

The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security. They therefore agree to this North Atlantic Treaty: Article 1 The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. Article 2 The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, by bringing about a better understanding of the principles upon which these institutions are founded, and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them. Article 3 In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack. Article 4 The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened. Article 5 The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Any such armed attack immediately be reported and terminated when the Security Council has acted to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Article 6 1 For the purpose of this Treaty the territory of any of the Parties is deemed to include its territory in Europe, its Algerian Departments and Islands under the jurisdiction of the Party concerned, and the area north of the Tropic

# NATO 2030:

## United for a New Era

Analysis and Recommendations of the Reflection  
Group Appointed by the NATO Secretary General

25 November 2020

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# 1 Preface

At the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Meeting of Heads of State and Government in London in December 2019, Alliance leaders asked the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to undertake a Forward-Looking Reflection Process to assess ways to strengthen the political dimension of the NATO Alliance. To this end, in April 2020, Secretary General Stoltenberg appointed an independent Reflection Group co-chaired by Thomas de Maizière and A. Wess Mitchell and consisting of John Bew, Greta Bossenmaier, Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, Marta Dassù, Anna Fotyga, Tacan Ildem, Hubert Védrine, and Herna Verhagen.

*The Secretary General tasked the Group with providing recommendations in three areas:*

- 1) Reinforcing Allied unity, solidarity, and cohesion, including to cement the centrality of the transatlantic bond;*
- 2) Increasing political consultation and coordination between Allies in NATO; and*
- 3) Strengthening NATO's political role and relevant instruments to address current and future threats and challenges to Alliance security emanating from all strategic directions.*

To inform its work, the Reflection Group conducted extensive consultations within and outside of NATO, including with scholars, leaders from business and the technology sector, parliamentarians, military officials, and government representatives from all thirty Allies, most NATO partner states, and numerous International Organisations (see Chronology in Annex). Throughout the process, the Group maintained close contact with the Secretary General and provided regular updates on its progress to him and to the North Atlantic Council (NAC).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the entirety of the Reflection Process was conducted remotely. Altogether, from the launch of the process to the conclusion of the final text, the Group conducted more than ninety meetings with over two-hundred interlocutors via video teleconference. The fully virtual character of the process is a historic first for NATO.

This document is the final report of the Reflection Group to the Secretary General. The first part summarises the report, outlines the Group's vision for NATO in 2030, and provides a condensed version of the Group's main findings. The second part assesses the main trends that will shape NATO's environment between now and 2030. The third part provides a more detailed discussion of the recommendations, organised thematically according to each of the three objectives given to the Group by the Secretary General. The analysis and recommendations offered herein are intended to inform the Secretary General's deliberations in the lead-up to the meeting of NATO Leaders in 2021, when he will conclude the Reflection Process by offering recommendations for strengthening NATO's political dimension to Allied Heads of State and Government.

Throughout this process, the members of the Reflection Group acted as independent experts. As NATO moves forward with these deliberations, the group members remain available for further explanation and consultation as needed.

The Reflection Group would like to thank Secretary General Stoltenberg for his trust and engagement throughout the reflection process. We are grateful to the NATO International Staff, in particular Benedetta Berti-Alberti and her team at the Policy Planning Unit for their assistance, and for their tireless efforts to ensure that the Group's countless video teleconferences, week in and week out, ran seamlessly, and on time. We would like to express our appreciation to Simon Herchen and Carsten Schmiedl for their help in coordinating the Group's work and supporting the drafting process, and Claire Yorke for her help in editing the text. Finally, we are grateful to the numerous individuals inside and outside of NATO who briefed the group, as well as the Permanent Representatives to the NAC, the governments of the Alliance and its partners, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and all who contributed their valuable time, ideas and thoughts to this report.

## 2 Introduction and Main Findings

### 2.1 A Strategic Anchor in Uncertain Times

NATO enters the eighth decade of its existence with both a longer record of success and a wider assortment of looming challenges than its founders could have foreseen when they signed the Washington Treaty in April 1949. In the thirty years since the collapse of the Soviet threat that called NATO into existence, the Western Alliance has defied innumerable predictions of its imminent demise. It ended two wars and ethnic cleansing in the Western Balkans, extended the hand of partnership to Russia and other former adversaries, stepped up to the threat of terrorism directed against NATO territory, engaged abroad including in Afghanistan, and responded with clarity, unity, and resolve to the threat posed by Russian aggression in the Euro-Atlantic region. Today, NATO stands as history's most successful alliance, encompassing nearly a billion people and half of global GDP across a space that stretches from the Pacific coast of North America to the Black Sea.

**“NATO stands as history's most successful alliance.”**

Yet, future uncertainties demand that NATO continues to adapt. The world of the next ten years will be very different than the world that the Alliance inhabited either during the Cold War or the decades that immediately followed. It will be a world of competing great powers, in which assertive authoritarian states with revisionist foreign policy agendas seek to expand their power and influence, and in which NATO Allies will once again face a systemic challenge cutting across the domains of security and economics. Well-known threats like terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations will persist, even as new risks loom from pandemics and climate change, and as emerging and disruptive technologies (EDTs) present both dangers and opportunities for the Alliance.

Against this changing backdrop, NATO has experienced internal strains. Recent years have seen Allies engaged in disputes that partly reflect anxieties about their long-term strategic futures. 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. Some Americans worry that Europeans will shirk their responsibilities for the common defence – or even pursue a path of autonomy in a way that splinters the Alliance. Inside NATO, societal divisions have arisen and representative democracy is being challenged. In many ways, the Alliance could be said to be formidable in military strength; but it is far from invulnerable to such political turbulence.

In spite of these challenges, NATO remains indispensable. In fact, the fundamental purpose of NATO is more demonstrably clear today than it has been for decades. NATO has weathered stormy times before, surviving the Soviet threat, the Suez Crisis, divisions among Allies over the Vietnam war, dictatorships in its own ranks, the Euromissile debates, disagreements over enlargement, and the Iraq War—just to name a few. Now, as then, Allies have remained bound together by a combination of shared principles, democratic institutions, and the benefit that all Allies derive from collective security. Looking out to 2030, the need for a collective defence Alliance to protect Europe and North America against threats to their physical security and democratic way of life is as strong as ever.

**“The fundamental purpose of NATO is more demonstrably clear today than it has been for decades.”**

Yet NATO will have to continue to adapt. In a world of systemic challengers and proliferating threats, the Alliance, in complementarity with the comprehensive military adaptation it has undergone, must cement its ability to act as the principal political forum for the strategic and geopolitical challenges facing the transatlantic community. Fulfilling this role will require even greater cohesion than NATO has possessed in recent years. As it has since NATO's founding, cohesion resides in the ability and will to act collectively against shared threats. This is the lifeblood that ensures the vitality, credibility, and durability of the Alliance; it becomes all the more important in a sharpened competitive environment that requires collaboration and effective networks to deal with growing threats.

In recent years, Allies have strengthened the military component of NATO and should continue to do so. But in parallel, they must move decisively to bolster the political dimension of NATO, including its foundations of shared democratic principles, mechanisms of consultation, processes of decision-making, and political tools for responding to current and emerging threats. If they do so, NATO will be in a strong position to protect the freedom and security of its members and act as an essential pillar of an open and stable international order.

**“Allies must move decisively to bolster the political dimension of NATO.”**

## 2.2 NATO's Political Legacy: Adapting to Change

NATO's longevity and success have been rooted in its ability to adapt to changing strategic circumstances. The very establishment of NATO in the early days of the Cold War represented strategic adaptation on a grand scale, committing sovereign states to standing defence cooperation that went well beyond what alliances historically had entailed. This new collective defence was seen as a vital component of European order, based on the hard-learned historical experience of the interwar years. Its cornerstone was, and remains, Article 5, which states that 'an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.' This defensive component is NATO's first and most essential requirement.

**"NATO's longevity and success have been rooted in its ability to adapt."**

From the beginning, however, NATO was more than just a military alliance; it also embraced a political role, in unifying Allies behind a common strategic vision, a community of shared values, shared interests, and shared destiny. At key intervals in NATO's history, Allied leaders moved to strengthen NATO's political dimension to match changing strategic circumstances. The first such moment came in 1956 when NATO created the Committee of Three (known informally as the 'Wise Men Group') to 'advise on ways and means to improve and extend NATO cooperation in non-military fields and to develop greater unity within the Atlantic Community.' As the committee wrote in its final report, the 'peace-ensuring role of NATO...based on solidarity and strength, can be discharged only if the political and economic relations between its members are cooperative and close.' The report continued:

*From the very beginning of NATO, then, it was recognised that while defence cooperation was the first and most urgent requirement, this was not enough. It has also become increasingly realised since the Treaty was signed that security is today far more than a military matter. The strengthening of political consultation and economic cooperation, the development of resources, progress in education and public understanding, all these can be as important, or even more important, for the protection of the security of a nation, or an alliance, as the building of a battleship or the equipping of an army.*

In 1967, again at a time of tensions among Allies, Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Harmel initiated a review of NATO which reaffirmed its twin military and political dimensions – defence and deterrence of Soviet aggression on the one hand, détente and arms control on the other. The Harmel Report argued that NATO's first function was 'to maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries.' In addition, Harmel's work paved the way for NATO to pursue a political role externally, in 'pursuing the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved.'

This elevated political role proved essential to NATO's success in the Cold War. Coming at a time when U.S. nuclear superiority had ended and some Allies were rethinking their commitment to NATO, the broadening of political consultation within the Alliance was more than just window dressing: it inaugurated an era of heightened U.S. consultation with Allies, including on U.S.-Soviet negotiations, which bore fruit with breakthroughs in arms control (the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty) and East-West diplomacy (Helsinki Final Act) that would contribute to NATO's eventual success in the Cold War.

Following the Cold War, NATO undertook the most significant adaptation in its history. It took on expanded partnerships, including via the Partnership for Peace programme; built dialogues with Russia, Ukraine, the countries of the Mediterranean, and the Middle East; embraced a role in crisis-management; conducted its first out-of-area mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and most dramatically, enlarged to include the countries of Central and Eastern Europe at these nations' free request. In keeping with the Alliance's dual role, this eastern enlargement represented both the closing of the geopolitical vacuum in Europe's East that had been a major source of earlier conflicts, and the reincorporation of former captive nations into the democratic West. In the years that followed, NATO has continued to hold out the prospect of inclusion, via the Open Door Policy, for states that aspire to this status, share its values, and meet the criteria for joining.

In the wake of the September 11th attacks, NATO adjusted to a dramatically altered strategic environment in which terrorist groups were capable of bringing devastation into the heart of the Alliance. The invocation of Article 5 for the first time in NATO's history underscored the fundamental adaptive logic of the Alliance. In the years that followed, NATO supported a military and political agenda aimed at projecting both defensive capabilities and political stability beyond the traditional focus of the Euro-Atlantic area, based on an assessment of the primary and prevailing threats to the Alliance. To support this shift of focus, NATO commissioned a Group of Experts, chaired by former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, which produced a report outlining recommendations as a prelude to the drafting of the 2010 Strategic Concept, which NATO has continued to use in the period since.

In the intervening decade, the Alliance has continued to evolve in the face of a changing international scene characterised by the return of geopolitical competition. Following the illegitimate and illegal invasion and annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, NATO undertook sustained improvements to its defence and deterrence posture, including through enhanced Forward Presence, the Readiness Action Plan, and NATO Readiness Initiative, and embarked on a far-reaching upgrade to defence spending and capabilities across the Alliance. As a result, NATO now possesses a wider range of tools, not only for countering the Russian military threat but also for understanding, anticipating, and defending against terrorism and threats in the hybrid and cyber realms. And, as in the past, these defensive enhancements have been accompanied by political measures that supported the new approach, including expanded forums for internal consultation, the development of new tools in cyber, hybrid, and strategic communications, increased engagement with eastern partners Ukraine and Georgia, and dialogue to accompany NATO's enhanced deterrence.

## 2.3 A Political Role Suited to a New Era

It is against this backdrop of earlier, successful adaptations, as well as the long sustainment of a vibrant political dimension to its work, that NATO enters a new and very different strategic environment in the period from now to 2030. But past adaptation is no guarantee of future success; to survive, and remain effective and relevant to the needs of its members, NATO must again adapt to changing strategic circumstances.

In this new chapter of its existence, the foundational mission for NATO remains, as set out in the North Atlantic Treaty, to ‘safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law... to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area... [and] to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security.’ Nor have the basic ingredients for this mission changed; they remain, as they were at the time of the Harmel Report, military strength and political solidarity combined with pursuit of a long-term stable international environment.

Mustering the necessary cohesion to support these purposes is, however, likely to be both more important and harder in the coming decade than it was in previous eras, not least because of the way different Allies prioritise multiple threats. Where NATO faced one big threat in the Cold War and no peer competitor in the immediate post-Cold War period, today it faces two systemic rivals, the enduring threat of terrorism, instability along NATO’s southern periphery, a dramatically changing technological landscape, numerous, vexing non-state threats, and man-made as well as natural risks. While these threats reaffirm NATO’s enduring purpose, their very plurality, and the differing weight that Allies attach to each, also makes the process of reaching consensus on priorities harder. Alongside this, there have at times been tensions and differences over underlying values which contribute to strained relations between Allies.

Political divergences within NATO are dangerous because they enable external actors, and in particular Russia and China, to exploit intra-Alliance differences and take advantage of individual Allies in ways that endanger their collective interests and security. This includes actions that are directly relevant to NATO’s traditional geographic and functional mission but also extends to the cyber, technological, and strategic-commercial realms—and indeed, the democratic way of life. Without cohesion, NATO’s Allies would face these challenges alone. And neither Europe nor North America, for all their strength, are powerful enough to manage these threats alone, while also dealing with the growing array of non-traditional threats and risks that affect our societies.

A drift toward NATO disunity, should it occur, must be seen as a strategic rather than merely tactical or optical problem. Should such a trend be left unaddressed, it will place all NATO Allies, big and small, on much less favourable terms in the coming decade than would otherwise be the case if they acted together. This brings into sharper focus the central political task for NATO in our time: to consolidate the transatlantic Alliance for an era of strategic simultaneity, in which numerous interconnected threats face the Alliance at the same time. Such an environment will require NATO to build on the increased political consultations that have taken place in the Alliance in recent years to make the North Atlantic Council the unique and essential forum for consultation on the most important strategic issues, including major national-security developments, the status of the threat, common security, and national-operational or capability-related decisions which have an impact on the Alliance and its members.

**“A drift toward NATO disunity, should it occur, must be seen as a strategic rather than merely tactical or optical problem.”**

Achieving this outcome will not be easy. Divergences in threat perception cannot simply be wished away, since they are an expression of a state’s own unique interests, geography, and national-political outlook. But arriving at a convergence of political and strategic priorities is possible, necessary, and entirely in keeping with the traditions of the Alliance. The history of NATO is defined by the determined pursuit of such convergence—itsself an inherently political act—by using strategy and statecraft to forge compromises and enable common action in a way that serves the good of all Allies. Arriving at such convergence, by maintaining not only the structures but the culture of proactive consultation whereby differentials in threat assessment can be mitigated, has been the most important way that NATO and its leaders have achieved cohesion, and remains the path to a strong NATO today.

**“Arriving at a convergence of political and strategic priorities is possible, necessary and in keeping with the traditions of the Alliance.”**

**“Such a NATO would be a source of stability for an unstable world.”**

The question of how NATO should go about this task of enhancing political cohesion and convergence for the challenges of a new era is the principal subject of this report. A central contention is that, however challenging it may be to attain, NATO critically needs political convergence on first order questions because the sheer scale of threats, and in particular the simultaneous geopolitical and ideological challenge from Russia and China, portend consequences for the security and prosperity of us all. In such a setting, NATO’s political responsibility, and opportunity, is truly immense – to remain the platform around which the Alliance organises itself for an era of truly global challenges. Such a NATO would continue to be not only a protector of its core region but a source of stability for an unstable world. Viewed in this light, 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.

