

*The occasional papers of the*

*Centre for Historical Analysis and Conflict Research*

**16**

# ARES & ATHENA

DECEMBER 2019



---

## <sup>16</sup>NATO TODAY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

# CONTENTS

- 02 Introduction
- 04 **UK and NATO today**
- 06 NATO: The enduring Alliance
- 08 **Russia and the challenge to NATO's northern and eastern borders**
- 11 Russian challenges to NATO's southern flank
- 14 **Terrorism: Future trends**
- 16 Cyber threats to NATO
- 19 **Cohesion and shared culture: NATO's key assets in response to the new strategic environment**
- 21 Strengthening C2 and relationships in the High North and Baltic Sea regions



Published by:  
Centre for Historical Analysis and  
Conflict Research, Robertson House,  
Slim Road, Camberley, Surrey  
GU15 4NP  
Tel: 01276 412708/412660  
chacr.org.uk

#### CHACR business partner:

NSC, River View, 2 Meadows Business Park, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 9AB  
Tel: 01276 678867

#### CHACR

**Director:** Major General (ret'd) Dr Andrew Sharpe CBE

**Assistant Director:** Colonel Alistair McCluskey

**Senior Resident Fellow:** Dr Ziya Meral

**Resident Fellow:** Dr Louise Tumchewics

**Visiting Fellow:** Dr Matthias Strohn

**Executive Officer:** Adam Wakeham

**Staff Assistant:** SSgt Senitiki Biaukula

Cover image: © Crown Copyright © CHACR 2019

# INTRODUCTION

---

*Major General (ret'd) Dr Andrew Sharpe  
Director CHACR*

---

NATO, we are repeatedly told by politicians and the denizens of both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence, sits at the heart of British Defence strategy. It's a cornerstone. It's our foundation. At the same time the ARRC is held up as an exemplar of the very best of the multinational Corps headquarters on the NATO organisation chart.

But how often does the British military talk about NATO? Is it front and centre of the agenda for the practitioners of Defence in the same way that it is for the policy writers? Does the British Army put the ARRC at the head of every order of battle – or does it start the chart with its divisions?

**Importantly, membership of this alliance (indeed of**



any alliance) brings as many obligations as it does benefits. Those who count the cost of Defence and look for efficiency are often tempted to substitute the capabilities of others within an alliance for their own, reassuring themselves that 'while we have decided to do without such-and-such a capability we remain able to access it because our friends have retained it'. But this is, of course, an unrealistic, irresponsible and dangerous assumption to make. Alliance members can depend upon contributions from members only as far as they themselves are prepared to commit and contribute: inter-dependability only works if everyone involved is dependable!

And NATO, that great bulwark of Europe-Atlantic security, has its issues and weaknesses that require addressing with real commitment and interest. Britain's two principal allies within NATO, the US and France, have Presidents that have both, over the last few years, made a string of pronouncements that suggest that they may not see NATO's foundational qualities quite as Britain does. Should

“““

NATO, that great bulwark of Europe-Atlantic security, has its issues and weaknesses that require addressing with real commitment and interest

that worry us? Turkey, a key member of NATO, is looking increasingly close to Russia. Should that worry us? Russia has repeatedly demonstrated that the clarity of Article V ties NATO to inaction below a clearly articulated threshold, and thus frees her up to operate in a grey zone below that threshold, staying ahead of her NATO competitors in a 'constant competition'. Should that worry us?

Put simply, we cannot know whether all of these things should worry us or not unless we ponder them, talk about them,

and share our considerations with others. That was the function of the recent CHACR workshop on NATO, some of the results of which are laid out in this issue of *Ares & Athena*. The views expressed in the articles are of their authors, not CHACR, nor the Army and wider MOD. Our mandate is to provide a platform for such discussions to take place. Be you policy maker, practitioner, academic or simply interested party, we hope that you find them at the very least to be interesting and, hopefully, at best, to be of considerable utility.



# UK AND NATO TODAY

*General Sir James Everard*  
*Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe*

The UK remains powerful. The UK has an unparalleled network. We are a Nuclear Power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council, a leading member of NATO (overall, we are one of the biggest contributors to NATO operations and missions, and fill our permanent establishment commitment to more than 90 per cent), we sit at the heart of the Commonwealth of Nations, we have an extensive and impressive diplomatic and intelligence footprint, and our five-eyes intelligence sharing partnership is the envy of those who sit outside it.

The UK's defence budget is also the second largest in NATO after the US, meeting the NATO Defence Investment Pledge, and the biggest in the EU. We are also one of only six countries that meet or exceed the UN's target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income for international aid spending. Our Armed Forces are also respected around the world for their capability, agility and reach as a full spectrum force; one of very few nations left who maintain forces for high-intensity warfighting, expeditionary operations and defence engagement. We are creative (but should be less shrill over our reference army or thought leadership status, because we are some way from being a lodestar). But for a nation with so much going for it, once so confident, even bold, we can seem divided, distracted, discontented, and hesitant about our place in the world to outside eyes.

At the same time, the underground narrative questions the political value of NATO. It suggests that after 70 years NATO has lost its mojo; that support for NATO is falling; that NATO is too big and too slow and military power is no longer important. The story goes that NATO is being undermined: by differences between European allies; by differences between Europe and America on key foreign policy issues; by doubts over America's commitment to Europe; by the lack of European military capacity, and even by Europe's yearning for neutrality (*Washington Post*, 19th September 2019).

My reply? That complacency has always been the curse of our forces and the killer of our men and women and is best avoided. That we live in dangerous times and we are a long way from the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, triumph of liberal democracy and the so-called End of History. That the strategic shocks and after-shocks of the 21st Century (and I could list a minimum of ten that represent lost certainties) have made life more complicated and unpredictable, seeing the return of great power competition, the growth of terrorism and the rise of a polycentric, competitive, more difficult world order, with an increase in the number of threats

and challenges (hybrid, conventional and terrorist) which we all face, all the time. That it is unwise to take peace for granted. That military power is still important. That these threats and challenges alone, let alone in combination, exceed the capacity of any single nation to manage, or resolve.

So, we should play to our strengths. NATO is a working Alliance underpinned by a Treaty that is the model of brevity and clarity, gives the US a seat at the European security table and has kept the peace in the Euro-Atlantic Area for 70 years. Change takes time, but since 1949 NATO has been an extraordinary instrument for building common purpose between allies. This constancy of purpose has in hard times always overcome the necessarily different, often disparate and sometimes contradictory perspectives and interests of allies. Finally, like vegetables to a child, NATO is something that is good for you, rather than something you have to necessarily like. Why? Because being a true ally can be difficult, it can be hard work, demands constant attention and may even require the prioritisation of Alliance over national requirements.

As a result I **know** that the West and UK need more NATO, not less. For the UK it is now even more important in the context of BREXIT as we work to give structure, meaning and purpose to the idea of Global Britain. I think Global Britain is all about reinvesting in our relationships, championing the rules-based international order and demonstrating that the UK is open, outward looking and confident on the world stage. The temptation is to believe all change is for the better, (the baby/bathwater moment is another curse) when we can and should build and adapt alongside NATO, as the cornerstone of our defence.

There is a long list of visible achievements flowing from the Wales, Warsaw and Brussels Summits – you know these well. At the same time, we have improved command and control and decision-making, improved our understanding of activities on our eastern flank and the co-ordination of activity on our southern flank. NATO has a growing partnership programme that is building defence capacity not just in Afghanistan and Iraq, but where and when it is needed. The Alliance is also working on a new approach (for the first time since 1967) that will, in time, move NATO away from a reactive case-by-case approach to crisis management, to a more proactive comprehensive defensive strategy that continually contests the play-books of our adversaries, geographically and across all-domains, regaining the initiative and better exploiting Alliance strategic advantages. All this linked to a significantly larger NATO Response Force than we have today. NATO has mass. NATO has reach. NATO has know-how.