## 2.4 Vision

The Reflection Group's vision for NATO in 2030 is one of an Alliance defined by vitality, utility, relevance, and endurance. By the end of the decade, no matter the strategic environment, NATO will:

- Uphold its role as the bedrock of peace, stability, and the rule of law in the Euro-Atlantic area;
- Remain the strategic centre of gravity for collective defence of all its members on the basis of an up-to-date Strategic Concept;
- Strengthen its role as the unique and essential forum to which Allies turn on all major national security challenges, proactively seeking to forge consensus and build common strategies for dealing with common threats;
- Play a larger part in an international order in which open societies can flourish and be secure and prosperous; a world in which a plurality of worldviews and fundamental differences of opinion are no obstacle to dialogue and cooperation;
- Enjoy deeper strategic and mutually reinforcing connections with partners that share these principles and aspirations, affirming the Helsinki Final Act principle that all states have the right to choose their security arrangements; and, where partnership is not possible, a commitment to work towards shared security on the basis of mutual respect;
- Possess a stronger relationship and intensify consultation on issues of common concern with the European Union built on the foundations of cooperation, with a view to taking advantage of different capabilities and toolkits.

To achieve this, Allies should redouble their commitment to:

- Adhere to the democratic principles enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty, with all Allies free to shape their own destinies within these bounds;
- Share the burden that comes with collective security, maintaining equitable responsibilities for the common defence;
- Ensure their actions do not undermine the utility and cohesion of the Alliance for unrelated ends or narrow national goals without prejudice to their sovereign rights and core national security interests;
- Put collective defence, from conventional to nuclear and hybrid, at the forefront of consultation and decision-making on security in the Euro-Atlantic area;
- Enable swift decision-making and policy implementation—preserving the principle of consensus but ensuring the Alliance is equipped to deal with a changing strategic environment.

## 2.5 Main Findings: Moving Toward NATO 2030

NATO must adapt to meet the needs of a more demanding strategic environment marked by the return of systemic rivalry, persistently aggressive Russia, the rise of China, and the growing role of EDTs, at the same time that it faces elevated transnational threats and risks. The overarching political objective for NATO must be to consolidate the transatlantic Alliance to ensure that it possesses the tools, cohesion, and consultative attributes to provide collective defence in this more challenging landscape. NATO's political dimension must adapt in order to maintain and strengthen its efficiency as well as ensuring its relevance for all Allies. To this end, this report offers 138 recommendations, of which the following are some of the main takeaways:

1. The starting point must be to **update the 2010 Strategic Concept**. This should be seen as an opportunity to solidify cohesion by confronting new strategic realities and bringing together the various strands of recent adaptations into one coherent strategic picture. When updating the Concept, Allies should seek to preserve NATO's three core tasks and enhance its role as the unique and essential transatlantic forum for consultations; it should update content related to the principles undergirding the NATO Alliance, changes to the geostrategic environment (including both Russia and China), and the need to incorporate terrorism more fully into NATO's core tasks.
2. NATO should continue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue with **Russia**. The Alliance must respond to Russian threats and hostile actions in a politically united, determined, and coherent way, without a return to 'business as usual' barring alterations in Russia's aggressive behaviour and its return to full compliance with international law. At the same time, NATO should remain open to discussing peaceful co-existence and to reacting positively to constructive changes in Russia's posture and attitude. NATO should evolve the content of its dual-track strategy to ensure its continued effectiveness by raising the costs for Russian aggression and develop a more comprehensive response to hybrid forms of Russian aggression, while at the same time supporting increased political outreach to negotiate arms control and risk reduction measures.
3. NATO must devote much more time, political resources, and action to the security challenges posed by **China** – based on an assessment of its national capabilities, economic heft, and the stated ideological goals of its leaders. It needs to develop a political strategy for approaching a world in which China will be of growing importance through to 2030. The Alliance should infuse the China challenge throughout existing structures and consider establishing a consultative body to discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China. It must expand efforts to assess the implications of China's technological development and monitor and defend against any Chinese activities that could impact collective defence, military readiness or resilience in the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's (SACEUR) Area of Responsibility.

4. **Emerging and disruptive technologies** are a challenge but also opportunity for NATO. Competing with the efforts underway by large authoritarian states to achieve dominance in key EDTs must be a strategic priority for the Alliance and its members. NATO should serve as a crucial coordinating institution for information-sharing and collaboration between Allies on all aspects of EDTs that have a bearing on their security. NATO should hold a digital summit of governments and private sector with the aim of identifying gaps in collective defence cooperation in security-related AI strategies, norms, and research and development (R&D), and safeguarding against the malign and aggressive use of AI.
5. **Terrorism** poses one of the most immediate, asymmetric threats to Allied nations and citizens. NATO should more explicitly integrate the fight against terrorism into its core tasks. This fight should be given a place within NATO structures, supported by necessary resources, commensurate with the threat that it poses. NATO should enhance the fight against terrorism as part of the hybrid and cyber conversation and ensure that the threat from terrorism figures in exercises and lessons learned. NATO should strive to improve current practices of intelligence-sharing among Allies to achieve better, common situational awareness in key areas including emerging safe havens and terrorists' use of EDTs, as well as hybrid tactics.
6. NATO must articulate a consistent, clear, and coherent approach to **the South**, addressing both traditional threats like terrorism, and the growing presence of Russia and to a lesser extent China. NATO must maintain political focus on building up military preparedness and response for the southern/Mediterranean flank, in particular by revising and delivering its Advance Plans and strengthening the Hub for the South at JFC Naples. NATO should strengthen ties and cooperation, especially with the EU, in the framework of a coordinated approach. It should increase the frequency of political consultations, including at the NAC level, on the South. Allies with specialist understandings and/or greater engagement should be asked to brief the NAC more frequently.
7. NATO should reaffirm its support for **arms control** while maintaining an effective **nuclear deterrence**. It should play an enhanced role as a forum to debate challenges to existing arms control mechanisms and consult on any future arrangements. NATO should continue to support the strengthening of effective verification regimes and enable monitoring capabilities and enforcement mechanisms. It should develop an agenda for international arms control in key areas of EDT with military application. NATO should further adapt its defence and deterrence posture in the post-Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty setting to take into account the threat posed by Russia's existing and new military capabilities. It should continue and revitalise the nuclear-sharing arrangements that constitute a critical element of NATO's deterrence policy.

8. **Climate change** will continue to shape NATO's security environment. While modulating emissions is primarily a national competency, 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. It should build on efforts to include climate change and other non-military threats such as pandemics in NATO planning on resilience and crisis management, with an emphasis on making energy and telecommunications grids better able to withstand weather events. NATO should revise its 2014 Green Defence framework and make more strategic use of the Science for Peace and Security programme in order to develop and implement better green military technology.
9. Maintaining **political cohesion and unity** must be an unambiguous priority for all Allies. Allies on both sides of the Atlantic must reaffirm their commitment to NATO as the principal institution for the defence of the Euro-Atlantic area. Allies should pledge themselves to a code of good conduct to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of the North Atlantic Treaty. Allies should maintain and meet agreed burden-sharing requirements. NATO should reassert its core identity as an Alliance rooted in the principles of democracy, and Allies should consider establishing a Centre of Excellence for Democratic Resilience dedicated to providing support to individual Allies, upon their request, for strengthening societal resilience to resist interference from hostile external actors in the functioning of their democratic institutions and processes. When disputes between Allies arise, the Secretary General should continue to provide his good offices and consider more closely involving other Allies as informal mediators.
10. The Group calls for transatlantic **consultation** to be strengthened in a systematic, credible, and powerful manner. Allies must reaffirm the role of the North Atlantic Council as a genuine forum for consultation on major strategic and political issues. Allies should strive to hold national policies to the line of policy developed at NATO. The Alliance should institute a practice whereby Allied Foreign Ministers make a periodic appraisal of the Alliance's political health and development. NATO should hold more frequent Ministerials and, when appropriate, expand their format. It should resume the practice whereby the number of annual Foreign Ministerials matches the number of Defence Ministerials, with meetings alternating between NATO HQ and Allied capitals. It should hold more informal meetings and institute regular consultations on issues beyond the traditional agenda, including meetings of NATO Political Directors or other senior officials for e.g., Middle East, African, and East Asian affairs as well as cyber and other topics as appropriate.

11. **NATO and the EU** should seek to reinvigorate trust and understanding at the highest levels. At the next NATO Summit or the next available opportunity, it would be useful for NATO and EU Heads of State and Government to meet in a special formal session to review the current state of the relationship and examine areas for greater cooperation. The two organisations should create an institutionalised staff link through a permanent political liaison element in NATO's International Staff (IS) and the European External Action Service (EEAS). NATO should welcome EU efforts towards a stronger and more capable European defence capacity insofar as these strengthen NATO, contribute to a fair transatlantic burden-sharing, and fully involve non-EU Allies. Ongoing European efforts should be better used to increase the share of European Allies in support of NATO capability targets.
12. NATO should outline a global blueprint for better utilising its **partnerships** to advance NATO strategic interests. It should shift from the current demand-driven approach to an interest-driven approach and consider providing more stable and predictable resource streams for partnership activities. NATO's Open Door Policy should be upheld and reinvigorated. NATO should expand and strengthen partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia, seek to heighten engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and counter destabilisation across the Western Balkans. NATO should energise the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) through strengthened political engagement, capacity building, and resilience enhancement. It should deepen cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners, including by strengthening information-sharing and creating regularised dialogues on technological cooperation and pooling of R&D in select fields.
13. The principle of consensus is a cornerstone of the Alliance, but NATO must be diligent in ensuring that it remains capable of **reaching and implementing decisions** in a timely fashion. NATO should strengthen measures to ensure that consensus-based decisions are implemented and not diluted in follow-on work. It should consider bolstering the Secretary General's chief executive role in order to make decisions on routine matters and to bring difficult issues into the open at an early stage. NATO should create a more structured mechanism to support the establishment of coalitions inside existing Alliance structures and should examine ways to time-limit decision making in crisis. To deal with the growing frequency of single-country blockages involving external bilateral disputes, it should consider raising the threshold for such blockages to the Ministerial level.
14. With regard to **political structure, staffing, and resources**, NATO needs a strong political dimension to match its military adaptation. NATO should consider increasing the delegated authorities of the Secretary General to make meaningful decisions on personnel and certain budgetary matters. It should institute a practice of outside-in audits of the administrative functioning of the organisation and require a functional review process once every five years. Allies that make up a low proportional share of the civil budget should raise their national contributions. NATO should establish a centre of higher learning to cultivate future talent outside of NATO and launch a scholarship program, tentatively called the Harmel Fellowship Programme, under which each Ally would fund a scholarship programme for at least one individual every year from another NATO Ally to undertake postgraduate study at one of its leading universities.

## 3 Analysis: The Security and Political Environment 2010-2030

### 3.1 The Security Environment: The Return of Systemic Rivalry and Rise of Global Threats

NATO's external security environment has changed dramatically since 2010, when the most recent NATO Strategic Concept was published. That Strategic Concept recommended cultivating a strategic partnership with Russia, made limited mention of terrorism, and no mention of China. Since then, fundamental shifts have occurred in NATO's security environment that are likely to intensify over the coming decade and require greater efforts at both political cohesion and adaptations to NATO strategy.

**“NATO's external security environment has changed dramatically since the 2010 Strategic Concept was published.”**

Transnational threats and risks continue to pose a major challenge to the Alliance, from terrorism to the security challenges posed by pandemics, climate change, and migratory flows. The changing instruments of state power – such as cyber and space capabilities – will continue to shape the nature of conflict. Yet the main characteristic of the current security environment is the re-emergence of geopolitical competition – that is, the profusion and escalation of state-based rivalries and disputes over territory, resources, and values. In the Euro-Atlantic area, the most profound geopolitical challenge is posed by Russia. While Russia is by economic and social measures a declining power, it has proven itself capable of territorial aggression and is likely to remain a chief threat facing NATO over the coming decade. Russia maintains a powerful conventional military and robust nuclear arsenal that poses a threat across NATO territory, but is particularly acute on the eastern flank. The Alliance has made progress on redressing gaps in deterrence and defence on this flank, and this must continue to be a priority for the Alliance moving forward. Russia also threatens NATO in non-kinetic domains in ways that blur the lines between war and peace. NATO's attempts to build a meaningful partnership and involve Russia in creating a post-Cold War Euro-Atlantic security architecture have been rebuffed. In 2014, Russia illegally and illegitimately annexed Crimea and invaded and occupied parts of eastern Ukraine.

**“The main characteristic of the current security environment is the re-emergence of geopolitical competition.”**

The Russian government seeks hegemony over its former Soviet possessions and undermines their sovereignty and territorial integrity, seeking to block the path of nations that want to move toward NATO. While Russian aggression in Ukraine and Georgia continues, assertive Russian behaviour has intensified in the High North and North Atlantic, with air and naval build ups in and around key maritime chokepoints in the Barents, Baltic, and Black seas, and the Mediterranean. In the last three of these, Russia has placed anti-access/area-denial (A2AD) capabilities, expanded hybrid warfare, and threatened energy and critical infrastructure. In parallel, it has attempted to create satellite or client states near NATO territory, including so-called frozen conflicts, and violated arms-control regimes leading to the end of the INF Treaty. Russia has also been trying to establish a foothold in the Mediterranean basin and in Africa, including by using proxies and Russian private military companies. In addition to its conventional military threat, Russia is deploying a broader hybrid toolkit including offensive cyber, state-sanctioned assassinations, and poisonings – using chemical weapons, political coercion, and other methods to violate the sovereignty of Allies.

**“Russia is deploying a broader hybrid toolkit including offensive cyber, state-sanctioned assassinations, and poisonings.”**

The return of geostrategic competition has also brought a proliferation of hybrid attacks. This grey zone activity has eroded the traditional boundaries of conflict. Domestic and international security bleed across into each other. The line between civilians and combatants is being blurred, through the use of proxies and private military companies, disinformation, and subversion. All of this, and the hybrid activity of terrorist organisations, seeks to weaken and divide Allies from within by undermining societal cohesion and our way of life. Thus, NATO has had to spend an increasing amount of time developing political and non-political tools to counter hybrid activities such as new approaches to attribution, deterrence in the hybrid domain, and tackling disinformation.

The growing power and assertiveness of China is the other major geopolitical development that is changing the strategic calculus of the Alliance. At their meeting in London in December 2019, NATO leaders stated that China's growing influence and international policies present both opportunities and challenges that need to be addressed as an Alliance. China poses a very different kind of challenge to NATO than Russia; unlike the latter it is not, at present, a direct military threat to the Euro-Atlantic area. Nevertheless, China has an increasingly global strategic agenda, supported by its economic and military heft. It has proven its willingness to use force against its neighbours, as well as economic coercion and intimidatory diplomacy well beyond the Indo-Pacific region. Over the coming decade, China will likely also challenge NATO's ability to build collective resilience, safeguard critical infrastructure, address new and emerging technologies such as 5G, and protect sensitive sectors of the economy including supply chains. Longer term, China is increasingly likely to project military power globally, including potentially in the Euro-Atlantic area.

**“China has an increasingly global strategic agenda, supported by its economic and military heft.”**

China's industrial policy and military-civil fusion (MCF) strategy are central components of this systemic challenge. Its military modernisation in all domains, including nuclear, naval, and missile capabilities, introduces new risks and potential threats to the Alliance and to strategic stability. Its approach to human rights and international law challenges the fundamental premise of a rules-based international order. Grave risks are posed by China in some critical sectors such as telecommunications, space, cyberspace, and new technologies, as well as disinformation campaigns. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, China has conducted a disinformation campaign in numerous Allied states. It has also committed widespread intellectual property theft with implications for Allied security and prosperity, as well as cyber attacks on NATO governments and societies which have been attributed by Allies as originating inside China.

At the same time, because of its scale and economic trajectory, China is a driver of global growth, trade and investment, and a significant investor in many NATO countries. It has begun to develop a strategic-commercial presence in the Euro-Atlantic Area via the Belt and Road Initiative, the 17+1 format, numerous bilateral agreements, and its MCF strategy. Allies will continue to seek relations with China, build economic and trading ties and seek to work with China on issues such as climate change and biodiversity. China's actions are central to prospects of tackling global challenges such as the Sustainable Development Goals, as it produces one-third of global emissions and almost half of global investment in green technology.

Terrorism has been, and remains, one of the most immediate asymmetric and significant threats facing the Alliance, repeatedly striking inside NATO and causing deep concern among Allied populations. While acts of terrorism in the Euro-Atlantic area have abated in recent years following military setbacks to so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or Daesh, due to coalition efforts, attacks by non-state terrorist actors motivated by extremist religious or political causes remain a great source of danger in both Europe and North America and manifest with dramatic outcomes. There are other risks including illegal mass migration, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and geopolitical contestation for resources. Illicit trade in weapons and narcotics, transnational organised crime, and piracy also have implications for Alliance security.