Is the UK the leading and most influential European member of NATO? The basic facts on the UK contribution to NATO



NATO has a growing partnership programme that is building defence capacity not just in Afghanistan and Iraq, but where and when it is needed

**International allies: A British soldier from the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup converses with an Estonian counterpart during an urban warfare training exercise**

Credit: Crown Copyright

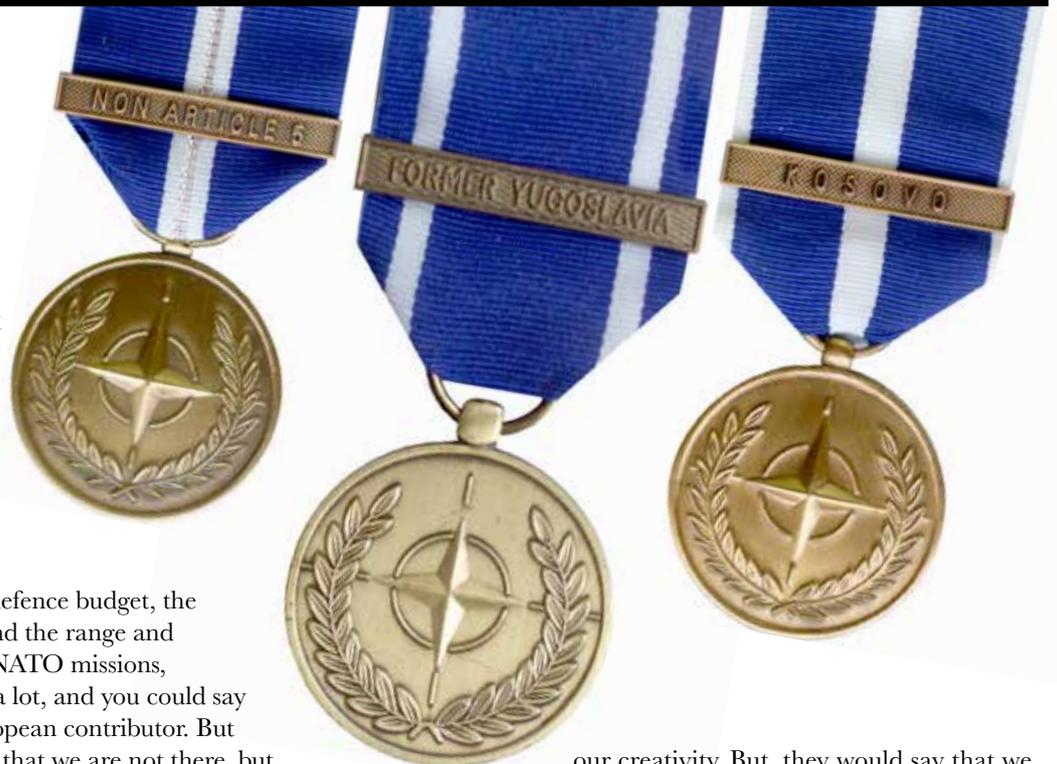


“““

Is the UK the leading and most influential European member of NATO? The basic facts on the UK contribution to NATO are compelling, in terms of our defence budget, the Continuous at Sea Deterrence and the range and depth of our contribution to all NATO missions, operations and activities

are compelling, in terms of our defence budget, the Continuous at Sea Deterrence and the range and depth of our contribution to all NATO missions, operations and activities. We do a lot, and you could say we are ‘there’ as the leading European contributor. But many of our allies would suggest that we are not there, but that we are only thereabouts.

Why the hesitation and gap? Our allies like the fact that the UK retains a collective memory of greatness, a memory that still persuades many people on our island that if there is something in the world that needs to be done, then Britain should be amongst the countries doing it. They like the UK investment in developing high-quality leaders, the importance we place on collective training, our thinking and



our creativity. But, they would say that we do not yet instinctively think NATO in the UK in the same way that you would reach for your seatbelt in a car. This is the challenge: we could and should always ‘Think NATO’ – in peace, crisis and war, across all domains, across all functions, across time and better message our commitment to NATO – until this becomes habit. If we do so, the UK’s influence within NATO will increase, Global Britain will become a reality and the UK will be stronger and safer.

# NATO: THE ENDURING ALLIANCE

*Daniel Drake*

*Head, MOD/FCO Euro-Atlantic Security Policy Unit*

NATO has proven its ability to adapt to changing circumstances many times over its history. Since the Wales Summit in 2014 NATO has turned round many years of defence cuts across the Alliance, and taken significant steps to restore deterrence in the face of a resurgent Russian threat, for example by the deployment of troops to the Baltic States and Poland under the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP).

More recently NATO has agreed its first new military strategy for 50 years, with work ongoing towards a new Concept for the Defence and Deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic Area. A renewed focus on readiness through the NATO Readiness Initiative – under which NATO allies agree to make 30 additional fighting units on land, sea and air available at 30 days’ notice – is also welcome. And many other important decisions have been taken since the Wales Summit, such as the adaptation and expansion of NATO’s Command Structure, establishment of the Hub for the South, and deployment of a new NATO training mission in Iraq.

All of this has reinforced NATO’s relevance in a changing security environment. And the accession of Montenegro in 2017, and North Macedonia in the near future, demonstrate the enduring appeal of the Alliance to countries across the Euro-Atlantic area. Nonetheless the challenges to NATO remain considerable, and the UK remains determined to work with other allies to address them as we move towards December’s Leaders’ Meeting in London.

Much attention has been paid recently to the issue of fairer burden sharing between the US and Europe for safeguarding



What of the US? In reality the US commitment to European security remains as steadfast as it ever was. For example, the European Deterrence Initiative will see more than \$5 billion of new US investment in Europe next year, improving interoperability and building new infrastructure

the security of the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO’s very foundation rests on binding the US and Europe together through a collective defence guarantee, so that the horrors of world war can never again happen on the continent of Europe. Seventy years on from enshrining this guarantee in Article V of the Washington Treaty, Europe remains critically dependent on the US for many aspects of its defence, especially those required to challenge a peer adversary such as Russia.

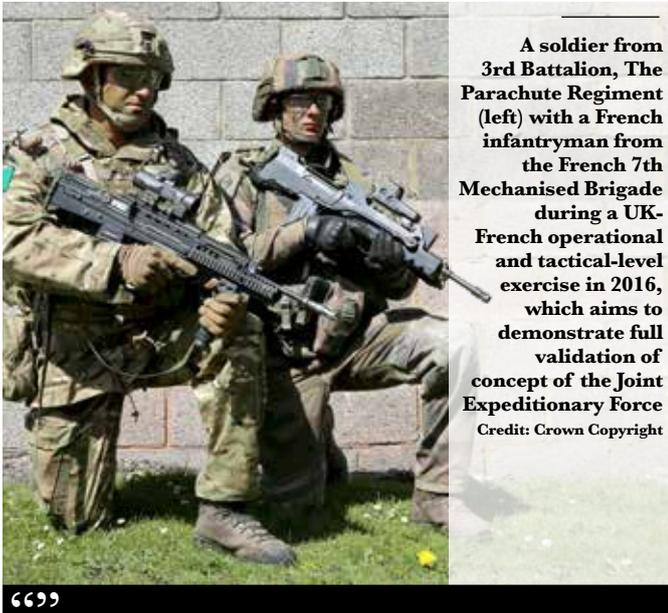
As the US has pivoted towards the rapidly growing economies of Asia it is entirely understandable that Europe should be expected to take more of the burden for its own security. Whilst not a new demand, this has been brought into sharper relief in the past four years. European nations have responded: from 2016-2020 more than \$100 billion of new defence spending in NATO will come from non-US allies. Eight allies will spend at least two per cent of their GDP on defence this year and a further 11 have plans to reach two per cent by the end of 2024. Equally important are the plans of most allies to spend at least 20 per cent of their defence budgets on major equipment. This element of the Defence Investment Pledge agreed in Wales often receives less attention, but is vitally important to ensure that spending is invested in new capabilities.

This is a positive story, but clearly it does not yet go far enough. Nine allies still have no plans to spend two per cent on defence, including Germany, Europe’s largest economy. The current German commitment to spend 1.5 per cent by 2024 is welcome. But recent budget decisions in Germany have brought the credibility of this commitment into question, and any plans to increase spending beyond this will be subject to the complexities of German domestic politics.

Burden sharing is not only about cash, of course. Some allies who do not spend two per cent on defence often refer to the commitments they make to NATO in other ways, such as through NATO’s deployments in Europe or its missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. And the NATO Readiness Initiative referenced above is likely to rely on non-US allies for up to 90 per cent of its total commitment. The UK agrees that allies should be judged by their cash, commitments and capabilities. But we cannot avoid the fact that building capabilities, or committing forces to NATO, is impossible if the funding is not there to pay for them.

Meanwhile, what of the US? In reality the US commitment to European security remains as steadfast as it ever was. For example, the European Deterrence Initiative will see more than \$5 billion of new US investment in Europe next year, improving interoperability and building new infrastructure. Successive US defence reviews have concluded that membership of NATO provides the US with a key strategic advantage over its global competitors such as Russia or China.

The benefits to the US of NATO membership were shown earlier this year, on the demise of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty. The US announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Treaty in November 2018 was followed by a six-month process of building consensus within the Alliance around the threat posed by Russia’s development



**A soldier from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (left) with a French infantryman from the French 7th Mechanised Brigade during a UK-French operational and tactical-level exercise in 2016, which aims to demonstrate full validation of concept of the Joint Expeditionary Force**  
Credit: Crown Copyright

“”

A plethora of European security initiatives have developed outside of either the EU or NATO, such as the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, the French-led European Intervention Initiative, the Northern Group, or the Franco-British Combined Joint Expeditionary Force

and deployment of the SSC8 missile system. This meant that, when the Treaty finally lapsed in August this year, the US and NATO could hold Russia responsible with one voice.

Of course questions about the US commitment to European security may not be the only source of tension in the Alliance when leaders gather in London. Growth of the European Union's level of ambition in security and defence will also draw speculation that it is the EU rather than NATO that will become the priority for some European countries in addressing the threats of the future.

The argument runs something like this. With the US commitment to Europe increasingly unpredictable, European countries should take greater responsibility for themselves and develop a form of 'strategic autonomy'. This should include a kind of collective security guarantee under Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union, formalised meetings of EU Defence Ministers and a permanent Operational HQ. Meanwhile the UK's departure from the EU will remove one of the major breaks on development of an EU defence identity.

President Macron and Chancellor Merkel have also written of the creation of some form of 'European Security Council', though with somewhat differing visions. And a plethora of European security initiatives have developed outside of either the EU or NATO, such as the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force, the French-led European Intervention Initiative, the Northern Group, or the Franco-British Combined Joint Expeditionary Force.

However, this argument does not bear close scrutiny. The vast majority of EU Member States are also members of NATO. They have a single set of forces, and simply do not have the capacity to respond to two growing set of commitments. The

UK's exit from the EU may indeed remove one of the most cautious voices on the growth of the EU's defence ambition, but it will also mean the loss of 20 per cent of the EU's Force Catalogue, and critical enablers such as strategic lift and ISR. And of course for those EU Member States not prepared to commit to NATO's Article V, the prospect of being bound into a collective security guarantee through another organisation may be just as unpalatable.

Nonetheless, if certain conditions are met, the EU's growing role in building European capabilities can become an important part of burden sharing. Its European Defence Fund and Permanent Structured Co-operation (PESCO) can provide powerful incentives for European countries to collaborate to build their defence capabilities.

The NATO Secretary-General has set these conditions. First, that the EU should build capabilities required by NATO; second, that such capabilities should be made available to NATO; and third, that there should be the fullest possible involvement of non-EU NATO allies. Yet it is far from clear that these conditions will be met. For example, current proposals for third party participation in EU defence initiatives still remain highly restrictive.

The EU's role extends beyond capability development. It can bring a unique set of tools in tackling modern security challenges, ranging from sanctions to civilian and military interventions. The UK was proud to command the Operation ATALANTA anti-piracy mission for more than ten years, and continues to play an important role in EU missions such as Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia, and EULEX Kosovo. Arrangements in both the draft Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration on the future relationship with the EU will allow the UK to continue to play a role in the EU's defence and security efforts should we so wish.

Other sources of tension will inevitably draw questions about the strength of the Alliance as leaders gather in London. Turkey's intervention in North East Syria, for example, drew serious concern from countries across NATO. But while we were clear that we disagreed with Turkey's actions and believed them to be wrong, Turkey remains a valued member of the Alliance and an important partner across a range of security issues. NATO's interests would not be served by Turkey drifting away from the Alliance and further towards Russia. Meanwhile trade, climate change or other global issues are all capable of casting a shadow over the core message of unity. Yet despite all this, we can be confident that the London Leaders' Meeting will indeed see the Alliance emerge rejuvenated, and better prepared to face the future. Over recent months important discussions have taken place at the North Atlantic Council on emerging and disruptive technologies, on cyber and hybrid, on space as a domain of operations, and on Russia's growing arsenal of missile systems.

Seventy years after NATO was founded and 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall we should celebrate all the Alliance has done to bring security and stability to more than a billion people across the Euro-Atlantic area. But we should also recognise that adapting to the challenges of the future will require just as much vision, commitment and resilience as that shown by NATO's founding fathers when they first met 70 years ago.

# RUSSIA AND THE CHALLENGE TO NATO'S NORTHERN AND EASTERN BORDERS

*Dr Andrew Monaghan*

*Director of Research on Russia and Northern European Defence and Security, The Changing Character of War Centre, Pembroke College, University of Oxford*

Russia has become central to NATO's thinking. The statement following the 2018 Brussels summit noted that "Russia's aggressive actions, including the threat and use of force to attain political goals, challenge the Alliance and are undermining Euro-Atlantic security and the rules based order". Over six paragraphs in the Summit Declaration, the Alliance noted its willingness to engage in "periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue" with Russia, but reaffirmed the decisions reached at the Wales and Warsaw summits and its shift towards an enhanced deterrence and defence posture in response to Russian activities that have resulted in a deteriorating and destabilised security environment. Much space is dedicated to the list of Russian actions that the Alliance considers to have led to this situation, from Russia's annexation of Crimea to its "military posture and provocative military activities, including near NATO borders", from the growing number of military exercises (including with a nuclear dimension) to Russian hybrid actions, interference in elections and domestic politics of sovereign states and the attempted murder of Sergei Skripal in the UK in March 2018. As a statement of intent for the Alliance, it is clear: "there is to be no compromise on the principles on which our alliance and security in Europe and North America exist. Under current circumstances... there can be no return to business as usual

until there is a clear, constructive change in Russia's actions that demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities"<sup>1</sup>.

This can be said to reflect the broad Euro-Atlantic view of how and why relations with Russia have deteriorated, particularly since 2014. But the "Russian Question" offers a number of important complexities and nuances, within the Alliance itself, in terms of NATO-Russia relations and Russia's own policies.

Though the Declaration gives a good indication, for instance, of the broader alliance view, achieving consensus across NATO about the nature and the extent of the challenge that Russia poses remains difficult. There are well-known differences of priority across the wider alliance, with some members more focused on threats from the south than from the east. Equally, there are differences of perspective among those states that border Russia about how to handle relations with Moscow. Norway and Turkey, for instance, espouse different policy positions towards Russia than those advocated by Lithuania and Poland.