Against the backdrop of geopolitical competition, other threats and challenges persist and some are becoming more intense. NATO's 'South' refers to a broad geographic area including North Africa and large parts of the Middle East, extending to sub-Saharan Africa and Afghanistan. While there is great diversity in this region, large parts of the southern neighbourhood are characterised by fragility, instability, and insecurity. Instability in Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan continues to generate illegal migration that is felt acutely throughout Europe, but especially by those Allies bordering the Mediterranean.

To the South, the challenge includes the presence of Russia and to a lesser extent China, exploiting regional fragilities. Russia has reinserted itself in the Middle East and the Eastern Mediterranean. In 2015, it intervened in the Syrian Civil War and remains there. Russia's Middle East policy is likely to exacerbate tensions and political strife across the region as it extends an increasing amount of political, financial, operational, and logistical assets to its partners. China's influence across the Middle East is also growing. It signed a strategic partnership with Iran, is the largest importer of crude oil from Iraq, wedged itself into the Afghanistan peace process, and is the biggest foreign investor in the region.

In the coming decade, EDTs will play an increasing role in the security environment, both in systemic competition and potentially in exacerbating trans-boundary security threats. Since NATO's founding, the West has been at the forefront of R&D in innovations critical to stability and security. But China, and to a lesser extent Russia, are now dedicating significant and increasing resources to this domain in an effort to outpace the West, including illicit technology transfer and intellectual property theft, to enhance already potent non-conventional tools. New technologies will change the nature of warfare, and enable new forms of attacks with hypersonic missiles and hybrid operations. New technologies play a significant role in space, which has become an operational domain for NATO that will continue to evolve as Russia and China increase their capabilities there. NATO populations expect to be protected against new threats such as cyber and disinformation and expect their governments, supported by NATO, to develop tools for attribution and deterrence. Resilience must reside within societies as well as the state.

**“New technologies will change the nature of warfare and enable new forms of attacks with hypersonic missiles and hybrid operations.”**

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. As some Allies pursue carbon neutrality, NATO policy needs to further adapt, including through the adoption of green technologies.

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated, in dramatic and unexpected fashion, the deleterious effects that pandemics can have not only to the public health of NATO citizenries but to social resilience and security, both by reorienting policy attention and scarce resources, and fuelling international rivalry and confrontation. It has accelerated the digitalisation of NATO societies and, in the coming years, could reduce defence spending.

In this emerging decade of renewed systemic rivalry and growing transboundary threats and risks, a functioning and robust NATO will be more important to the security and prosperity of those within the Alliance. No individual Ally can address all these threats alone. The Alliance needs a shared understanding of the threats – along with adaptability, creativity, strategy, and a willingness to share burden and risk – to prepare for the decade ahead.

## 3.2 The Political Environment: Strains on Allied Unity

To adapt to this changing security environment, NATO will need to maintain its unity and address potential impediments to collective action. NATO's unity derives from the unshakeable shared commitment of Allies to the common values outlined in the North Atlantic Treaty: 'democracy, individual liberty and rule of law.' The fact that Allies remain wedded to these foundational values is the single most important factor in ensuring the durability of the Alliance over seven decades. A shared democratic identity is what distinguishes the Alliance from the principal threats and challenges it faces.

**“A shared democratic identity is what distinguishes the Alliance from the principal threats and challenges it faces.”**

As befits a community of sovereign democratic states, NATO has never been able to achieve complete harmony and has been through periods of tension and divergence. Allies have occasionally disagreed in the past over interests and values, sometimes straining the Alliance. Yet another key to NATO's success is that it has been resilient in the face of many challenges because Allies do not deviate, even under strained circumstances, from an inviolable commitment to defending each other's security. Alongside a basic platform of shared values, therefore, stands a willingness to take collective action.

Recent years have seen a series of political challenges facing NATO Allies and a period of unusual turbulence in Western societies. Some of this is the result of strains caused by the 2008 global financial crisis, which prompted a questioning of aspects of international order. Trust and faith in democratic and international institutions has decreased, alongside heightened tensions over trade and competition for resources, exacerbated by developments in EDTs, and the spread of disinformation.

More broadly, the confidence of the post-Cold War era – in which it was believed that the spread of democracy and free markets would continue inexorably – has been much diminished, with a so-called 'democratic recession,' the global erosion of democratic norms, and the rise of authoritarianism. In some respects, NATO's political role more closely resembles the pre-1989 period when it was a bulwark of democracy against an authoritarian challenger. That is why it is vital that Allies, even as they are more cautious about exporting democracy, do not allow the erosion of democracy (intentionally or unintentionally) to infect their own polities. While the Alliance is stronger for reflecting a plurality of views and different political structures, any retreat from the democratic core in the North Atlantic Treaty will have a corrosive effect on unity, collective defence, and security.

The Reflection Process has identified a strong common agreement among national governments, stakeholders, and experts, on the nature of the strategic environment and threat assessment. However, the way in which respective Allies assess different threats – and the differing emphasis they place upon them – risks leading to divergence in some circumstances. Given that the coming security environment is increasingly challenging and unpredictable, NATO will have to be even more deliberate and determined than it was in the past about establishing more common ground on the prioritisation of threats. Without full and frank discussion of these challenges, there is a danger that the difficulties of the security environment will create an opportunity for NATO's adversaries to encourage disunity and impede collective action. Yet, as seen in the response to 9/11, the 2014 illegal and illegitimate annexation of Crimea, and the adaptation to hybrid and cyber threats, NATO has a strong record of strategic adaptation. This tradition needs to be summoned again in the early 2020s.

Another potential strain on Allied unity is the differing extent to which Allies are prepared to invest their national resources in maintaining the defence capabilities that make NATO an effective guarantor of their security. This political commitment of Allies to each other is symbolised in part by the pledge agreed at the 2014 Wales Summit for Allies to aim for reaching two percent of GDP on defence spending and twenty percent of their annual defence spending on major new equipment by 2024. The pledge represents an unwavering commitment of each Ally towards collective defence, and Allies have made substantial efforts toward fairer burden-sharing since these goals were set. COVID-19 has created serious economic problems which will likely impact the budget for all Allies. But the security threats that made Allies decide to increase defence spending have not gone away.

NATO unity is also impacted by disputes between Allies. In recent years, some Allies have brought disagreements on external matters into NATO, occasionally straining cohesion, and impeding decision-making. Allowing disputes that are external to NATO to infect the functioning of the Alliance could cause long-term damage to the Alliance.

**“Allowing disputes that are external to NATO to infect the functioning of the Alliance could cause long-term damage to the Alliance.”**

In addition to specific national interests or disputes between Allies, another development that NATO must seek to manage are changes in the grand strategic approach of Allies that could cause division. The last ten years have been characterised by questions about the commitment of the United States to the defence of the European continent, the impact of the European Union’s development as a security actor on the future of NATO, the commitment of some European Allies to sharing the burdens of common defence, and the development of deeper political inroads by NATO’s rivals into Alliance territory.

In order to maintain unity and strengthen collective action moving forward, Allies constantly have to reassert and demonstrate, by actions as well as words, their commitment to the political identity and strategic goals of the Alliance. NATO must remain robust enough to provide a platform for disagreement and withstand a plurality of views and perspectives. The ultimate responsibility for this rests with Allies themselves and their willingness to make use of the opportunities for consultation and discussion the Alliance provides. Strengthening NATO politically will leave the Alliance prepared for the next decade.

## 4 Recommendations: Strengthening NATO's Role, Cohesion, and Consultation

### 4.1 NATO's Political Purpose in the 21st Century

Managing the challenges of the next decade demands cohesion in the Atlantic Alliance. In order to fulfil its mission, the Reflection Group finds that NATO must continue to purposefully upgrade the political ways, means, and ends of its work. This reappraisal is consistent with past NATO precedents; its contours, as laid out in the Secretary General's tasking to the Reflection Group, broadly correspond to the two chief political dimensions of the Alliance as identified in the Harmel Report: maintaining political solidarity and pursuing long-term stability of the external environment.

**“NATO must continue to purposefully upgrade the political ways, means, and ends of its work.”**

The Group finds that NATO will benefit from continuing to undertake this effort proactively, rather than waiting to address political deficits reactively under conditions of crisis or even greater uncertainty. In this task, the Group further finds that the Alliance would benefit from adopting a long-term perspective and re-embracing the vision of NATO from earlier decades—as a preventative tool to shape its environment rather than primarily an instrument for managing crises once they have already broken out. This proactive mentality should permeate how Allies think about strengthening NATO's political role, cohesion and unity, and consultation and decision-making for the coming decade.

### 4.2 Strengthening NATO's Political Role and Tools with regard to Emerging Threats and Challenges from Every Direction

The changing strategic environment requires NATO to re-evaluate how it conceives of its political mission and the tools it needs to support its overarching goal: ensuring collective defence. The key to NATO's political and strategic credibility is that it keep pace with a dramatically and fundamentally changing strategic environment. This is all the more important in the context of a paradigm shift in how Allies think about their security. Doing so will require Allies to continue to adopt a genuinely strategic mindset that goes beyond risk- and crisis-management. NATO must preserve a geopolitical perspective and shared vision for NATO's strategy at the same time that it upgrades its ability to understand and manage the transboundary threats that will shape its environment over the long term. Only with this clarifying strategic framework will NATO be able to make full use of the resources at its disposal for shaping its external environment.

**“Allies must adopt a genuinely strategic mindset that goes beyond crisis-management.”**

## Recommendations:

1. NATO must update the 2010 Strategic Concept. This document 'outlines NATO's enduring purpose and nature, and its fundamental security tasks...identifies the central features of the new security environment, specifies the elements of the Alliance's approach to security and provides guidelines for the adaptation of its military forces.' The current Strategic Concept dates to 2010 and was developed prior to the emergence of many of the current security setting's key features, including most notably the return of confrontation with Russia and systemic rivalry with China. Although important work is underway at NATO in tackling these threats, ongoing changes to the strategic environment make the existing Strategic Concept an inadequate basis for responding to the

### “NATO must update the 2010 Strategic Concept.”

current geopolitical environment. Not having an up-to-date Strategic Concept could impede the process of anticipating main threats, and increase risks of disagreement or improvisation in times of crisis. While undertaking an update to the Strategic Concept, NATO should keep in mind the recommendations that follow in this report, as well as the following factors:

- An updated Strategic Concept is not a panacea, and NATO's challenges do not arise from the lack of such a document;
  - Many elements of the existing Strategic Concept, including most notably the three core tasks of collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security, remain highly pertinent;
  - The development of a new Strategic Concept should be seen as an opportunity to establish clear priorities, solidify cohesion by leading the Alliance to confront new strategic realities, and bring together the various strands of adaptation already undertaken into one coherent strategic picture;
  - The updating process should be conducted under the auspices of the Secretary General, in consultation with Allies, and start immediately after it is agreed upon by NATO Heads of State and Government when they next meet. It should ideally not last longer than one year based on a clear timetable, incorporating outreach activities to cover a large variety of perspectives.
2. When developing an updated Concept, NATO Allies should consider the Main Findings outlined in this report. In addition, they should consider:
    - Preserving and strengthening content related to:
      - The three core tasks of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security
      - NATO's role as a unique and essential transatlantic forum for consultations among Allies;
      - Strengthening deterrence and defence, including nuclear deterrence in the overall posture of the Alliance, projecting stability, as well as resilience across all domains;
      - The role of arms control.
    - Updating content related to:
      - The principles undergirding the NATO Alliance as a foundation to be reaffirmed and enhanced;
      - Changes to the geostrategic environment, including both the main challenge of Russia and the emerging challenge of China;
      - Incorporating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations more fully into the core tasks;
      - Reflecting the increasing role of hybrid threats by NATO adversaries and the implications of EDTs.

3. NATO should consider creating a new net assessment office, composed of both military and civilian staff and reporting directly to the Secretary General, with the mission of examining NATO's strategic environment on the basis of agreed threats and challenges across the whole spectrum of military and non-military tools. Such a capacity would be differentiated from, and augment, the tools that NATO has developed in recent years; including the Joint Intelligence and Security Division (JISD), Policy Planning Unit (PPU), and the routine meetings of the senior staff policy board for purposes of horizon scanning and strategic anticipation. A net assessment function, in constant and full consultation with all Allies, would bring a systematic methodology distinct from horizon scanning. It would exist to analyse the organisation's strengths and options for consideration by Allies on the basis of a holistic assessment of perspectives and tools, and contribute directly to mitigating differentials in Allies' threat assessments that form a foremost impediment to political cohesion.
4. NATO should develop a practice to ensure that the insights developed by its suite of strategic tools—the JISD, PPU, senior staff policy board, and any new net assessment capability—are better linked to the political discussions in the NAC. This would be to continue the process of adaption to a new strategic environment in which political and non-political tools must be coherently used. NATO needs to be as politically ready as it is militarily. As such, it should institute a practice of periodic wargaming, net assessment presentations, and threat scenarios in the NAC and/or Military Committee (MC), incorporating new data techniques and technologies in visualisation. These should include presentations of scenarios that assess the consequences of NATO's potential political inaction in a crisis.

**“NATO should institute a practice of periodic wargaming, net assessment presentations, and threat scenarios in the NAC.”**

## Russia

After the end of the Cold War, NATO attempted to build a meaningful partnership with Russia, based on dialogue and practical cooperation in areas of common interest. But Russia's aggression against Georgia and Ukraine, followed by its ongoing military build-ups and assertive activity in the Baltic and Black Sea regions, in the Eastern Mediterranean, Baltic, and in the High North, have led to a sharp deterioration in the relationship and negatively impacted the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. Russia routinely engages in intimidatory military operations in the immediate vicinity of NATO and has enhanced its reach and capabilities for threatening airspace and freedom of navigation in the Atlantic. It has violated a number of major international commitments and developed an array of conventional and non-conventional capabilities that threaten both the security of individual NATO Allies and the stability and cohesion of the Alliance as a whole. Russia has amply demonstrated its ability and willingness to use military force, and continues to attempt to exploit fissures between Allies, and inside NATO societies. It has also employed chemical weapons on Allied soil, costing civilian lives.

Following the illegitimate and illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, the Alliance has maintained a united front to Russian aggression, both militarily, in improvements to NATO's deterrence posture along the eastern flank, and politically, in the solidarity that Allies have shown in response to Russia's orchestration of the Salisbury nerve agent attack, breach of the INF Treaty, and other aggressive actions. In 2016 and again in 2018, Allies reaffirmed a dual-track policy of deterrence and readiness to continue dialogue with Russia in the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) to exchange views on the crisis in Ukraine, and maintained military channels of communication with the purpose of reducing risks and avoiding misunderstandings. To date, however, Russia's ongoing assertive policies and aggressive actions—including a hybrid campaign to undermine faith in democratic institutions in the Alliance—have proven persistent obstacles to meaningful dialogue. Looking out to 2030, Russia will most likely remain the main military threat to the Alliance. It confronts NATO with the risk of a *fait accompli* or with sustained and paralysing pressure in a crisis situation. Faced with such an actor, NATO will have to show diligence and solidarity, while it maintains openings for dialogue in the event that Russia's leaders choose a more constructive path.

### Recommendations:

1. NATO should continue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue, within parameters agreed at the Wales and Warsaw Summits, as the basis for its approach toward Russia.
2. NATO must continue to respond to Russian threats and hostile actions in a politically united, determined, and coherent way, without a return to 'business as usual' barring alterations in Russia's aggressive behaviour and its return to full compliance with international law. NATO unity on Russia is the most profound symbol of the political cohesion that is the basis of effective deterrence—the clearest demonstration that, when threatened, it responds with clarity and strength.
3. For this reason, NATO Allies must adhere to the common guidelines agreed at NATO when formulating security and defence-related national-level policies toward Russia, and must clearly and consistently communicate the indivisibility of the security of the Euro-Atlantic area, as unanimously expressed in Summit communiqués or, when cyber or other incidents are involved, in common attribution.