Furthermore, the recent sharp deterioration of the NATO-Russia relationship is part of a much longer-term set of disagreements between the Euro-Atlantic community and

<sup>1</sup>Brussels Summit Declaration, 11 July 2018, Press Release (2018) 074, [nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156624.htm#4](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm#4)

**Members of the local population welcome the arrival of British Army personnel – part of NATO's Kosovo Force – on to the streets of Podujevo in 1999**  
Credit: Crown copyright



**President Vladimir Putin – flagged by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu (right) and Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces and First Deputy Defence Minister Valery Gerasimov – during a visit to a major strategic command and staff exercise this September. The multinational manoeuvres involved circa 128,000 military personnel from eight countries, 600 aircraft and more than 20,000 pieces of weaponry and military equipment.**

Credit: kremlin.ru



“““

Prominent Russian observers note that Putin considers himself a wartime president, a view borne out considering Russia’s explicit military intervention in Syria and the ongoing war in Ukraine

Russia. This situation reflects a dissonance between the two parties that became obvious in the mid-to-late 1990s, and particularly with NATO’s Kosovo campaign which Russia vigorously opposed, and has become increasingly systemic since the early 2000s. Though there were several attempts to establish strategic partnership with lengthy lists of areas for cooperation, these foundered resulting in mutual frustration and recriminations. This dissonance reflects not just a “values gap”, therefore, but also numerous persistent policy disagreements.

It is worth remembering that many in the Russian policy community, both officials and observers, think that NATO cannot be trusted, being seen both to have broken a promise to not enlarge and to have misrepresented its case regarding the intervention in Libya. Hence the repeated statements by even the most senior officials that NATO “says one thing and does another”. Indeed, many think that NATO should not even exist, that it should have dissolved itself alongside the Warsaw Pact. These gaps in world view create much rubble over which any substantive dialogue beyond the military lines of communication to de-conflict activities could be established.

This relates to a third point: Russia’s own priorities and policies. NATO’s call for a “clear, constructive change in Russia’s actions”, for Russia to “change course” is very likely to go unheard because of how the Russian leadership sees not just the trajectory of NATO-Russia relations, but NATO as a whole and, more broadly, the evolution of international affairs. Since 2002-2003, and increasingly obviously since 2007-8 and then from 2011 and the so-called “Arab Spring”, many in the Russian policy community have been arguing that the international order is undergoing systemic change, that the Euro-Atlantic West is in decline and that power is

shifting East, resulting in strategic global competition. In 2012, President Putin stated that international affairs were entering a long and painful zone of turbulence. A year later, Russian Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov pointed to increasing competition over resources, transit routes and access to markets that would grow through the 2020s.

This view should be seen as the underpinning of Russian activity – a state-wide effort to prepare for wider international geopolitical and geoeconomic competition. Within this, there is considerable concern in Moscow about and disagreement with the role of the United States in this competition – and here it should not be forgotten that for many Russians, NATO is simply an extension of US foreign and security policy. Taken together, this has a number of implications for NATO’s strategic thinking about Russia. There are a number of conceptual mismatches between how NATO sees Russia and its activity and how this looks in Moscow. These mismatches go beyond broader “world view” dissonance noted above, and have practical consequences. Two examples illustrate the scale and scope of mismatches.

First, it is a commonplace in the Euro-Atlantic community to emphasise Russian “measures short of war” – to focus on hybrid or “gray zone” matters, including cyber attacks, propaganda and disinformation, election interference and so on. In other words, the focus is on actions that stop short of open, conventional warfare that many believe Russia could not realistically hope to win against an alliance that could bring considerable economic and military capability to bear in any war. This understanding has become an orthodoxy across the Euro-Atlantic policy community. But it does not quite match the view in Moscow, where “measures

of war” would be more apt. Prominent Russian observers note that Putin considers himself a wartime president, a view borne out considering Russia’s explicit military intervention in Syria and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Moreover, there is a general concern in Moscow about rising conflict in international affairs – especially intra-state conflict exacerbated by outside powers who then intervene. This is understood in Russia as war by “colour revolution” or “controlled chaos”, and much state activity this decade has been focused on ensuring that Russia is resistant to such threats. This has resulted in the state effectively moving onto a war footing, rehearsing whole-of-state mobilisation and threat response, coordinating different ministries and departments, and seeking to enhance command and control through the establishment not only of a central command in the National Defence Management Centre, but a nationwide network of such centres. This seeks to weave together the capabilities of the state, both civil and military. Grasping this rather different emphasis will be essential both for shaping any form of dialogue, defence, or deterrence – are sanctions, for instance, “measures short of war” or “measures of war”? – and for understanding Russia’s own evolution, including how it responds to Euro-Atlantic measures.

This leads to the second mismatch – the horizon of perceived activity. NATO and its member states too often adopt rather narrow lenses through which to understand and respond to the Russian challenge. Some states, for instance, tend to see Russia through the lens of Ukraine and the ongoing conflict there, others see the challenge in terms of north eastern European security, particularly in terms of the defence of Baltic allies. Both reflect a “local-to-regional” approach to Russia.

Moscow, however, has a rather different, more global focus. In contrast to the “local-to-regional” focus of the Alliance, therefore, Moscow’s can be defined as “regional-to-global”. This can be illustrated by the way that their exercises seek to link up capabilities across great distances, connecting the Atlantic, via the Arctic, to the Pacific, connecting the Arctic down through central and Western Russia to the Black Sea, and connecting the Caspian and Black Seas with the Eastern Mediterranean. The global horizon is also suggested by the growing Russian presence – civilian and military – in different continents, from Africa to Latin America.

The Russian leadership considers Russia to be effectively a “ubiquitous” state: its continental geography meaning that Russian interests are seen to be synonymous with a global horizon. Like the preparation to face growing geopolitical and geoeconomic competition that may lead to conflict and war in the 2020s, this “regional-to-global” horizon reflects the trajectory of Russian interests, and should become the Alliance’s strategic frame of reference for reflecting on the Russian challenge. In part, at least, Moscow’s global approach is shaped by its view of the global sweep of US power, and what it sees as NATO going global.

These mismatches have important implications for NATO’s strategic thinking about Russia and its relationship. If Russia is traditionally seen as a continental power, for example, might

the implications of Russia’s view of geoeconomics be that the leadership seeks to give Russia a more maritime focus, given the growth of seaborne trade? Russia may not become a traditional “maritime” power, but may develop sufficient capabilities to play a greater maritime role.

Similarly, a common view is that Russian activities blur the lines between war and peace. But it might also be said that the lines between offensive and defensive are becoming blurred. The Russian leadership has already pointed to a state’s need to be able to defend its interests beyond its borders: Gerasimov has asserted the need to defend embassies and diplomatic staff, for instance, or to defend against piracy. He has recently reflected on the development of a strategy of “active defence”, for example, the attempt to “proactively neutralise threats to the state”.

All of this has implications for defence, of course, but also for deterrence. Deterrence is much misunderstood, often framed as NATO should “do” deterrence – i.e. implement specific activities aimed at Russia. But in the end, deterrence is a form of dialogue, and it is not so much the activity that counts as what the adversary sees and how decisions are affected.

Understanding “the Russia Question” in a more nuanced way is essential. This means ensuring that deterrence is not simply “reassurance” or “defence” differently badged, but forward looking (to the 2020s) and part of a broader strategy of how relations could evolve over the next decade, rather than being an end in itself. Given this broader picture, what, more specifically, might NATO be doing? Three points stand out. The first is about efficiency and coordination in planning for the longer term. Many activities for reassurance, deterrence and defence are proliferating, including to the edges of NATO’s core competencies. Not all of the activities being conducted by the alliance and its member states appear to be fully coordinated – for instance, the many different activities planned for spring and summer 2020 – and this affects signalling to Moscow.

The second might be called “enlargement awareness”. This implies an ability to engage with Russia on a long-term, difficult question. NATO made explicit at its Bucharest and Strasbourg-Kehl summits a decade ago that Georgia and Ukraine would become members of the alliance. If this has been the main focus of the NATO enlargement-Russia debate, there are other points of tension, not only Sweden and Finland, but in the Balkans. Senior Russian officials have repeatedly emphasised their opposition to NATO enlargement, and so the Alliance should not be surprised to find that further enlargement will lead to negative Russian responses.