**“NATO should evolve the content of its dual-track strategy to ensure its continued effectiveness.”**

**“NATO must continue to respond to Russian threats and hostile actions in a politically united, determined and coherent way.”**

4. NATO must maintain adequate conventional and nuclear military capabilities and possess the agility and flexibility to confront aggression across the Alliance's territory, including where Russian forces are either directly or indirectly active, particularly on NATO's eastern flank. Non-U.S. Allies need to step up their efforts to ensure that their financial commitments and military contributions match NATO's strategic needs and are capable of delivering an effective balance between U.S. commitments and the development of other Allies' capabilities.
5. NATO should remain open to discussing peaceful co-existence and to react positively to constructive changes in Russia's posture and attitude. To be productive, such dialogue must be firm on principles and conducted from a position of unity and strength. Dialogue cannot replace necessary transparency or fulfilment of obligations Russia has committed to under international law and bilateral agreements, including refraining from using force. NATO Allies must therefore maintain unanimity in their effort to induce Russia to return to full compliance with international law, including via coordination in other international institutions. In all of its actions toward Russia, NATO should continue to show that it has no quarrel with the Russian people, and that its actions are in response to those of the current Russian Government.
6. The Alliance should continue to treat the NATO-Russia Council as the main platform to deliver political messages to Russia. NRC should serve as a platform to communicate to Russia a unified, two-fold political message: those related to confidence and security building measures and those aimed at underscoring the steadiness of Allied defence and deterrence postures. The conflict in Ukraine must remain high on the agenda of the NRC.
7. NATO should continue to develop de-confliction and confidence-building measures. It should maintain regular contact with Russia in areas of immediate threat to the security of the Alliance, including in arms control, military transparency, and maintaining channels of communication to avoid misunderstandings that could escalate into major crises.
8. Looking ahead, NATO should consider ways to evolve the content of its dual-track strategy to ensure its continued effectiveness. The Alliance should consider a dynamic template under which it takes steps to raise the costs for Russian aggression (e.g., coordinating to tighten rather than merely renew sanctions, according to Russian behaviour, exposing the facts of Russian covert activities in Ukraine, etc.) while at the same time supporting increased political outreach to negotiate arms control and risk reduction measures. Evolving the strategy in this way would preserve cohesion within NATO while providing a prospect for breaking the stalemate with Russia on NATO's terms.
9. NATO should designate a special unit within the JISD to monitor and assess how Russia-China cooperation in the military, technological and political fields, including coordination in disinformation and hybrid warfare, impacts Euro-Atlantic security, and provide regular updates to the NAC.

## China

The scale of Chinese power and global reach poses acute challenges to open and democratic societies, particularly because of that country's trajectory to greater authoritarianism and an expansion of its territorial ambitions. For most Allies, China is both an economic competitor and significant trade partner. China is therefore best understood as a full-spectrum systemic rival, rather than a purely economic player or an only Asia-focused security actor. While China does not pose an immediate military threat to the Euro-Atlantic area on the scale of Russia, it is expanding its military reach into the Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Arctic, deepening defence ties with Russia, and developing long-range missiles and aircraft, aircraft carriers, and nuclear-attack submarines with global reach, extensive space-based capabilities, and a larger nuclear arsenal. NATO Allies feel China's influence more and more in every domain. Its Belt and Road, Polar Silk Road, and Cyber Silk Road have extended rapidly, and it is acquiring infrastructure across Europe with a potential bearing upon communications and interoperability. A number of Allies have attributed cyber attacks to actors based in China, identified intellectual property theft with implications for defence, and been subjected to disinformation campaigns originating in

**“The scale of Chinese power and global reach poses acute challenges to open and democratic societies.”**

China, especially in the period since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. China's stated policies include an ambition to become a world leader in Artificial Intelligence by 2030 and by 2049 to be the world's leading global technological superpower.

At the NATO London Leaders Meeting in November 2019, Allies recognised that China presents both opportunities and challenges that must be addressed together as an Alliance. Looking out to 2030, NATO must provide a position of security and strength to contribute to Allies' relations with China and guard against any attempts by Beijing to employ coercion against them. This requires that China be unable to exploit differences between Allies. The Alliance must enhance its understanding of China's capabilities, activities, and intentions that affect Euro-Atlantic security, with a clear-eyed understanding of risk, threat, and opportunity. NATO must redouble its efforts to help Allies to build resilience and maintain their technological edge or respond to critical weaknesses that could affect the security of the Alliance as a whole. Above all, it must show political cohesion and remain a platform for consultation on China's actions and Allies' reactions; defending Allies' values and an international order based on rules. In parallel, NATO should be open to the possibility of constructive dialogue with China when it serves its interests, and should continue to identify opportunities and prospects to tackle a number of global challenges.

## Recommendations:

1. NATO should enhance its ability to coordinate strategy and safeguard Allies' security vis-à-vis China. There is a critical need to increase Allies' political coordination at NATO on issues where China's approach runs counter to their security interests. The Alliance should continue its ongoing efforts to infuse the China challenge throughout existing structures and committees, including on

cyber, hybrid, EDTs, space, arms control, and non-proliferation. The Alliance should consider establishing a consultative body, in support of existing efforts, to bring together NATO Allies, and other institutions and partners

**“NATO should consider establishing a consultative body to discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China.”**

as relevant, to exchange information, share experiences, and discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China. If Allies are threatened by China, NATO must be able to demonstrate its ability to be an effective actor to provide protection.

2. NATO must devote much more time, political resources and action to the security challenges posed by China – based on an assessment of its national capabilities, economic heft, and the stated ideological goals of its leaders. It needs to develop a political strategy for approaching a world in which China will be of growing importance through to 2030.

**“NATO must devote much more time, political resources and action to the security challenges posed by China.”**

3. NATO must increase capacity to anticipate and react to Chinese activities that undermine Allies' security. This should include steps to:

- Increase information-sharing analysis on China within the Alliance;
- Continue efforts to build resilience and counter cyber attacks and disinformation that originate in China;
- Expand efforts to assess the implications for Allies' security of China's technology capability development;
- Invest in its ability to monitor and defend against any Chinese activities that could impact collective defence, military readiness and/or resilience in SACEUR's Area of Responsibility;
- Continue to identify vulnerabilities of key sectors and supply chains, in coordination with the EU;
- Uphold NATO cohesion when Allies engage China bilaterally and through formats such as the 17+1 format and Belt Road Initiative;
- Adapt to China's integrated MCF doctrine by encouraging Allies to increase technological and military engagement with Allies more vulnerable to Chinese penetration.

4. NATO should keep open the prospect of political dialogue with China on shared interests and differences, for example in arms control. It should maintain contacts with China on issues of mutual interest; and proactively engage China's representatives when doing so is in NATO's interests. It should be open to engagement with China at different levels and to opportunities for cooperation, including considering establishing a de-confliction mechanism at the military level, should China's role in the Euro-Atlantic area warrant. In all of its actions toward China, NATO should continue to show that it has no quarrel with the Chinese people and that any actions it undertakes are defensive in nature and in response to the stated intentions or actions of the current Chinese Government.

# Emerging and Disruptive Technologies

Maintaining a technological edge is the foundation upon which NATO's ability to deter and defend against potential threats ultimately rests. EDTs pose a fundamental challenge but also—if harnessed correctly—an opportunity for the Alliance. Without a strategic surge in this area, allowing adversaries to gain competitive advantage would impede NATO's ability to win on the battlefield, challenge strategic stability and change the fundamentals of deterrence, but also offer state and even non-state actors, including eventually terrorists, the potential to threaten our societies from within. They also could undermine NATO's political cohesion, by raising questions about technology sharing within the Alliance, impairing interoperability, and potentially fuelling dependencies on rival states. At the same time, new technologies offer historic opportunities for strategic advantage, from dealing with new types of conflicts to sharing and analysing data at an unprecedented level and, more broadly, for the enrichment and betterment of society.

**“New technologies offer historic opportunities for strategic advantage and for the enrichment and betterment of society.”**

Against that backdrop, the acquisition of, and access to, EDTs in the arenas of e.g., big data, Artificial Intelligence, autonomous capabilities, space, cloud technologies, hypersonic and new missile technologies, quantum technologies and biotechnologies, and human augmentation/enhancement, is fundamental to the future security of NATO and its Allies – and should be reflected in the capabilities NATO asks its Allies to deliver. This must begin with a common understanding and approach of the major challenges the Alliance is facing in this domain. NATO and its Allies have acknowledged the profound impact of new technologies by launching the Emerging and Disruptive Technologies Roadmap during the London Leaders Meeting in December 2019. However, NATO has to increase the pace and scale of its political focus on this area if it really wants to counter the threats and to reap the fruits resulting from new technologies.

## Recommendations:

1. NATO Allies should agree to, and begin to enact, NATO's EDT Implementation Strategy as soon as possible. The development and introduction of cutting-edge capabilities is the primary responsibility of national governments. However, NATO has an important role to play in prompting the development of a common strategy, grounded in an Alliance-wide EDT threat assessment and an analysis of opportunities, whereby members can conceptualise how their national efforts fit together for purposes of common security and where the Alliance can benefit from new technologies.
2. Competing with the efforts underway by large authoritarian states to achieve dominance in key EDTs must be a strategic priority for the Alliance and its members. It should enhance its role as the key coordinating institution on security-related EDTs for its members. While key aspects of technological innovation lie at the national or EU levels, NATO has an appropriate and as-yet under-developed role to play in providing a forum for discussion on all aspects of EDTs that have a direct bearing on the security of the Euro-Atlantic area.
3. NATO should serve as a crucial coordinating institution for information-sharing and collaboration between Allies on the security dimensions of EDTs. At present, no transatlantic coordination tool exists for this purpose. These consultations could, when NATO security requires, be extended to included non-allies that are cleared for intelligence-sharing.

**“NATO should serve as a crucial coordinating institution for information-sharing and collaboration between Allies on the security dimensions of EDTs.”**

4. NATO should hold a digital summit of governments and private sector with the aim of identifying gaps in collective defence cooperation in security-related AI strategies, norms and R&D, and safeguarding against the malign and aggressive use of AI, including militarily, and via the spread of digital authoritarianism.
5. NATO should anchor EDTs in the defence planning process (NDPP) to ensure that all Allies modernise their forces appropriately, and that technological adaptation is included in evaluating fair burden-sharing. Against that backdrop, the NDPP should be analysed and potentially adapted to reflect NATO's capabilities to respond to threats from EDTs. NATO should review whether, in light of the fast-moving nature of technological change, the four-year time span allotted for incorporation of EDTs should be shortened.
6. NATO should encourage the incorporation of AI into strategic and operational planning. It should exploit the power of AI-driven technologies to enhance scenario planning exercises and long-term preparedness.
7. NATO should move with alacrity to improve the technological, and specifically AI, proficiency of its leadership and technical workforce:
  - NATO leadership should push necessary technological changes across the organisation; it must make it a priority to identify and minimise any technical, bureaucratic, and human obstacles across NATO departments that impede technological change within the institution;
  - NATO should develop a knowledge acceleration programme for leadership and professional staff across HQ. Central to this effort will be the development of the abilities to train and recruit AI talent and strengthen the AI workforce;
  - NATO should study and partner with private sector firms that lead in implementation of new technologies with a view to integrating organisational stovepipes (to enable horizontal steering), with participation open to all Allies.
8. NATO should expand cooperation with the private sector, beyond 'classical' partners in the defence industry and include a mentoring and training partnership with select tech firms aimed at importing deeper technological know-how into the organisation. Building new partnerships at NATO with the private sector, academia, and NGOs will enable the Alliance to increase awareness, share data, and creatively tap into experiences and knowledge.

**“NATO should hold a digital summit of governments and private sector.”**

9. NATO should develop a long-term game plan to counter China's MCF strategy in Europe, whereby China acquires intellectual property and technological advances by leading scholars and research centres to propel its military aims. This should include efforts to:

**“NATO should develop a long-term game plan to counter China's military-civil fusion (MCF) strategy in Europe.”**

- Inform all Allies on the nature of MCF and highlight specific threats that it poses to Alliance security;
- Continue to encourage Allies to develop equipment and infrastructure that is secure from outside infiltration and interoperable across SACEUR's area of responsibility;
- Continue to encourage Allies to commit to invest in military-technological relationships with other Allies. Doing so is crucial to limit the eventuality that Allies are denied procurement of key technologies and therefore go to outside sources.

10. NATO should consider developing a North Atlantic equivalent of the U.S. Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) or European Defence Fund (EDF) charged with encouraging support for innovation in strategic areas among Allies. Such an entity could be supported by an Advisory Group for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) to the NATO Industrial Advisory Group (NIAG) to advise the Alliance on how to keep pace with technological change. A key objective for these efforts should be to encourage the development of an AI-focused agenda for R&D within the Alliance.

## Terrorism

Terrorism is responsible for the death of more Allied citizens than any other security threat in NATO's history. It also poses one of the most immediate, asymmetric threats to Allied nations and citizens. The only time that Article 5 was triggered was in response to a terrorist attack, but in general terrorists have been able to operate beneath this threshold because of the nature of their tactics. The 2010 Strategic Concept cites terrorism as part of the security environment but emphasises mainly the need for enhanced analysis, consultations, and training of local forces. Since then, NATO has made important strides, including with the adoption and subsequent updating of the 2017 Counter Terrorism (CT) Action Plan.

The evolving strategies and modus operandi of terrorist networks and groups and the emergence and spread of EDTs call for adaptive and innovative counterterrorism strategies, means, and methods. While the primary responsibility for countering terrorism remains with national authorities, as acknowledged by Allies, NATO adds value and has an important role to play in the fight against terrorism, not least to maintain NATO's perceived relevance amongst concerned home audiences. Displaying a united Allied stance against terrorism will remain a crucially important response to this threat. Together with relevant partners NATO should develop its role to match the evolving threat. NATO must focus primarily on the threat of terrorism in the Euro-Atlantic area, including terrorist threats emanating from NATO's southern flank. It should not continue to approach terrorism as a standalone phenomenon but instead focus on specific identifiable threats to Allies. At the same time, the Alliance should be mindful of wider global trends and connections of terrorist groups because of their tendency to share ideas, tactics, and technology.

### Recommendations:

1. NATO should more explicitly integrate the fight against terrorism into NATO's core tasks –namely collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security—as a cross-cutting line of effort. The fight against terrorism should be given a place within NATO structures, supported by necessary resources, commensurate with the threat that it poses, while acknowledging the need for better CT coordination among Allies.
2. The Alliance should enhance the fight against terrorism as part of the hybrid and cyber conversation, and ensure that the threat from terrorism figures in exercises and lessons learned. It should continue to incorporate the CT dimension in military planning documents, where relevant and in accordance with threat assessments, with the aim of tackling instances of severe and organised terrorist threats originating outside of Alliance territory.
3. NATO should strive to improve current practices of intelligence-sharing among Allies to achieve better, common situational awareness in key areas including emerging safe havens and terrorists' use of EDTs, as well as hybrid tactics. The NAC should engage more actively with future threat scenarios in order to foster common perceptions of how the terrorist threat develops, how it may threaten Allied nations, and how NATO should respond.

**“NATO should more explicitly integrate the fight against terrorism into its core tasks.”**

4. NATO should build on the recent practice of the policy on Battlefield Evidence to include a broader set of stakeholders from Allies when convening to discuss the threat from terrorism, including representatives from other agencies such as interior, justice, transportation, civil defence and, where relevant, partner-countries and civil society organisations, not least from NATO's southern neighbourhood. In this vein, joint meetings of Defence and Interior Ministers or other relevant ministries could be sought.
5. NATO should focus more on EDTs for the use of Allies in their fight against terrorism, taking into consideration the commercially available advanced technologies that terrorists are using and the evolving tactics of terrorist groups; and to maintain CT-related capability development within the NDPP.
6. Allied nations should improve resilience by strengthening their national capacities for civil preparedness and homeland security. Allied nations retain the primary responsibility for their domestic security, and for their own resilience, nevertheless, more determined, coordinated and integrated joint work to establish and pool capabilities to cope with contingencies with a low probability, but very high impact would be beneficial. NATO could offer a surge capacity to individual countries whose capabilities may be overwhelmed by e.g. a terrorist attack involving non-conventional means including chemical, biological, or radiological substances.

## The South

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.

### **“When NATO's southern neighbors are more secure, NATO is more secure.”**

A new and concerning trend in the South is the confluence of conventional challenges by state actors, especially by Russia and to a lesser extent by China, with growing asymmetric threats. The return of geopolitics in the South is going to impact the security of the Alliance: challenges from NATO's Southern neighbourhood affect all Allies. The Alliance has agreed that its approach in the South includes: building the capacity of and engaging southern partners and neighbours; increasing Alliance awareness and risk monitoring; increasing Alliance resilience and responsiveness to security threats and challenges arising from the South; working with the EU, African Union and other regional and international organisations, where relevant.