This relates to the third point, that of “consequence management”: the careful planning and preparation for second and third order effects, responses and counter-responses. While it is appropriate to exercise in the Arctic region, for instance, it is also necessary to prepare for possible Russian responses to such activity in what is a high priority region for Moscow. This is not a counsel to self-deter, but about shaping a coherent strategy that takes into account the dynamic and often responsive interaction between parties.

“”  
The Russian leadership considers Russia to be effectively a “ubiquitous” state: its continental geography meaning that Russian interests are seen to be synonymous with a global horizon

# RUSSIAN CHALLENGES TO NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK

*Dr James Ker-Lindsay*  
*Visiting Professor, London School of Economics*

While NATO's northern and eastern flanks usually receive the bulk of strategic attention, rather less tends to be said about the southern flank. Although the threats to the Baltics and conflict in Ukraine may seem more readily understandable from a traditional military perspective, the challenges to the south are, in their own way, just as formidable. The geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans are changing rapidly and in highly unpredictable ways. Russia is actively seeking to extend its influence in these areas and is using a wide variety of methods to achieve its goals, including soft power and hybrid warfare. Alongside its focus on Northeast and Central Europe, NATO needs to consider how to respond to the changing regional landscape in Southeast Europe.

## Eastern Mediterranean

The Eastern Mediterranean is proving to be a particularly fascinating region for long-standing observers. Many of the old assumptions about allegiances and alliances are being tested in novel ways. By far the most important actor is Turkey. In recent years, there has been considerable discussion about the direction that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is leading the country. EU membership talks are now on hold over concern about his increasingly autocratic ways. Meanwhile, many in NATO increasingly question the country's commitment to the alliance. There have been strong differences of opinion between Turkey and its partners over Syria, not least of all over the recent military invasion of Kurdish held areas. It is no secret that there is a profound sense of uncertainty in the alliance about Turkey's direction.



Even in Cyprus, where the dominant Greek Cypriot community has long looked to Russia to defend their interests against perceived British and American support for Turkey, there are signs that Moscow's influence is declining



Putin clearly sees an ideal opportunity to weaken NATO. Ankara's decision to purchase Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems has caused dismay amongst Turkey's NATO partners

However, it is Turkey's relationship with Russia that is causing the most alarm. Having come perilously close to conflict in 2015, when a Turkish F-16 shot down a Russian SU-24 jet over the Turkish-Syrian border, the two countries have since mended fences and established what looks to be, at least on the surface, a close relationship. Although many are sceptical about the true depth of these ties – does Vladimir Putin either truly forgive or forget? – there is no doubt that Erdogan admires the Russian president. For his part, Putin clearly sees an ideal opportunity to weaken NATO. Ankara's decision to purchase Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems has caused dismay amongst Turkey's NATO partners.

And yet, in other ways, Russian influence in the Eastern Mediterranean appears to be waning. There was a time when Greece and Cyprus – fellow Orthodox Christian nations – were considered to be reliable sympathisers; even to the point that both were considered by many to be Moscow's Trojan horses in NATO and the EU. This is no longer the case. Despite coming to power as a radical leftist, the Greek government led by Alexander Tsipras (2015-2019) proved to be far more pro-American than anyone would have imagined. These ties have been further strengthened with the arrival into power of a new centre-right administration under Kyriakos Mitsotakis. Visiting Athens in October 2019, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo hailed a 'new era' in relations with Greece. This was underscored by further enhancements to a bilateral military agreement that will see US naval facilities in the country upgraded.

Meanwhile, Greece's relations with Moscow have come under unprecedented strain – not least because of Russian mishandling. The most significant incident came in the summer of 2018 with the signifying of the historic

Prespa Agreement, which brought an end to the so-called Macedonia name issue. Fearful that the deal would open the way for North Macedonia to join NATO, Russia sought to whip up opposition to the agreement in Greece. In response, Athens expelled two Russian diplomats. This was an unprecedented development in a country long felt to be particularly close to Moscow.

Even in Cyprus, where the dominant Greek Cypriot community has long looked to Russia to defend their interests against perceived British and American support for Turkey, there are signs that Moscow's influence is declining. This is primarily driven by the discovery of natural gas off the island's coast. As well as trying to cultivate US support for drilling activity in the face of strong opposition from Turkey, Nicosia has sought to establish a strong relationship with Israel, which is also sitting on vast offshore energy reserves. The bonds of friendship between Israel and Turkey in the 1990s, have seemingly now given way to a burgeoning Israeli-Hellenic axis. Meanwhile, the growing ties between Russia and Turkey are also a source of concern for the Cypriot Government. While Nicosia does not appear ready to wholly abandon its close historic ties with Moscow, it is nevertheless telling that, as in Greece, the US is increasingly seen by policy makers as the more valuable strategic ally.

### Western Balkans

Just as important geostrategic changes are taking place in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Western Balkans are again attracting attention. Following the end of the wars in the 1990s, the region drifted off the radar of most policy makers as Afghanistan and the Middle East came to the fore. However, in recent years, interest has grown again. In part, this is due to lingering concerns about the possibility of renewed fighting in the region. Although this risk should not be overstated, the potential for clashes in Kosovo or violent incidents in Bosnia remains.

In the meantime, other security challenges have come to the fore. Organised criminal networks, including arms smuggling, pose a very real threat. Likewise, radicalism, be



“““

We can expect North Macedonia to become the 30th member of NATO by the end of this year... from there the picture becomes more difficult

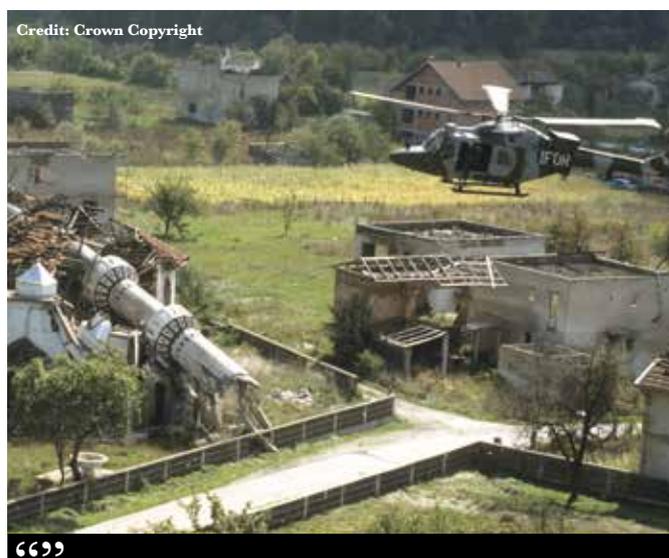
it from Islamist movements or extreme nationalists, is also a source of concern.

Once again, there is also a sense that Russia sees an ideal opportunity to create mischief in the region. It is no secret that Moscow has been ramping up its propaganda efforts in the region. It also seems to have been active in sowing discord in other, more troubling ways. Russia stands accused of fomenting a coup attempt in Montenegro in October 2016. However, Putin's room for manoeuvre in the region is limited. NATO has established a good reach into the Western Balkans over the past two decades. In 2004, Slovenia became the first republic of Former Yugoslavia to join the organisation. This was followed by Croatia, and Albania, in 2009. More recently, Montenegro joined NATO in 2017. Looking ahead, and as noted above, we can expect North Macedonia to become the 30th member of NATO by the end of this year. However, from there the picture becomes more difficult. Three key territories remain outside the organisation: Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia.



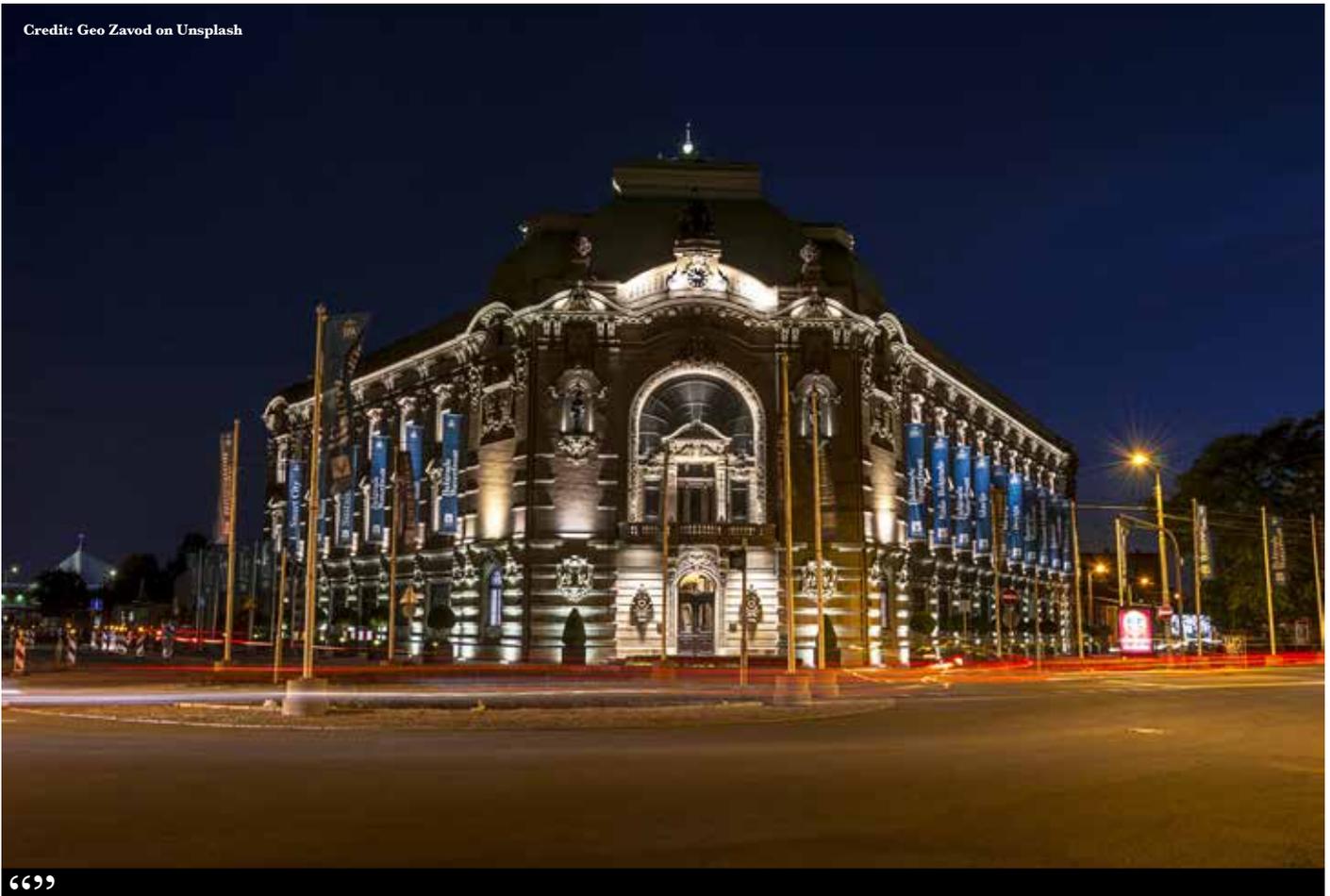
Credit: Crown Copyright

Above and right, British personnel and assets on NATO business in Bosnia during 1996



“““

Although this risk should not be overstated, the potential for clashes in Kosovo or violent incidents in Bosnia remains



If Serbia can be brought on board, then Kosovo and Bosnia will fall into place. As long as Serbia needs Russia's support in the Security Council, Moscow will have leverage over Belgrade

Alongside Cyprus, Kosovo is the second European country that is not a member of PFP. This is perhaps surprising. In many ways, it is a natural fit for the organisation. The country is extremely pro-Western and already hosts a major NATO presence. However, its path to membership is blocked as it is not recognised by four NATO members – Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain. Until there is a final agreement on its independence, it seems destined to remain outside the organisation. Likewise, Bosnia seems to have little prospect of NATO membership any time soon. In this case, accession is blocked by the deep political divisions in the country and the fierce opposition to membership within the Bosnian Serb leadership.

This brings us to Serbia. This is in many ways the key piece of the puzzle. If Serbia can be brought on board, then Kosovo and Bosnia will fall into place. Key to this is reaching a final settlement over Kosovo. As long as Serbia needs Russia's support in the Security Council, Moscow will have leverage over Belgrade. It is perhaps not surprising that the US and EU are both determined to try to resolve the issue in the next year. Beyond this, an ideal outcome would also see Serbia join NATO. At present, this seems wholly unrealistic. Opinion polls show that the public is wholly against the idea. So too is the government, in public. In private, it seems that many policy makers do not see it as such a far-fetched ambition. There is already extensive military cooperation with NATO; far more than with Russia. Many in Serbia can see the benefits of membership, especially if the Kosovo issue has been resolved.

### Conclusion

While there is a natural temptation for many policy makers and officials to focus on the Baltics and Ukraine as the key risks and strategic challenges to NATO, it is clear that Russia's strategy extends well beyond the North East and Central Europe. South East Europe – broadly defined to include the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkans – also represents a key target for Moscow. In particular, the entire Russian strategy in the region now rests on two key countries: Turkey and Serbia.

These must be the key goals for Western diplomacy if it is to keep Moscow in check. More needs to be done to break the emerging strategic relationship between Putin and Erdogan. At the same time, a concerted effort needs to be made to settle Kosovo and win over Belgrade. Without these two countries on board, Russia will continue to pose a challenge on NATO's southern flank.

---

*James Ker-Lindsay is Visiting Professor at LSEE- Research on South East Europe, European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science and a research associate at the University of Oxford. He has published more than a dozen books on conflict, peace and security in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans. In 2016-2017 he was attached to the Eastern Mediterranean Department at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.*

# TERRORISM: FUTURE TRENDS

*Professor Peter R. Neumann*

*Department of War Studies, King's College London*

With the military defeat of so-called Islamic State in 2018, many experts and commentators expected the threat from terrorism to decline. But recent events have shown that terrorism will continue to affect NATO, and that member states need to remain vigilant and cooperative in reducing its potential impact. This article provides an overview of future trends and developments, with a particular emphasis on jihadist and far-right extremism, as well as new and emerging forms of extremism and state-sponsored terrorism.

## Jihadism

The military defeat of Islamic State's territorial Caliphate in December 2018 was the result of a four-year long campaign, which was led by the United States and actively supported by the overwhelming majority of NATO member states (as well as NATO itself). It deprived Islamic State of its operational base, from where the group had fought against neighbouring territories and trained terrorist operatives to carry out attacks in NATO countries. It also defeated Islamic State's narrative of a new, powerful and seemingly ever-expanding 'Caliphate', which had drawn up to 40,000 so-called foreign fighters from nearly 100 countries into its orbit.

Yet, while the 'Caliphate' no longer exists, the movement and ideas behind it continue to have some traction. Furthermore, Islamic State as an organisation has not disappeared, but merely gone underground, waiting for the next opportunity to re-emerge. It is too early to tell whether the American withdrawal from Northern Syria will allow Islamic State to regain support. But it seems clear that the chaos and lack of stability, which has resulted from this decision, has the potential to re-create the conditions from which the group had emerged in the first place. It also seems obvious that none of the political grievances that gave the group a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of its followers have been addressed. It is vitally important, therefore, for NATO members to remain engaged.

Indeed, the wider regional situation in the Middle East continues to be highly volatile. Given that more than 80 per cent of terrorist attacks globally occur in the context of violent conflicts, and that a large part of the remaining 20 per cent are linked to those conflicts, the prospect of a regional confrontation between Saudi-Arabia and Iran will inevitably have consequences for the level of terrorism in the Middle East and beyond. Both countries have histories of framing their grievances in sectarian terms – appealing to Sunnis and Shias respectively – and have supported sectarian proxy groups, which have used terrorist tactics and/or evolved into

terrorist groups. Should the confrontation between the two powers escalate, it is reasonable to expect that this will lead to increased support for proxy groups in various conflict theatres, such as Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, and may spill over to the territories of their respective allies. This will have significant consequences for terrorism, and may empower groups like Hezbollah and/or Sunni jihadist groups across the region.