Differences have arisen among some Allies about certain security challenges in the South. If not carefully managed, they may impair the Alliance's ability to respond to security challenges in the region and risk the cohesion of the Alliance. Conversely, a stable South holds the prospect of realising the immense latent potential of societies and economies in this region, with attendant benefits for the countries of the Euro-Atlantic area.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1.** NATO must articulate a consistent, clear, coherent approach to the South, addressing both the traditional threats emanating from this region like terrorism and new risks, including the growing presence of Russia, and to a lesser extent China. The relationship between multiple frameworks and activities (Projecting Stability, Framework for the South, Defence Capacity Building, Partnerships) needs to be defined more effectively – with ownership of different portfolios clearly allocated as they are in areas such as the Eastern and Northern flanks.
- 2.** NATO must therefore maintain political focus on building up military preparedness and response for the Southern/Mediterranean flank, in particular by revising and delivering its Advance Plans and strengthening the Hub for the South at JFC Naples. In this context, the Mediterranean region has to remain free to Allied navigation as a prerequisite to sustaining a military effort across Alliance territory.

- 3.** NATO should strengthen ties and cooperation, especially with the EU, in the framework of a coordinated approach. Maritime security is one of the dimensions of this enhanced cooperation, while NATO must remain the key actor in guaranteeing freedom of navigation. It should engage more with partners in the South, regional organisations, including African Union (AU), League of Arab States (LOAS), Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and via continued out-reach out to international organisations, including the United Nations, to establish a cooperative security network across the region.
- 4.** NATO should increase the frequency of political consultations, including at the NAC level, on the South. Allies with specialist understandings and/or greater engagement should be asked to brief the NAC more frequently. NATO's aims, engagement and actions in the South must do more to incorporate the impact of Russian and Chinese presence, interests, and activities. In this context, NATO's Russia policy should be updated to include a Mediterranean component.

## Arms Control and Nuclear Deterrence

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation play an important role in promoting peace in the Euro-Atlantic region and preserving a stable international order. NATO has for many years actively contributed to effective and verifiable nuclear arms control and disarmament efforts, not only as an Alliance but through the efforts of its members. Beyond Cold War-era frameworks, Allies have long recognised the threat posed by WMD, as well as their means of delivery, by state and non-state actors.

In recent years, the traditional framework for arms control in the Euro-Atlantic area has significantly eroded, with potential NATO adversaries greatly increasing their armaments and engaging in risky behaviour, including provocative air and sea manoeuvres. Core pillars of the arms control architecture have been subjected to manipulation and repeated violations by Russia, including its building and fielding of missiles in violation of the INF Treaty, its so-called 'suspension' of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), its circumvention of the Vienna Document, its abuses of the Open Skies Treaty, its abrogation of the security assurances of the Budapest Memorandum, its degradation of the security assurances of The Budapest Memorandum, and its violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), including the use of nerve agents on Allied territory. Alongside this, Russia is pioneering unregulated new technologies, has greatly expanded its arsenal of precision-guided, dual-capable missiles, and has deployed advanced weaponry into new territories (High North, Crimea, Kaliningrad). Looking out to 2030, Russia appears likely to conclude its ongoing, full-scale modernisation cycle of its nuclear forces. These forces, coupled with Russia's rejuvenated conventional forces, pose a serious threat to NATO Allies. More broadly, the international strategic context underscores the need for more effective arms control. NATO Allies must further take into account the impact of China's modernisation and expansion of its nuclear and conventional forces. China has growing long-range strike capabilities that are increasingly pertinent to the Euro-Atlantic area while also expanding its work on new technologies. While China's behaviour is a serious concern, it does not undermine the rationale for existing or new agreements with Russia. Finally, we have witnessed the increased use of chemical weapons in the last decade.

All of this contributes to serious risks for international security, with implications for the transatlantic area. In such an environment, arms control plays an important role. But we also underline 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 weapons have been a critical pillar of NATO's collective defence since its inception. Moreover, 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. Additionally, NATO needs to give more political attention to new forms of arms control, with a more proactive approach to the regulation of new technologies, when appropriate.

## Recommendations:

1. We here reaffirm the fundamental logic NATO has pursued at least since 1957 and as enshrined in the Harmel Report of 1967: a dual track of effective deterrence and defence alongside efforts to reduce risks. Given the deterioration of the Cold War-era arms control framework, it is critical to sustain nuclear deterrence and conventional defence capabilities in the 21st century as the bedrock of NATO security. NATO should reaffirm its support for a process of arms control alongside the critical value of maintaining an effective nuclear deterrence.

**“It is critical to sustain nuclear deterrence and conventional defence capabilities.”**

### *Arms Control recommendations*

2. NATO should play an enhanced role as a forum to debate challenges to existing mechanisms and consult on any future arms control arrangements. Since nuclear deterrence and arms control efforts serve the security of the whole Euro-Atlantic area, more regular use should be made of NATO to discuss Allied views on these topics, with the aim of arriving at a common understanding and joint positioning, with a view to feeding into Allies’ and like-minded countries’ positions in UN and OSCE fora as well as in other relevant international formats (e.g. Hague Code of Conduct).
- “NATO should play an enhanced role as a forum to debate arms control arrangements.”**
3. NATO Allies should maintain political pressure on Russia to return to compliance with existing arms control agreements. Allies must be consistent in their messaging that nuclear weapons cannot be used as a tool to divide Allies and impose pressure on our partners. Consultations among Allies should be encouraged, especially in cases in which Allies perceive any such attempts.
  4. NATO should encourage Allies, building on past experience, to strengthen effective verification regimes, and enable monitoring capabilities and enforcement mechanisms. In all renewed or new treaties Allies should take into account technical progress, including new types of delivery systems. Allies should assess how science and emerging technologies can contribute to the arms control regimes of the 21st century.
  5. NATO should conduct a historical review of the Alliance’s successful approach to nuclear détente and deterrence policies during the Cold War era to identify what worked best when tensions were high, with an eye to applying relevant elements from these experiences to the current environment.
  6. NATO Allies and partners should reaffirm their full commitment to the provisions of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and emphasise the need for full implementation of the treaty in all its aspects, including by Iran and North Korea. Allies also should recall their position on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (Ban Treaty), namely that it will never contribute to practical disarmament, nor will it affect international law. NATO should welcome arms control treaties that regulate the strategic arms balance, such as the New START Treaty, and in the European theatre, such as an adapted INF. Such treaties must reflect contemporary strategic realities.

7. Allies should be diligent and unified in condemning recent uses of chemical weapons by Syria, Russia, North Korea, and terrorist organisations and seek accountability for these incidents as barbarous acts that undermine the international norm against chemical weapons. Allies should devote greater attention to the development of joint policies to deter and respond to the use of chemical weapons, to ensure the protection of NATO Allies and forces from these weapons, and to strengthen the international system (OPCW) to ensure speedy and accurate attribution and effective response mechanisms.
8. China must be considered in prospective future arms control negotiations, especially in the contexts of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. The Alliance should encourage China to engage in meaningful and verifiable arms control to reduce the chance of an arms race in Asia and beyond. Doing more to monitor and set standards for EDTs is a significant part of this goal.
9. NATO should develop an agenda for international arms control in key areas of EDT with military application, to include those technologies useful for Allies' defence capabilities, while seeking to limit access by our adversaries to technologies that could threaten strategic stability in the decade ahead. It should loosely model this effort on the role that NATO played as a catalyst for developing arms control platforms such as the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction in the 1970s that ultimately led to the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

### *Nuclear Deterrence recommendations*

10. In light of the deterioration of the Cold War-era arms control framework, it is critical to sustain nuclear deterrence and conventional defence capabilities in the 21st century as the bedrock of our security. NATO should further adapt its defence and deterrence posture in the post-INF setting to take into account the threat posed by Russia's existing and new military capabilities.
11. NATO should continue and revitalise the nuclear-sharing arrangements that constitute a critical element of NATO's deterrence policy, coupled with effective conventional defence and the independent arsenals of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. Nuclear sharing, which is in compliance with the NPT, ensures political cohesion of all states, offering security guarantees and preventing an increase in the number of independent nuclear arsenals. The political value of this commitment is as important as the military value it brings.
12. NATO should better communicate on the key role of its nuclear deterrence policy in ensuring the security of Allies and their populations, sharing its values and principles, so as to effectively counter hostile efforts to undermine this vital policy. It should systematically reach out to, and seek to inform, the expert community and civil society, including on the content of Russia's nuclear doctrine and its capabilities.

## Energy Security

Allies recognise energy security as part of their common security. A disruption of energy supply could affect the security of Allies and partners and have an impact on NATO's military operations. Energy security is also a key element of the Alliance's enhanced resilience and of the ongoing efforts for countering hybrid warfare. While energy security is primarily a national responsibility, it is a critical area of interest for NATO, where the Alliance should constantly monitor and bring added value within its means and capabilities. The competition for scarce energy resources will only increase in the next decade. In light of the potential implications of this reality for Allies, energy security should be a constant item to be monitored, assessed, and consulted among Allies, as necessary.

NATO's energy agenda has been influenced by the evolution of the global energy landscape. Past examples show that energy can be used as part of the foreign policy of potential adversaries and is part of their toolbox of hybrid activities. The energy sector is among the primary targets of cyber threats. A stable and reliable energy supply, by diversification of routes, suppliers and energy resources, and the interconnectivity of energy networks are of critical importance and increase resilience. Assuring energy supplies to military operations is important for NATO and the Allies.

Against this backdrop, NATO should continue to contribute to improving situational awareness and understanding the risks; assist Allies, when requested, in protecting critical infrastructure and help enhance Alliance resilience, including in cyber space, and ensure that Allied forces have access to necessary energy resources at all times.

### Recommendations:

1. Allies should enhance their strategic-level political consultations on energy security issues in all its aspects with the participation of major stakeholders, where appropriate, such as the International Energy Agency.
2. Allies should scrutinise their national energy security plans through the prism of the security of fellow Allies and seek to avoid actions in this sphere that could increase those fellow Allies' susceptibility to manipulation, such as through political blackmail or supply interruption.
3. NATO should ensure that energy security becomes a major focus of engagement with partners who are either energy producers or transit countries.
4. Allies should tackle the interrelationship between energy security and hybrid tactics in a more systematic way also by including it in their political consultations and scenario-based discussions. NATO needs to incorporate energy security considerations in regular exercises and in defence plans.
5. Allies should increase their situational awareness by sharing of intelligence and exchanges with outside experts on energy development; support the protection of critical energy infrastructure by sharing best practices among experts; and organise training courses, with the involvement of NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme (SPS), NATO entities like Centre of Excellence on energy security in Lithuania and NATO-ICI Regional Cooperation Centre in Kuwait.

6. NATO should produce annual assessments of energy security as it relates to Allied deterrence and defence, including e.g., the state of energy infrastructure and ability to draw on civilian sources in a time of crisis.
7. NATO should be able to further advance the 'smart energy' agenda that aims to enhance energy efficiency in the military by continuing to incorporate the relevant aspects of the question in the NATO Defence Planning Process.
8. NATO should remain seized of the importance of ensuring uninterrupted supply of the requisite energy resources and availability of infrastructure, with the aim of ascertaining the continuity of Article 5 and non-Article 5 operations.

## Climate and Green Defence

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our times and holds serious implications for the security and economic interests of all thirty members of the Alliance. While other international organisations are better equipped to lead the fight against climate change, NATO has an important role to play in those areas where climate change has a demonstrable impact on Allied security and shapes the security conditions under which NATO and its adversaries operate. A NATO that aspires to enduring relevance to the concerns of its members and citizens should understand, and where practicable, address climate change, without any dilution of its core purpose.

**“Allies should invest in green technologies for the ultimate purpose of improving military effectiveness and maintaining competitive advantages.”**

The 2010 Strategic Concept states that climate change is a driver of NATO's security environment. Its effects can be seen in, inter alia, the intensity of geopolitical competition, freedom of navigation in the High North, and migration streams from the south, all of which involve vital Allied interests. In 2014, NATO adopted the Green Defence framework, which aspires to reduce the environmental footprint of its military operations and improve NATO's resilience by investing in green technologies that reduce fuel consumption, energy dependencies, mission footprints and long, vulnerable supply lines. Modulating emissions and other climate change-aversion steps are national competencies. Nevertheless, NATO should continue to take steps to protect the environment, consider the impact on climate change from its own operations and act where possible to mitigate those effects. To this end, it should encourage Allies, where possible and without undercutting readiness, to invest in green technologies for the ultimate purpose of improving military effectiveness and maintaining competitive advantages vis-a-vis systemic rivals.

### Recommendations:

1. NATO should reaffirm that climate change is shaping and will continue to shape its security environment, and should ensure that this reality is reflected in the development of future strategic documents.
2. NATO should enhance its situational awareness across the High North and the Arctic and, for the High North that falls within SACEUR's Area of Responsibility, should develop a strategy that takes into account broader deterrence and defence plans. This regional strategy should be built in close coordination with, and with sensitivity to the perspectives of, NATO Allies that are Arctic littoral states. It should include plans for ensuring freedom of navigation in the High North and adjacent bodies of water, including the North Atlantic, as well as provisions for addressing aggressive moves by state actors. In support of these efforts, the 2011 Alliance Maritime Strategy should be updated to reflect new threats to transatlantic communications and NATO's desire to keep the Arctic/High North a region of low tensions.

- 3.** NATO should monitor and assess the impact of climate change on security in the coming decade and increase its situational awareness of threats that could emanate from consequent heightened activity and increased freedom of navigation. In support of this goal, NATO should increase situational awareness, early warning and information sharing on climate and security, including by Allies considering the establishment of a NATO Centre of Excellence on Climate and Security or adding climate to the NATO Centre of Excellence on Energy Security.
- 4.** NATO should build on the Secretary Generals' efforts to include climate change and other non-military threats such as pandemics in NATO planning, exercises, and deliberations and discussions on resilience and crisis management. It should consider how the Alliance can help make its operations more resilient, including by making energy and telecommunications grids better able to withstand weather events.
- 5.** NATO should reinvigorate, reassess, and revise its 2014 Green Defence framework in light of evolving challenges and emerging green technologies. Its emphasis should be on the nexus of climate change and security, and on ensuring that efforts to address climate change bolster rather than undercut military readiness or capabilities. To this end, NATO should map emerging green technologies with a potential to ensure the Alliance's competitive edge vis-a-vis rivals and encourage Allies to prioritise investments accordingly.
- 6.** NATO should use the Science for Peace and Security (SPS) programme in a more strategic manner to push forward on developing and implementing better green technology and smart energy, including solar panels and biofuels. It should establish targeted collaboration with selected partners for the same purpose.

# Human Security and Women, Peace, and Security

In recent years NATO has developed a human security agenda aimed at protecting civilians in armed conflict, countering human trafficking, preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. Drawing on lessons from experience in Afghanistan, it has worked to incorporate the human dimension of security (including operational, moral, political, and legal considerations) into NATO operations.

In parallel, since the 2000 adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and subsequent resolutions, NATO has worked to integrate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda into its operations and counter terrorism activities, as well as across the three core tasks, and as an integral aspect of its doctrines and planning. These steps, together with efforts to ensure a diverse workforce, enable NATO to think more creatively and comprehensively about evolving security challenges, enhance the Alliance's value and relevance to its publics, better understand the environments in which it operates and the potential impacts its policies and programmes may have, and ensure strategic and operational effectiveness on the ground. More broadly, 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.

**“Emphasizing the value of human dignity and security differentiates NATO from authoritarian rivals.”**

## Recommendations:

1. NATO should incorporate human security in its development of future strategic documents and clarify how it relates to NATO's core mission and major goals for purposes of prioritisation, operationalisation, and resources.
2. NATO should conduct lessons-learned exercises from recent missions in Afghanistan and Iraq to identify areas for improvement or expanded application in its approaches to the civilian environment. While continuing to prioritise military necessity, it should continue to seek improvements in NATO forces' sensitivity to the need to protect vulnerable populations and sites.
3. The Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security should encourage Allies to consider WPS as a special concern, including by promoting a sharing of best practices among NATO Allies, and the Secretary General should include progress on this front in his/her annual report on the state of the Alliance.
4. 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.
5. NATO should leverage existing partnerships with civil society organisations and partner countries 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. 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.

## Pandemics and Natural Disasters

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated, in dramatic and unexpected fashion, the deleterious effects that pandemics can have not only to the public health of NATO citizenries but to economic health, social resilience, and security, both by reorienting policy attention and scarce resources, and fuelling international rivalry and confrontation. Managing the effects of pandemics is fundamentally a competency of national governments and neither is nor should become a core NATO task. Nevertheless, this and future pandemics have demonstrable consequences for NATO's security. It has so far accelerated underlying geopolitical-competitive trends and uncertainties in the world, such as supply chain resilience, with lasting consequences for international security and stability.

Throughout the first wave of the pandemic, NATO's operational readiness and preparedness to deal with a wide range of security threats was never compromised. Political consultation and decision-making on all essential matters also continued, including by fast implementation of new video-link modalities for ministerial meetings. Nevertheless, the pandemic confirmed the need to continue reviewing and enhancing NATO's resilience architecture. In the wake of the pandemic, it will be important to assess what it has revealed about NATO's ability to handle numerous, simultaneous events of a disruptive and non-traditional nature and to meet the basic requirements of resilience: minimising damage, restoring

**“The pandemic confirmed the need to enhance NATO's resilience architecture.”**

**“NATO must be able to handle numerous, simultaneous events of a disruptive and non-traditional nature.”**

stability quickly, and catalysing improved strategies for similar challenges in the future. In this and other ways, COVID-19 has been a learning experience that NATO and its members should study closely with an eye to similar events in the future.

### Recommendations:

1. NATO should continue to conduct lessons-learned exercises from the COVID-19 crisis with an emphasis on managing unexpected events in the context of strategic simultaneity. Such an exercise should focus on assessing NATO's ability to maintain deterrence and defence requirements amidst numerous disruptive events and identifying appropriate changes in the realms of logistics support, communications, business continuity, supply chain, energy, transport, decision-making, and planning.
2. Consistent with defence priorities, NATO should develop a regular schedule of training exercises that would prepare Allies to anticipate and simulate strategic shocks from natural and man-made disasters, both individually and simultaneously with one another. The aim should be to ensure that designated responsibilities and required information exist well in advance of these crises, including a previously discussed and agreed role for NATO.

## Hybrid and Cyber Threats

So-called 'hybrid' methods, such as propaganda, deception, sabotage, and other non-military tactics have been used throughout the history of warfare to undermine adversaries from within. The digital era, with its rapid technological change and global interconnectivity, has boosted the appeal and power of these methods, amplifying their speed, scale, and intensity. Hybrid and cyber attacks are not, themselves, threats; they are tools employed by hostile actors, state, and non-state actors alike, that are the threat. Nevertheless, it is difficult to detect who is behind them, as states sometimes use proxies. Behind these attacks lies a strategic goal, which is to undermine international order, weaken NATO and undermine democratic systems of government from within. These methods are frequently targeted at the 'weakest link' or Allied nations with a specific vulnerability.

In recent years, NATO has done more to counter these threats. In 2016, Allies recognised cyberspace as a domain of operations alongside air, land, and sea and instituted a Cyber Defence Pledge to enhance national-level cyber defences. In 2018 it created Counter Hybrid Support Teams (CHSTs) to provide tailored assistance to Allies. In November 2019, it approved the Report on Enhancing NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats outlining priorities and an agenda for countering hybrid threats. At the same time, NATO must be vigilant about its cyber hygiene. Nevertheless, NATO needs a common political framework for how NATO should assess, attribute, and respond to hybrid and cyber incidents in a crisis. That brings more clarity on NATO's level of ambition in these areas and on the appropriate roles for NATO, the EU, and national governments. Lengthy political discussions on attribution and how/whether NATO should act hamper the Alliance from responding to challenges in a timely fashion, which increases the risk of miscalculation and unintended escalation by potential adversaries.

### Recommendations:

1. NATO should implement the letter and spirit of the Report on Enhancing NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats. It should specify a NATO level of ambition and integrate discussions of hybrid threats in fora and committees beyond the Operations Policy Committee (OPC) to include the Public Diplomacy Division. Doing so would help to combat the current fragmentation and compartmentalisation on these issues within NATO structures.
2. Building on the work of the Brussels summit, NATO should strengthen its capacity to support Allies in defending against cyber and hybrid attacks. These attacks may trigger Article 5. Invoking consultation under Article 4 could be used more regularly in the context of hybrid attacks, even when it is not fully clear who is behind an attack (non-attribution). In such situations, Article 4 should be more aggressively used by Allies as a basis for political dialogue and signalling unity.
3. NATO should build greater awareness of the nature of hybrid threats and the orchestrated campaigns behind them. It should build shared terminology and situational awareness through detection, monitoring, and analysis of hybrid threats at both the operational and strategic levels, including via foresight studies and trend anticipation analysis, sharing of best practices, scenario games, and incorporating situations of hybrid conflict in training and exercises.

**“NATO should strengthen its capacity to support Allies against cyber and hybrid attacks.”**

4. NATO should support Allies in developing a comprehensive response framework for countering hybrid threats. This could be developed as a follow-on to the Report on Enhancing NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats. It should be approached at both the political-strategic and tactical-operational levels, with particular attention paid to continuously renewing operational concepts. The goal should be to bring NATO's civilian and military options together in one coherent framework. NATO should continue to support Allies in their efforts to increase resilience in their national societies and robust civil protection. All this should include:
  - Response options to disinformation aimed at NATO or individual Allies (e.g., 'divide and rule' tactics). In a hybrid environment, strategic communications (StratCom) are not crisis-related, but part of an ongoing and overarching narrative that is aligned internally with Allies and externally with partners. This narrative is critical to the credibility of NATO's deterrence;
  - Response options to military intimidation/harassment (both physical and cyber). The possibility of escalation should be kept as low as possible, and the response closely aligned with responses in other domains, including those that are not in the NATO toolbox;
  - Political response options. NATO should seek to structure its role on the international political stage for responding to hybrid threats, in addition to being a military player. It should develop a diplomatic de-escalation menu (via e.g., high-level visits, statements, public press conferences, and activation of Article 4 consultation) and develop a political deterrence toolbox suitable for hybrid threats;
  - Response options for partner countries, including further development of various forms of support, such as making Counter Hybrid Support Teams available to partners.
5. NATO and Allies must develop more capabilities for operating in the cognitive and virtual dimensions, including at the tactical level. These capabilities are needed to detect disinformation and provide support in preventing or limiting its impact, including by better understanding people, networks, online information, and related narratives. Simultaneously, NATO and Allies need to establish the legal and ethical framework to be able to effectively and legitimately operate in these dimensions.
6. NATO should periodically exercise response options to hybrid threats which are based on realistic scenarios, in the closest possible cooperation with actors representing all diplomatic, information, military, economic, financial, intelligence and law enforcement (DIMEFIL) instruments. These training and exercises should be developed both on the tactical-operational level as well as the political-strategic level.
7. NATO must improve its ability to fund, recruit, and continue to train staff on the newest cyber defence measures, and must constantly ensure it has the necessary political and legal framework for addressing these issues.

## Outer Space

Space is a dynamic and rapidly evolving domain, the security of which is essential for assuring NATO's ability not only to win on the battlefield but to protect communications, navigation, and commerce at

**“Outer space is a new theater for geopolitical competition.”** all times. Recent years have seen a growing number of actors enter space, with attendant increases in risks of accident or hostile action. The development of sophisticated new military technologies by Russia and China threaten Allied security in this domain and have made outer space a new theatre for geopolitical competition.

In response to these challenges, at the 2018 Brussels Summit Allied leaders agreed to develop a NATO Space policy which was endorsed by Defence Ministers in June 2019. In London, Allied leaders declared space as an operational domain alongside air, land, sea, and cyberspace. Looking ahead, NATO must show stamina in further developing and promoting this new policy, maintaining security in space as a priority for the Alliance.

### Recommendations:

1. NATO should become the essential transatlantic forum for consultation on space security. To this end, the Secretary General should promote information-sharing, space-based crisis scenarios, integrated assessments of air-land-sea-space threats, and regular updates on space interoperability in the NAC. Efforts should be made now to begin incorporating more space expertise across NATO and improve Allies' overall 'space IQ'.
2. NATO should include outer space in resilience planning, to ensure that deterrence and defence efforts remain solvent in the event that attacks or denial in space impair critical infrastructure (e.g., communications and energy grids).
3. NATO should ensure the free access, exploration, and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. NATO will continue to promote that all activities in outer space are conducted in accordance with international law. NATO should review how the geographic delimitations of the NATO treaty would be interpreted for outer space security contingencies.
4. NATO should seek to promote dialogue between the Alliance and the private sector on space-based challenges and opportunities for shared R&D among Allies.
5. NATO should consider making its Space Policy adequately available to the public, as it has done with the Alliance Maritime Strategy and Joint Air Power Strategy.

# Strategic Communications, Public Diplomacy, and Tackling Disinformation

Strategic communications are a critical tool of deterrence and defence. Effective deterrence rests on clear projection of the ability and resolve to act if necessary. For some adversaries and challengers, information is now a domain of contest. The information environment is contorted by misinformation, disinformation, and deception from these actors. These techniques aim to disseminate manipulated information with the intent of undermining trust in democratic institutions. Disinformation, propaganda, and misinformation are especially dangerous in times of rapid technological advancements and when generational changes continue to alter perceptions of NATO among Allied publics.

**“Disinformation and propaganda are especially dangerous in times of rapid technological advancements.”**

The rapid pace of digitisation across all walks of life poses a particular challenge to NATO Strategic Communications. NATO and Allied audiences are increasingly drawing their information from, and are influenced by, information delivered via digital means. Strategic competitors continue to demonstrate their growing capability and will to deploy the latest digital technologies against NATO and Allies, particularly in the information environment. Building resilience across Allied populations is the primary responsibility of Allies themselves. However, across the board, Allies have not invested sufficiently in the human, technical, and financial resources required to engage in a consistent and sustained manner on issues related to security and defence. Neither have they prioritised proactive and consistent communications in support of Alliance aims and objectives. Recognising the threat posed by state and non-state actors who deploy aggressive tactics below the threshold of conventional force to challenge and undermine Alliance values and cohesion, NATO must ensure that it is aware and able to prevent and respond with objective and factual information.

## Recommendations:

1. NATO should reinforce and accelerate the transformation of its strategic communications to enable the Alliance to compete more effectively in a highly competitive information environment. This includes investment in personnel, budget, and technology, embedding an objective-driven approach to strategic communications, driven by audience research and underpinned by meaningful assessment and evaluation. A key element will be for NATO to uphold a strong and clear brand to bring coherence and unity of purpose to its many sub-brands. This will serve the goal of increasing public recognition, familiarity of, and support for, the Alliance.
2. NATO should prioritise the digital elements of its ongoing communications transformation effort to exploit data-driven insight and understanding of this complex environment, and to enable even more agile and focused engagement with its priority audiences using the full range of digital channels.

3. Allies should take additional proactive steps to inform their citizens about and build support for Alliance policies, operations, and activities, and in order to advance NATO's aims.
4. While NATO accelerates digitalisation of its public communications functions, Allies should amplify face-to-face engagements with broader audiences while partnering with stakeholders in NATO's rich network of force multipliers like the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and Atlantic Treaty Association.
5. NATO should further enhance cooperation with partner nations, international organisations, private sector, think-tank communities, and academia in addressing the challenge of disinformation. From international organisations and national and local governments, to private companies, civil society and a free and independent media, all actors – including NATO – have a part to play.
6. NATO should make more disciplined and strategic use of ministerial and summit declarations as public communications tools. Since the discontinuation of ministerial declarations in 2011, summit declarations have ballooned in size and lost in practical communication value. NATO should see such statements as opportunities to explain to Allied publics what the Alliance is doing and affirm its key principles and commitments, as well as performing an internal function to task future work for NATO. While using longer summit communiqués when needed to inform the expert community about the progress achieved in NATO work strands, the Alliance should resume the practice of ministerial statements on specific topics and cap the length of these statements to encourage their use for messaging to the public. It should make heightened use of crisp, to-the-point Summit Declarations and NAC communiqués, issued on occasions like the Salisbury incident, to achieve strategic communications goals.

## 4.3 Strengthening NATO's Political Cohesion and Unity

NATO is an outcome of political cohesion as well as a source of it. Political unity and the ability to take the requisite action exists in any alliance in proportion to the willingness and ability of its members to defend against common threats, on the basis of shared interests and values. The bedrock of this unity, and its ultimate expression, is the solemn obligation of members to consider an attack on one an attack on all, to be met resolutely by collective action. Undergirding this obligation is the willingness to share the burden – in terms of the risk as well as resource – that comes with the privilege of collective defence. This is the basis of the long-standing compact that has demonstrated the worth of NATO to its individual Allies over seven decades, supporting the first responsibility of any State – to protect its territory and people. In the words of the 1956 report by the 'Committee of Three', 'If there is to be vitality and growth in the concept of the Atlantic Community, then NATO through its member governments must demonstrate that this international organisation has something special to offer to its members which is not available to them in the United Nations or other international associations.'

**“The bedrock of unity is the solemn obligation of members to consider an attack on one an attack on all.”**

The other dimension of NATO is the community of fundamental democratic values in which it operates. Any commitment to strengthening NATO's political cohesion therefore has to be orientated toward those shared values and ideals, grounded in democracy, rule of law and individual liberty. To strengthen NATO cohesion, then, is to tend to, nurture, respect and preserve both the interests and values that underpin its existence and enable that defence. This is not a one-time act; it requires a continual and active political commitment rather than periodic attention; that is, a conscious and ongoing prioritisation of common approaches to shared problems and, even where there are differences in the prioritisation of threats or how to deal with them, to avoid actions that undermine fellow Allies' ability to deal with the challenges they see as most pressing. To weaken cohesion is to ignore or downgrade the reasons for which NATO was created—to neglect common values and interests, disregard the perspectives of other members when acting or, worst of all, to threaten fellow members.

In order to stand up to the challenges of the coming decade, maintaining cohesion must be an unambiguous political priority for all Allies, shaping their behaviour even when it sets limits on them.

# Recommendations:

1. Allies on both sides of the Atlantic must reaffirm their commitment to NATO as the principal institution for the defence of the Euro-Atlantic area. To this end, Allies should pledge themselves to a code of good conduct to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of the North Atlantic Treaty. Given

**“Allies should pledge themselves to a code of conduct to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of the North Atlantic Treaty.”**

that Allies owe each other assistance in case of attack (Article 5 of the Treaty), they should recommit at the highest level to:

- Uphold our common values, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty, and the rule of law;
- Maintain and develop Allies’ individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack;
- Consultation on all major issues of Euro-Atlantic security, including in advance of military operations affecting Allied interests (where operationally possible), or when the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of an Ally is threatened or undermined;
- Uphold an open and stable international order based on the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of conflicts;
- Make good-faith efforts to settle any dispute in which an Ally may be involved with another Ally by peaceful means and foremost bilaterally, through dialogue, as set forth in the UN Charter and in accordance with international law;
- Refrain from politically motivated blockage involving matters external to NATO;
- Report on significant bilateral interactions with third countries which relate to the vital security interests of Allies where appropriate.

**“Allies should refrain from politically motivated blockages involving matters external to NATO.”**

Taking this pledge would signify renewed commitment to solidarity at the onset of a new and more challenging era. This means taking care that issues external to Alliance business do not adversely affect Allied unity. It is not a substitute for the hard work of cohesion; only by demonstrating their will to consult by addressing common problems and ensuring that national interests are not pursued in a way that could directly undercut cohesion in coming years.

2. NATO should reassert its core identity as an Alliance rooted in the principles of democracy. As stated in the preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty, NATO exists to ‘safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of our peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.’ NATO’s political cohesion is strongest when its members adhere to these principles. NATO should continue reaffirming these principles and draw a clear political and moral distinction between democracy and the autocratic forms of government that characterise NATO’s systemic rivals.

**“NATO should reassert its core identity as an Alliance rooted in the principles of democracy.”**

3. NATO Allies should maintain and meet burden-sharing requirements that have been agreed as the foremost test of their commitment to collective security. Maintaining adequate military capabilities

**“Maintaining adequate military capabilities is not only necessary for deterrence and defence but also a central plank of political cohesion.”**

is not only necessary for deterrence and defence but also a central plank of political cohesion, going to the heart of the logic of pooling resources and the benefits (including the security on which prosperity depends) that come from being within the Alliance umbrella. Allies have made progress in meeting the NATO’s Defence Investment Pledge at the 2014 Wales Summit, under which they aim to spend two percent of GDP on defence and twenty percent of defence budgets on major equipment by 2024. They must continue to work towards this in the next four years to provide the most solid foundation basis for the Alliance in the second half of the decade. Capabilities and contributions to missions are also vital to burden-sharing – both for their utility and as demonstrations of Allies’ commitments. Elimination or dilution of the Wales commitment would undercut the credibility of future political commitments.