## Far-right extremism

As well as jihadism, NATO member states are increasingly affected by a rise of far-right extremism. To some extent, this is a result of the increasing domestic polarisation that could be witnessed across Europe and North America in recent years, with increasing conflicts and the nature and identity of Western societies, as well as issues like immigration,

globalisation, and rapid economic change. In practically every Western country, there has been an increase in incidents of so-called hate crime, which are defined as criminal offences that are motivated by offenders' bias. In addition, there has been a rise in extreme Right terrorist attacks, often carried out by lone attackers who have been socialised into far-right communities on the internet. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies across NATO member states believe that this trend is likely to continue.

One particular risk is what academics have described as 'cumulative extremism', whereby jihadists and far-right extremists justify their attacks with reference to the others. An example was the March 2019 attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, which the attacker explained as a response to jihadist terrorism. Writing in his manifesto, he claimed that he "could no longer ignore these attacks. They were attacks on my people, attacks on my culture". Islamic State, in turn, called on its supporters to respond to Christchurch by launching more attacks of their own, demonstrating that 'the enemies of Islam' had to pay a price. It is easy to see how such dynamics could create vicious cycles of violence and increase the potential for communal conflict.

Moreover, supporters of the extreme Right are increasingly networked across national borders. While earlier far-right groups had focused on the situation in their own countries, and only maintained sporadic links to their 'brethren' abroad, recent years have seen the emergence of transnational networks on virtual message boards like 8Chan, where the 'struggle' is consciously framed as one for 'European civilisation'. Many of the individuals who populate these message boards are socially isolated males, who consider themselves 'losers' and are inspired by the actions of 'lone shooters' such as the Christchurch attacker. While there are limits to which these individuals are capable of collective action, they represent a significant – and growing threat – to the security of NATO member states, and increasingly



“”  
The prospect of a regional confrontation between Saudi-Arabia and Iran will inevitably have consequences for the level of terrorism in the Middle East and beyond

**Mission accomplished? A coalition member hangs an 81mm mortar prior to launching it at a known ISIS location near the Iraqi-Syrian border on May 13, 2018. The coalition provided fire support and air-strikes to assist the Syrian Democratic Forces as they continued Operation Roundup, the military offensive to destroy the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and liberate all land east of the Euphrates River.**

Credit: US Army, SSgt Timothy R. Koster



“““

While the ‘Caliphate’ no longer exists, the movement and ideas behind it continue to have some traction. Furthermore, Islamic State as an organisation has not disappeared, but merely gone underground, waiting for the next opportunity to re-emerge

require international cooperation and exchange.

### **Other forms of terrorism**

All forms of terrorism reflect societal fault lines of conflicts, and are often directly related to them. As a result, anyone who wants to predict or anticipate future types of terrorism needs to take a close interest in the wider political cleavages and tensions that could give rise to radical and, in some instances, violent activism. For example, while the anti-climate change movement that has grown stronger in many countries is largely peaceful and has expressed legitimate political grievances, there can be no doubt that some of its fringes have increasingly portrayed the problem in urgent and existential terms, made demands that no liberal democracy can easily meet, and been prepared to break laws in the name of their cause. Once it becomes clear that radical change is not possible or forthcoming, it will require significant discipline for their movement to maintain a peaceful stance and prevent violent splinters from emerging.

Equally, NATO member states are likely to be affected by spillovers from conflicts outside their borders. This may be relevant, for example, with respect to the conflicts in Kashmir and between Turkey and Kurdish forces in northern Syria. With

significant diaspora communities in NATO member states, such conflicts hold the potential for causing terrorist activity, including fundraising, recruitment, if not outright attacks.

Lastly, there is an ongoing threat from state-sponsored terrorism, which – again – may be related to conflicts in other parts of the world. Groups like Hezbollah, for example, have long built structures across Western countries, which may be reactivated in the case of a wider conflict in the Middle East and target Western institutions and those of Iran’s self-declared enemies.

It is important, therefore, that NATO member states realise that terrorism is not ‘over’ with the defeat of Islamic State, and that global cooperation against terrorism is a never-ending task. While few of these threats are likely to trigger Article 5, NATO can nevertheless make a significant contribution in minimising the resulting risks, for example by maintaining its efforts in capacity building, training, and exchange of information.

*Peter R. Neumann is Professor of Security Studies, King’s College London, and served as Director of the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR), 2008-18.*

---

# CYBER THREATS TO NATO

---

*Professor Sir David Omand GCB*

*War Studies Department, King's College London and  
former UK Security and Intelligence Coordinator,  
Cabinet Office, Director GCHQ and Deputy Under  
Secretary of State for Policy, MOD London*

---

I have been asked to address the subject of cyber threats to NATO. I interpret that as not just threats to NATO as an institution but also threats to the work of NATO through member nations engaged in NATO business and contributing forces to live NATO operations.

Let me start with an unchallengeable proposition. Any serious armed conflict in which advanced states participate will involve a cyber dimension. When NATO forces face a serious adversary then the NATO commanders will – must – have at the back of their minds the worry that the adversary will succeed in blunting some of their capabilities. It might be that satellite communications systems, GPS, air defences or a C4I system will not work as expected or in the future, who knows, it may be that weapons systems and their sensors cannot be relied upon to function as they should because of adversary cyber action, including trojan attacks inside key software – or in the future – hardware that is activated when hostilities start.

The security problems for those that design, manufacture and maintain complex electronic systems are hard. There will be no sure way of providing the level of assurance in future that a NATO commander would have today that it will be all right on the night. There are mitigating steps that can be taken in the design of new weapons systems, such as using mathematically sophisticated methods for writing secure code. Manufacturing can be in-sourced to secure facilities inside some NATO member states. Restrictions can be imposed on which countries may supply weapons systems components to NATO nations.

Redundancy can be designed into communications systems that can be architected to continue to function even when degraded. And so on. There is only one certainty. Such measures will push up costs. The cost of consumer digital devices and apps may be falling but the costs will rise of the specialised forms of these technologies that have to be guaranteed to work under very hostile conditions. And more intensive personnel vetting to guard against the insider attack will become even more important than it was during the Cold War and that will add cost too.

If what I have just described looks difficult then you would be right. But that is the easy part of dealing with the cyber threat to NATO since it relates directly to military capability itself. The cyber threat to NATO is very much wider than that. A second preliminary remark is to point to the dependence of modern armed forces on digitised information. It is in the nature of such information that it can not only be stolen, but denied, altered and corrupted – and we might not know that in time.