4. Allies should consider establishing a Centre of Excellence for Democratic Resilience dedicated to providing support to individual Allies, upon their request, for strengthening societal resilience to resist interference from hostile external actors in the functioning of their democratic institutions and processes, in complementarity with relevant international organisations.

**“Allies should consider establishing a Center of Excellence for Democratic Resilience.”**

5. Allies should revisit and renew their collective commitment under Article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty to ‘settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means.’ While NATO is not a venue for arbitration, any Alliance in which the members engage in conflict is unlikely to be effective in collective defence. The Group encourages the Secretary General to provide his good offices and to consider more closely involving other Allies as informal mediators.

**“Allies should renew their collective commitment under Article 1 of the North Atlantic Treaty to settle disputes by peaceful means.”**

## 4.4 Strengthening NATO's Political Consultation and Decision-Making

Political consultation remains the most important means by which NATO can resolve disagreements, mitigate differentials in threat assessment, and reinforce political cohesion. In recent years, especially since 2014, political consultation has been intensifying within NATO, driven partly by the need to understand and respond to Russia's behaviour, but also by the challenges of arms control, the situation in the Indo-Pacific region, the implications of China's rise, and, since 2019, the strategic challenges in the Middle East. At the same time, the size of the Alliance and nature of the threat environment have made it more important than ever that NATO be able to make decisions and reach and maintain consensus in a timely manner. Continuing to strengthen both consultation and decision-making will be crucial for ensuring NATO's ability to take collective action in the decade ahead.

### 4.4.1 Political Consultation among Allies

The Group calls for transatlantic consultation to be strengthened in a systematic, credible, and more powerful manner. It notes that significant improvement could be achieved by reinforcing NATO as the forum which addresses the bigger strategic questions Allies face. It notes the urgent need, in an era

**“In an era of increasing systemic rivalry, NATO must be less reactive and more front-footed.”**

of increasing systemic rivalry, for the Alliance to be less reactive and more front-footed in setting and debating the strategic horizon, and further notes the benefits of political consultation among Allies even in those instances when NATO is not yet operationalised for the purpose at hand.

### Recommendations:

1. Allies must strengthen the North Atlantic Council as a genuine forum for consultation on the major strategic and political issues they face. An era of heightened geostrategic competition, combined with non-state and trans-boundary threats demands more frequent and comprehensive utilisation of the NAC for this purpose. At all levels, NATO should aspire to become a progenitor for and essential forum for debate on the primary security challenges that will define the coming decade. Such consultation should address the full spectrum of national-security issues facing members, to include:

- Exchanges of information on any matter affecting the security of the Euro-Atlantic area or the security of individual Allies;
- Appraisals of security developments on which NATO may not be the first responder but in which Allies' equities are involved;
- Any matter in which an expression of Allied solidarity would provide a symbol of solidarity with like-minded democratic states resisting aggression or autocracy in other regions.

**“Solidarity with like-minded democratic states resisting aggression or autocracy in other regions.”**

2. Allies are encouraged to inform the NAC of new developments or shifts in their policies which may significantly affect other members' interests. Allies should strive to hold the development of their national policies on the matter in question to the line of policy developed at NATO to the extent possible, without prejudice to their sovereign and inalienable rights to ensure their own national security.
3. NATO should institute a practice whereby Allied Foreign Ministers make a periodic appraisal of the political health and development of NATO and the lines along which it should advance in the coming years.
4. NATO should hold more frequent NATO Ministerial Meetings and, when appropriate, expand their format. It should resume the practice whereby the number of annual Foreign Ministerials matches the number of Defence Ministerials, with meetings alternating between NATO HQ and Allied capitals. On a case-by-case basis, when circumstances require, the format could include other Ministers.
5. NATO should institute a regular schedule of consultations on issues beyond the traditional agenda, to include meetings of NATO Political Directors or other senior officials for e.g., Middle East, African, and East Asian affairs as well as cyber and other topics as appropriate.
6. NATO should hold more informal meetings. The current format of ministerial meetings entails a high degree of formality in presentation of positions prepared well in advance. While valuable, this format leaves limited space for leaders to build a rapport and trust. NATO should hold a certain number of meetings in an informal format to allow for freer interaction and discussion at both the Ministerial and Permanent Representative levels. This should include more innovative and interactive debate formats and scenario-based discussion and forecasting, employing modern visualisation technology, modelling and simulation tools, as well as exchanges with external experts from the private sector, academia, and civil society. NATO should evaluate the increased use of secure communications technology to enable ministers and Permanent Representatives to begin building consensus in the leadup to ministerial meetings.
7. NATO should institute a practice of intra-Alliance consultations ahead of meetings of other international organisations. The Group notes the value that Allies derive from speaking with one voice on global affairs. It calls for consultations in the areas described in the North Atlantic Treaty before or informally on the margins of meetings of e.g., the United Nations, G-20, and other fora. In parallel, the group calls for the strengthening of NATO's capacity to deploy swifter communiqués and statements of concern on major global issues.

## 4.4.2 Political Consultation with the European Union (EU)

When the democracies that make up NATO and the EU stick together, they represent a tremendous force for a stable and open international order. Together, they possess substantive ability to proactively shape the international environment for the better. In recent years, NATO-EU relations have expanded considerably, as illustrated by the Joint Declarations signed by the leaders of the two organisations in 2016 and 2018. However, the finding of the 2010 Group of Experts remains valid, that ‘Although NATO and the EU have devised detailed mechanisms for cooperation, these have not always worked as well as hoped.’ Follow-through on political agreements is lacking, stalling key initiatives, and relegating cooperation to the staff level. As a result, the substance of cooperation could be further improved. Moreover, efforts at EU ‘strategic autonomy’ should be developed in a spirit of NATO cohesion and with the aim of achieving a common vision by fully respecting and building on the foundations of cooperation between the two organisations.

**“When the democracies that make up NATO and the EU stick together, they represent a tremendous force for good.”**

Looking out to 2030, NATO and the EU should be animated by a shared vision of transatlantic unity in the face of global threats, even as they provide space for continued political pluralism and commercial competition within their own ranks. This reality should be a prompt to clarify the relationship and resolve uncertainties so that they do not become a source of internal discord at a moment when the Western Alliance needs to be confident and outward-facing. Unnecessary duplication of efforts and capabilities is pointless and a waste of resources; both must be complementary and reciprocal. Both organisations have much to gain from strengthened cooperation. Rather than developing new mechanisms to broaden the relationship, concerted effort is needed to build trust and make fuller use of existing arrangements and identified areas of cooperation, with a view to deepening long-term practical cooperation between the two organisations.

### Recommendations:

1. NATO and the EU should seek to reinvigorate trust and understanding at the highest levels. At the next NATO Summit or the next available opportunity, it would be useful for NATO and EU Heads of State and Government to meet in a special formal session, as agreed, to review the current state of the relationship and examine areas for greater cooperation.
2. NATO and the EU should ensure the implementation of existing mechanisms and arrangements, as agreed between the two organisations. They should affirm their adherence to the foundations of cooperation between the two organisations established almost two decades ago which underpin the principles emphasised by the two organisations in the lead-up to the 2016 Warsaw and 2018 Brussels Summits. These include:
  - The recognition that NATO remains the transatlantic framework for strong collective defence and the essential forum for security consultations and decisions among Allies. A stronger, more capable, and better resourced European defence will contribute to a stronger NATO and we welcome the ongoing efforts to develop European defence capabilities.

- The need to further develop effective mutual consultation, cooperation and transparency between NATO and the EU by making effective use of existing mechanisms.
- The fullest involvement of the NATO Allies that are not members of the EU in its initiatives, which is essential for strategic partnership between the two organisations.

**3.** NATO and the EU should seek to renew progress on the seventy-four agreed areas of common focus. They should regularly assess the record on these agreed areas and explore ways to focus on the most critical areas with a view to deepening and broadening cooperation. This could be done for example by creating thematic working groups at the staff level, with clearly defined end-states, mutually agreed timelines, and regular reporting to assist the organisations in measuring progress and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

**4.** NATO and the EU should create an institutionalised staff link between the two organisations through a permanent political liaison element in NATO's IS and the EEAS. These arrangements should be made on the basis of reciprocity and accompanied by moves to promote the better exchange of information—for example, by developing a means to transfer data securely between the respective communications and information systems.

**5.** NATO and the EU should improve their capacity for de-confliction on areas where competency may overlap. In reviewing the current state of the relationship, leaders should seek to clarify the means

**“NATO and the EU should improve their capacity for de-confliction.”**

by which the two organisations avoid unnecessary duplication and political competition on a day-to-day basis. Currently, the fact that the NATO-EU Capability Group cannot be convened is an impediment, and this group should be revived. Until that time, deeper contacts between the staffs should be considered.

**6.** NATO and the EU should explore having occasional coordinated or parallel strategic communications on common issues and concerns. Joint declarations by NATO/EU Secretary General and Presidents of the EU Commission and European Council, or joint statements from the NATO-Council-Political and Security Committee/EU Foreign Affairs Council, accompanied by joint travel by EU and NATO senior officials to destinations of common interest could demonstrate shared priorities.

**7.** NATO should welcome EU efforts towards a stronger and more capable European defence capacity insofar as these strengthen NATO, contribute to a fair transatlantic burden-sharing, and fully involve non-EU Allies, as agreed by both organisations. In an era of rising challenges and scarce resources, the development of coherent, complementary, and interoperable defence capabilities is essential for making the Euro-Atlantic area safer. Ongoing European efforts should be better used to increase the share of European Allies in support of NATO capability targets. NATO and the EU should work to ensure that capabilities developed under EU defence initiatives remain available to NATO. The two organisations should also pursue a coherent approach and synergies in the area of military mobility, including with regard to military mobility-related procedures that should apply to all Allies equally.

**“European efforts should be better used to increase the share of European Allies in support of NATO capability targets.”**

8. NATO and the EU should increase parallel and coordinated efforts toward planning for resilience. The two organisations should seek to improve how they jointly deliver on all of the basic requirements of resilience: minimising damage, restoring stability quickly, and catalysing improved strategies for similar challenges in the future.
9. NATO should develop a strategic dialogue with the EU on AI aimed at enhancing the Alliance's ability to share data and consult with the EU. This is of foundational importance for creating synergies between NATO-led R&D, in particular the NATO Science & Technology Collaborative Programme of Work, and EU-funded R&D conducted by public and private entities from EU member states, as the EU's regulatory policies affect NATO Allies' ability to share data as well as R&D.

### 4.4.3 Political Consultation with Partners

NATO's partnerships are crucial instruments of cooperative security, knowledge and information sharing, collaboration, and capacity building. NATO has a wide range of partners in the north, south, east, and west, many of whom share its founding principles of democracy, freedom, and the rule of law, and are significant contributors to international peace and stability. NATO derives significant value from partners sharing and pursuing these shared values and welcomes operational contributions from those partners to operations and missions. Partnerships add value as stabilising tools for regions beyond NATO's borders while enabling Allies to help partners to build their defence capacity and to ensure interoperability. Political dialogue is crucial to foster regional understanding and to exchange expertise. Dialogue is also essential so that NATO and its partners can develop tailored practical cooperation. This cooperation not only contributes to the success of operations but helps partners address security problems before they reach NATO borders. The functioning of partnerships in recent years has been adversely affected by blockages due to bilateral disputes between partners and Allies, as well as by inadequate funding and over-reliance on voluntary trust funds. NATO Partnerships are strongest when partners take account of and where possible support NATO's and Allies' security interests.

**“NATO's partnerships are crucial instruments of cooperative security.”**

**“The door should remain open to all European democracies that aspire to join NATO.”**

NATO's Open Door Policy is a founding principle of the North Atlantic Treaty. The enduring attractiveness of membership to non-member countries testifies to NATO's success as an alliance. The goal of a Europe whole and free, and sharing common values of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law remain as valid as ever. The door should remain open to all European democracies that aspire to join NATO structures and who are able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership and contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. Partnership cannot be a substitute to membership, which alone carries the benefit of Article 5. Looking to 2030, NATO should leverage its strong partnerships not only in NATO's neighbourhood but further afield in the Indo-Pacific in an era of intensifying geostrategic competition and global threats. But it will need to use these partnerships more strategically and purposefully than it has in the recent past. While preserving the distinction between Allies and partners and the decision-making autonomy of Allies, NATO must leverage and develop partnerships in a more deliberative and proactive manner to actively shape the security environment and promote NATO goals in support of its core tasks and missions. And with those partners on a path to membership, NATO must work to build deeper and more substantive relationships for promoting regional stability.

## Recommendations:

**“NATO should outline a global blueprint for partnerships.”**

1. NATO should outline a global blueprint for how partnerships in various regions will be utilised to advance NATO strategic interests in a more competitive geopolitical era. As part of this effort, NATO should review and reinvigorate existing partnerships by shifting from the current demand-driven approach, in which partner countries determine the scope and depth of their partnership, to an interest-driven approach, in which NATO itself prioritises what it does with partners based on strategic needs and limited resources.
2. NATO should proactively seek out new partnerships and further develop existing ones that substantially and demonstrably help NATO address its strategic priorities. Partnerships with entities other than states and international organisations should be established where it serves NATO's strategic needs.
3. NATO should strive to work more efficiently with regional partnership frameworks. NATO and its partners should more clearly define mutual expectations and goals, and agree to metrics for assessing the health and value of partnerships on a periodic basis.
4. NATO should make more use of thematic rather than only geographic groupings for advancing work on cross-cutting challenges.
5. NATO should lead a regular mapping exercise to determine the priorities and requirements of partners, in mutually beneficial areas including CT, in order to gear relevant efforts, in particular capacity building, and help operationalise these partnership frameworks in light of the priorities of the Alliance. Political consultations with partners, together with NATO's situational awareness and strategic anticipation, could leverage the nature and scope of the support that NATO could provide to partners.
6. NATO Allies should use the knowledge of partners better via increased consultations and information exchange, advanced training courses or joint workshops. This knowledge base, grounded in the unique experience that partners possess in countering many of the very threats and challenges that may confront NATO in the 2020s, is an asset that should be tapped.
7. NATO should consider providing more stable and predictable resource streams for partnership activities. There are insufficient resources to advance NATO's existing partnership agenda, let alone expand it. The partnership programme's heavy reliance on trust funds for financial resources and voluntary national contributions for personnel limits NATO's ability to reallocate resources in a strategic manner or in response to changing circumstances. NATO should show more creativity in funding its partnership activities, on a case-by-case basis, for example by using co-funding schemes and 'user-payment' when it comes to advice, training, and educational activities. This should underpin a more targeted and impact-orientated approach on behalf of both NATO and partners.

## *Partnerships in the North and East*

8. NATO should build upon, and where possible expand, its partnerships with Sweden and Finland as models for the development of its partnerships in other regions.
9. NATO should seek to expand and strengthen partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia as vulnerable democracies that seek membership and are under constant external and internal pressure from Russia.
10. NATO should seek to heighten engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina. It should devote particular attention to countering destabilisation, including especially by hybrid means and disinformation, across the Western Balkans.
11. NATO's Open Door Policy should be upheld and reinvigorated as a key factor for partners to modernise, integrate, and prepare themselves for eventual future membership. NATO should expand its assistance to partners who declared their aspirations to join the Alliance, to help develop the tools and reforms needed to fulfil criteria for membership, working alongside the political, military, civilian, and administrative structures of partners. NATO should remain committed to 2008 Bucharest decisions and elevate the importance of membership negotiations to a higher level.

**“NATO should strengthen partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia as vulnerable democracies that seek membership.”**

## *Partnerships in the South*

12. NATO must think more creatively about how it utilises partnerships in the South. Given the range of challenges and the geographical span, NATO cannot 'do it all' by itself. Therefore, NATO has to put itself at the centre of an informal system of overlapping organisations and bilateral/multilateral relationships to respond to threats and stabilise the region with other stakeholders. Specifically, it should:
  - Increase Defence Capacity and Institution Building (DCIB) efforts (drawing on the experiences with Tunisia and Jordan) with adequate personnel and resources;
  - Strengthen targeted Public Diplomacy efforts to raise and improve NATO's profile in populations of southern partners, including by establishing academic networks, scholarships, and fellowships;
  - Consider creating a Regional Centre for the Mediterranean Dialogue (similar to Regional Centre in Kuwait of the Istanbul Cooperation Centre).
13. NATO should energise current partnerships in the South, namely the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) through strengthened political engagement, sustained capacity building, and resilience enhancing to confront threat multipliers such as climate change, irregular migration, resource scarcity, and weakly-governed space. It should raise its profile and presence in the South through other channels, at N+1, and with the African Union, G5 Sahel, and other multi- and mini-lateral groupings. It should increase public diplomacy and engagement with civil society, youth, and future security leaders.

## *Indo-Pacific and Asian Partnerships*

**14.** NATO should deepen consultation and cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners – Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. This could be done using the existing NATO+4 Format or the NATO-Pacific Partnership Council, or through NATO engagement with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, potentially including other regional states such as India, as appropriate. Such a format would seek to heighten coordination on managing the strategic and political implications of China’s rise, including by strengthening information-sharing, and creating regularised dialogues on technological cooperation and pooling of R&D in select fields.

**“NATO should deepen consultation and cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners.”**

**15.** NATO should begin internal discussions about a possible future partnership with India, as the world’s largest democracy and a country that shares fundamental interests and values with the Alliance, assuming India’s willingness to engage in such a dialogue. It should begin a similar internal discussion about NATO’s future relationship with the countries of Central Asia, some of whom are already NATO partners.

**“NATO should begin internal discussions about a possible future partnership with India.”**

### 4.4.4 Political Decision-Making

The state of decision-making in NATO has an important bearing on political cohesion. The principle of consensus is a cornerstone of the Alliance that guarantees the ability of all members, irrespective of size, to decisively influence outcomes. The Reflection Group endorses this principle as a bedrock of cohesion and the only appropriate basis for reaching decisions in an Alliance whose ultimate purpose is if necessary to send men and women into combat.

At the same time, NATO must be diligent in ensuring that it remains capable of reaching and implementing decisions in a timely fashion. NATO can and does act swiftly as it showed in response to the Salisbury poisoning. Yet recent years have also seen a rise in the incidence of single-country blockages. Even after political consensus is reached in the NAC, it can be susceptible to dilution in follow-on work. In an era of increasing systemic rivalry and trans-boundary threats, an Alliance must remain capable of making swift and binding decisions to preserve its utility to its members and not lose political relevance. Looking to 2030, NATO will need to continue to review and ensure its ability to implement NAC agreed decisions and procedures that have been reached by consensus, and ensure that it can act in a timely fashion, especially during a crisis.

**“NATO must ensure that it remains capable of reaching and implementing decisions in a timely fashion.”**

## Recommendations:

1. NATO should strengthen measures to ensure that consensus-based decisions are implemented. Decisions reached in the NAC are sometimes prone to erosion in follow-on work. To avoid this, Allies should be as specific as possible in formulating their decisions (including resource consequences) and provide accurate and timely information in support of decisions. If and when Allies seek to stall or obstruct implementation of agreed policies, the International Staff Chair of the Committee should insist on adherence to the agreed policy, citing the importance of implementing it in a timely and logical manner. As needed, the Secretary General could bring the issue back to the NAC in order to reaffirm the underlying policy decisions.

2. NATO should consider bolstering the Secretary General’s chief executive role in order to make decisions on routine matters, and bring difficult issues into the open at an early stage where possible. Doing so would enable the Secretary General to focus more attention on strategic matters without imperilling the principle of consensus.

3. NATO should create a more structured mechanism to support the establishment of coalitions inside existing Alliance structures. The aim would be to enable Allies to bring new operations under a NATO chapeau, even when not all Allies may wish to participate in any resulting mission. Under this expedient:

- Sub-groups of Allies would be enabled to pursue specific objectives under a NATO chapeau, by making use of the NATO military structures and decision-making processes;
- The NAC would register its consensus, on the NAC Initiating Directive and the NAC Execution Directive;
- Any costs would be born under the longstanding rule that ‘costs lie where they fall.’ At the same time, we reaffirm the value of common funding for some military-operational expenses.

“Sub-groups of Allies would be enabled to pursue specific objectives under a NATO chapeau.”

4. NATO should consider raising the threshold for single-country blockages to the Ministerial level. The tendency of some Allies to conduct single-country blockages undermines the credibility of the Alliance. Allies should strive to avoid doing so, and should commit, as part of a political pledge, to avoid this practice (see section 4.3).

“NATO should consider raising the threshold for single-country blockages to the Ministerial level.”

5. NATO should time-limit crisis decision-making. Failure to act in a major crisis would endanger the security of Allies and NATO’s credibility. NATO should examine options for ensuring its ability to achieve consensus within twenty-four hours in a crisis-setting. Any such process would have to ensure that speed not be allowed to come at the expense of cohesion. NATO should make the amount of time needed to reach a decision a core metric in exercises.

“NATO should time-limit crisis decision-making.”

## 4.4.5 Political Structure, Staffing, and Resources

Since 2014 NATO has successfully adapted its military structures and posture and continues to do so in the light of new challenges. The Reflection Group recognises the welcome increase in military spending, and the corresponding investment in military capabilities over recent years. It favourably notes the ongoing implementation of the Functional Review results and NATO command structure adaptation.

However, the political arm of NATO that allows the Secretary General, and the organisation, to adapt and position itself in a rapidly evolving security environment needs to further evolve. NATO needs a strong political dimension to match its military adaptation. How NATO is led, staffed, and resourced will have a direct bearing upon its ability to deliver on political objectives. In the end, available resources must match political will and demands. At the same time, simply growing bureaucracy is not the answer; NATO must strive to adapt its organisational culture to the changed global strategic circumstances, to become more flexible and to curb bureaucracy wherever possible.

**“NATO needs a strong political dimension to match its military adaptation.”**

### Recommendations:

1. NATO should consider increasing the delegated authorities of the Secretary General to make meaningful decisions on personnel and certain budgetary matters, as well as encouraging him/her to make the fullest use of his/her existing authorities. This role carries substantial political and managerial responsibilities, yet is constrained in its ability to lead and effect change in NATO's staff. NATO leaders should review the Secretary General's delegated authorities with the aim to provide this position with enhanced flexibility to adapt to new challenges, new work strands and above all, to support a strengthened political dimension of NATO as tasked by NATO's leaders.
2. NATO should institute a practice of outside-in audits of the administrative functioning of the organisation. These should be incorporated into the functional review process, which should be required not less than once every five years.
3. NATO should continue to improve its talent acquisition and retention methods. The most important asset at the disposal of the Alliance is its people. NATO needs to ensure it can attract and retain the best talent at all levels and invest in the training and education of those personnel, to ensure its political objectives can be met. NATO should redouble efforts at ensuring diversity of identity, nationality, thought and geographical representation in its staff to reflect the vast array of talent found in its constituent societies.
4. NATO should increase staff rotations. NATO benefits from a steady influx of new ideas and perspectives into the organisation. NATO should rotate personnel out of the organisation after a set number of years to ensure adaptation and willingness to change. At the same time, the frequency and quantity of staff rotating between Allied governments and NATO HQ should be increased to assist in bridging the gap between Brussels and capitals. NATO should assess within the International Staff where voluntary national contributions are long established and convert these positions into regular NATO employees.

**“NATO should consider increasing the delegated authorities of the Secretary General.”**

5. NATO should strengthen business continuity at NATO HQ. Political control within NATO must be visible at all times and preserved under all conditions, whether in peacetime, crisis, or conflict. Resilient mechanisms are needed across the range of both political and military decision-making structures. Existing models of passive military defence, CBRN, and dispersal concepts provide useful examples for improving the resilience of the political structures. NATO should accelerate digitalisation (including in the classified domain), and prioritise employment of emerging technologies.

6. NATO Allies should increase funding for the Civil Budget. The persistent under-funding of this budget increases over-reliance on trust funds to develop resources for projects. Allies that make up a low proportional share of the civil budget should raise their national contributions. While minimal in relation to the overall defence spending of Allies, the civil budget brings a significant multiplier effect that cannot be replicated by 'contributions in kind' or trust funds. As any increase in funding must be linked to clear and verifiable political objectives, NATO should also investigate the potential for new Common Funded projects.

**“Allies that make up a low proportional share of the civil budget should raise their national contributions.”**

7. NATO should tap into new models of funding to ensure that it and its Allies adopt new technologies to their advantage. An example could be trust fund-based venture capital investment in start-ups. Common Funding should be employed to bring new technologies into NATO's strategic levels in order to increase situational awareness in the NATO-Council and aid in decision-making. Exercises such as the Crisis Management Exercise or Scenario Based Discussions could serve as a testbed. Such investments also change the way the organisation works and help to attract outstanding, innovative young people to NATO.

8. NATO should establish a centre of higher learning to cultivate future talent outside of NATO. Noting the success of the NATO Defence College in building organisational talent, it should found a NATO University aimed at inculcating a sense of Atlantic community and commonality of purpose among the youth of its publics. Pending the availability of funds for such an endeavour, NATO should launch a scholarship programme, tentatively called the Harmel Fellowship Programme, to encourage educational exchanges between NATO societies, under which each Ally would fund a scholarship programme for at least one individual every year from another NATO Ally to undertake postgraduate study at one of its leading universities. It should sponsor scholarships at leading think-tanks, including in both Allied and partner countries.

**“NATO should launch a Harmel Fellowship Programme to encourage educational exchanges between NATO societies.”**

9. Noting that this report outlines a number of possible new activities and roles for the NAC, the Group observes that the NAC will have to develop a practical means by which to devolve responsibility down to the appropriate committees in order to properly develop and push forward a new political agenda.

## 5 Conclusion

The Reflection Process concludes at an important inflection point in world affairs and Euro-Atlantic relations, in which the future role of NATO is of growing importance to a stable and open international order. The effects of Covid-19 will echo through the decade ahead, exacerbating existing trends, potentially heightening international competition, and causing long-term scarring to the global economy.

**“Political adaption is in the lifeblood of NATO but it is also a baseline requirement of its survival.”**

While the historical record suggests room for optimism about NATO’s long-term future, it also cautions against complacency and self-congratulation. Political adaption is in the lifeblood of NATO but it is also a baseline requirement of its survival. In 1949, twelve countries established the Alliance: binding post-War Europe to a Western trajectory and cementing the transatlantic bond. Seventy-one years on, twelve have become thirty, standing together to defend the security and prosperity of a billion people.

Throughout this time, NATO has been through phases of renewal and reorientation, while always delivering its central mission and never deviating from its founding principles. Throughout, the Alliance has remained strong and resolute at each turn, always challenging itself to be the best it can be. This ability to respond, adapt, and renew its internal bonds has been NATO’s hallmark over the last seven decades.

Throughout our consultations, there was a unanimous view that another such moment is upon the Alliance today. Since 2014, supported by the outstanding work of the Secretary General who was appointed that year, NATO has implemented the biggest reinforcement of collective defence in a generation. The Alliance now needs a process of political adaptation to match the progress made in the military sphere.

**“Since 2014, NATO has implemented the biggest reinforcement of collective defence in a generation.”**

The urgency of this effort is driven by an evolving security environment which has become more challenging and complex in recent years. Alongside the potent threat from Russia, China requires particular attention as its influence and presence grows. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations remains an immediate threat. More space is being contested physically, as the line between peace and war continues to blur, with disinformation and subversion posing serious challenges to our democracies. Hybrid attacks need new thinking about deterrence and defence, driven in part by new and emerging technologies. Agreeing a shared response to these challenges has at times tested NATO unity, with Allies taking positions that reflect anxieties about their long-term strategic futures.

No single Ally can address these challenges alone. So it is essential that all Allies recommit to the spirit as well as the letter of the Washington Treaty, reaffirm their political commitment to one another, sustain their commitment to democratic values, and glean the benefits that come from the projection of collective strength. As our report describes, NATO needs to enhance its ability to respond to both existing and new threats, from both state and non-state actors, increase its range of political tools to deter adversaries and defend the Alliance in the modern threat environment. The Alliance will maintain the capacity for continual adaptation to reflect changing strategic circumstances.

In our recommendations, we have set out ways in which NATO could respond to emerging technology and hybrid attacks, including by working more effectively with partners. A balance also needs to be found between the vital contribution North America continues to make to the security of Europe, and the increasing share of the burden which European Allies themselves will be taking in the years ahead. This should come together under a new Strategic Concept, which recognises the progress made and the new challenges since 2010; and equips the Alliance to deal with those to come.

**“The peace that most of Europe has enjoyed for the last seven decades is a historical exception. NATO remains the guardian of that precious asset.”**

In the face of attempts to divide, competing priorities, criticism and intense scrutiny, Allies need to retain their confidence in the durability and vitality of the Alliance, manage differences, rise above disagreements and close their ranks against threats affecting them, as they have for more than seventy years. The peace that most of Europe has enjoyed for the last seven decades is a historical exception, not the rule. NATO remains the guardian of that precious asset. As we submit our recommendations, we have every confidence that NATO will move from reflection to further action, so that it can continue to be the cornerstone of Allies' collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security for decades to come.

# Chronology

- 1-2 December 2019: At the NATO Leaders Meeting in London, NATO leaders agree to a forward-looking reflection process under the auspices of the Secretary General.
- 30 March 2020: The Secretary General appoints an independent Group to support his work.
- 2 April 2020: The Group is established and announced at the meeting of Foreign Ministers.

## Reflection Phase

- 8 April 2020: Initial Group exchange with the Secretary General.
- 21 April 2020: The Group meets virtually to agree their programme of work and the general engagement plan.
- 22 April 2020: First virtual engagement with the North Atlantic Council (NAC).
- 5-6 May 2020: Virtual framing seminar on the Geopolitical and Security Landscape.
- 12-13 May 2020: Virtual seminar on Allied Unity, Solidarity, and Cohesion.
- 27-28 May 2020: Virtual seminar on NATO's Political Role.
- 10-11 June 2020: Virtual seminar on NATO's Non-Military Tools.
- 15-16 June 2020: Virtual seminar on Political Consultation and Coordination.
- 6 July 2020: Group exchange with the Secretary General.
- 9 July 2020: Second virtual engagement with the NAC.
- 14 July 2020: Group negotiations.
- 15 July 2020: Virtual engagement with the NATO Deputy Secretary General and Assistant Secretary Generals.
- 27 July 2020: Virtual seminar on NATO's Decision-Making Process, Committees, Common Funding, and Staffing Policies.
- 30 July 2020: Virtual seminar on Innovation, Science, and Technology.
- 5-6 August 2020: Group discussions on tentative observations, conclusions, and the report outline.

## Consultation Phase

- 31 August – 3 September 2020: Group negotiations and individual virtual engagements with government representatives from the United States and Canada as well as senior officials from the United Nations, followed by an exchange with U.S. think tankers.
- 8 September 2020: Virtual engagement with government representatives from Finland and Sweden, followed by Georgia and Ukraine.
- 9 September 2020: Third virtual engagement with the NAC.
- 10 September 2020: The Group engages with Allies as part of the Allied Security Policy Directors Meeting.
- 14-18 September 2020: Individual virtual engagement with government representatives from Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey as well as regional Think Tanks.
- 22 September 2020: Virtual engagement with the Chairman of the Military Committee, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.
- 23 September 2020: Virtual engagement with government representatives from Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea.

- 24 September 2020: Group Brainstorming
- 28 September 2020: Virtual engagement with government representatives from Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partner nations, followed by a seminar with experts on Afghanistan.
- 1 October 2020: Virtual engagement with government representatives from Mediterranean Dialogue partner nations, followed by a seminar with experts on Iraq.
- 7 October 2020: Virtual engagement with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.
- 8-13 October 2020: Individual virtual engagements with government representatives from Allies (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) and selected partners (Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Ireland, Israel, Sweden, Switzerland); a virtual seminar with experts on Russia and other group negotiations.
- 15 October 2020: The Group engages with Allies as part of the Transatlantic Policy Planners Meeting.
- 19 October 2020: Virtual engagement with government representatives from France.
- 20 October 2020: Virtual engagement with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), followed by Group negotiations.
- 22 October 2020: Group negotiations, followed by a virtual engagement with senior official from the European Union (EU).

### **Drafting Phase**

- 28-29 October 2020: Group negotiations of the first draft.
- 4-5 November 2020: Group negotiations of the first draft.
- 10-13 November 2020: Group negotiations of the second draft.
- 17 November 2020: Group exchange with the Secretary General.
- 18 November 2020: Fourth virtual engagement with the NAC.
- 19 November 2020: The Group agrees the final report.
- 25 November 2020: Co-Chairs submit the report to the Secretary General.
- 1 December 2020: The Group engages with the NATO Foreign Ministers
- 3 December 2020: The Group publicly presents the findings of the report.