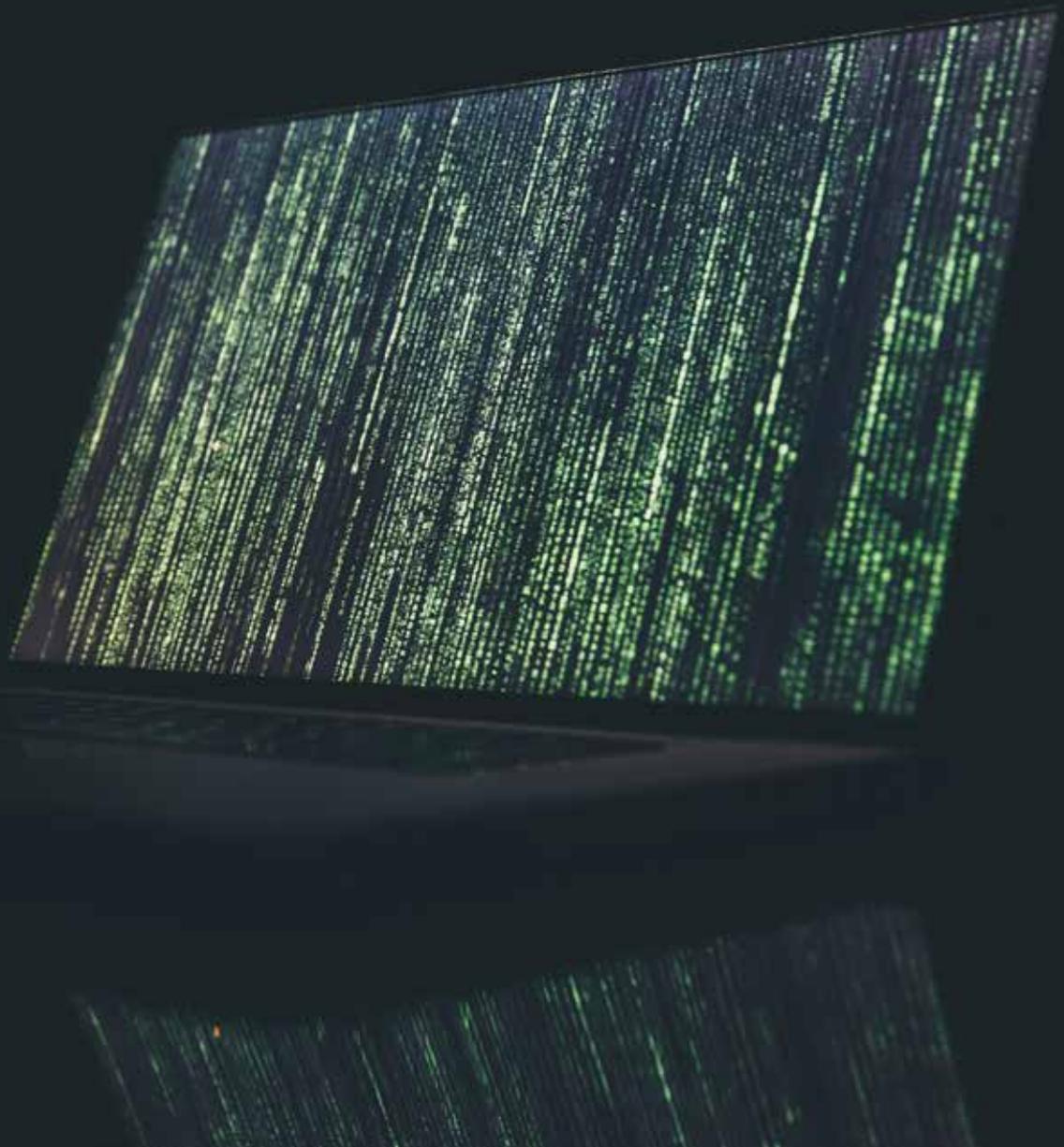
“““

The security problems for those that design, manufacture and maintain complex electronic systems are hard. There will be no sure way of providing the level of assurance in future that a NATO commander would have today that it will be all right on the night

Which brings me to a third preliminary remark, that modern armed forces are more dependent than ever on the functioning of the critical national infrastructure on which everyday life depends such as power, communications, and logistics. Most of the infrastructure is in the hands of the private sector and not under government control. NATO's defence capabilities are dependent on the proper functioning of tens of thousands of digital systems over which neither NATO nor the NATO nations have much, if any, control.

In the old days, there were elaborate war books with plans on which NATO mobilisation and transition to war would depend, taking ships up from trade, commandeering roll-on roll-off ferries and protecting the critical infrastructure nodes from sabotage. Today's digital world is very different.

I have an acronym to describe the wider range of cyber threats from hostile states and non-state actors to which NATO and NATO nations, companies, and citizens are now exposed: CESSPIT [Crime, Espionage, Sabotage and Subversion Perverting Internet Technology].



These threats are getting worse and are persistent. In the cyber domain the absence of war does not mean the absence of conflict. Let me therefore look at the relevance of that new threat environment, what has been called the grey zone, to NATO as a functioning Alliance. I start with crime. We are all aware of the rise in cyberattacks for illegal gain, with a low risk of being caught, the ability of criminals to base themselves in countries with no extradition treaties, and the generally lower penalties for what is seen as a white collar crime that does not put the public in direct danger. NATO has many administrative systems. They handle payments and receipts, and are therefore a target in the same way as in every company or government department. The response has to be to adopt the same cyber security measures as other large complex organisations, including attention to the people dimension given the insider threat.

When defence industry improved their corporate IT systems, criminal groups and hostile states started to attack their legal advisers, their auditors and the small- and medium-sized enterprises in their supply chain since they were likely to be

less well defended yet still had digital connectivity with the high value target. We also know that in the case of Russia, criminal groups are used by state intelligence agencies as hackers for hire. Even administrative systems for NATO could therefore represent security vulnerabilities.

Which takes me to the next letter in the acronym, E for espionage. When it comes to the digital espionage threat, NATO is a target three times over. NATO is first of all an important international organisation and therefore attracts attention from the intelligence agencies of a very wide number of countries, all of which maintain capability in Brussels. The head of Belgium's domestic security service was reported a few years ago as saying that Brussels had taken over from Vienna the title of spy capital of the world, given the very large number of diplomatic targets and international organisations located there. The list of attackers extends well beyond the obvious rogue states.

We should remember the military maxim that you attack where the enemy is most vulnerable not where the enemy is

strongest. The hostile intelligence agency will look to target those member states whose cyber security is relatively less advanced than others. And to recruit agents similarly, who may be able to facilitate digital access. That is another big difference with the pre-digital age of the Cold War. Once inside, the attacker will spend months moving laterally round the system trying to locate the really valuable information and acquiring the access permissions and passwords to access it. And at that point it is not just a few key documents that are covertly purloined but the whole database. It is all stolen, as Edward Snowden's thefts from NSA remind us. A second characteristic is that NATO has the United States at its heart, including its nuclear capability declared to NATO. For nations such as Russia, China, Iran and North Korea, NATO and its member states represent a route into gathering information about the US defence community. A third reason for NATO to be a major intelligence target is that it is an operational organisation that potential adversaries need to study closely in order to identify capabilities, orders of battle, command structures and all the C5I processes that support them.

In Cold War days, espionage against NATO and the NATO nations was a given. But all that peacetime hostile intelligence activity against NATO could be kept in a different conceptual box from the threat of aggressive use of armed force against the NATO area which the NATO strategy of defence and deterrence successfully contained. That is not possible in today's digital world. The difference between today's cyber intrusion into a computer system for the purpose of espionage and a cyberattack intended to destroy or degrade that system is only few lines of code. The intrusion and subsequent exploration and mapping of the network may be for the purpose of intelligence gathering, or it may be to conduct immediate sabotage, or it may be to plant malware for later activation, for example in the event of hostilities. You cannot be sure. Nor will we always be as certain as we would want to be who conducted a cyberattack when we discover it since the ways of creating false flags on attacks is getting more sophisticated. Attribution will be hard.

My next letter in the acronym is S for sabotage. The cyber threat to the critical infrastructure of NATO nations is well recognised. A recent example shows the destructive potential of sabotage attacks, the Russian NotPetya worm was released to cripple targets in Ukraine but escaped. It infected companies around the world including the logistic systems of Maersk, the world's largest shipping conglomerate. The company was within minutes of losing the global systems that record what is in each container, where it presently is and where it is going. Without that knowledge even a giant hyper-efficient company dies, and dies quickly. Maersk has estimated the cost of this Russian cyberattack at between \$250-300 million. The lesson for NATO and Western nations of the sabotage threat is clear.

It is a hard problem to defend infrastructure since much of it is in private sector hands and it is civil government that has the largest role in advising on peacetime cybersecurity. But as I have already pointed out, attackers pick the weakest link in the chain,

so NATO must work with the cyber security organisations in member states to raise everyone's game, drawing on the experience of the nations that are furthest ahead in devising and implanting national cyber security strategies.

The fourth letter is S for subversion. An examination of Soviet subversive activity directed against NATO nations during the Cold War shows that there are three key components: intimidation of the victim; hostile propaganda directed at the victim, at the international community to warn them off interfering and at the Russian domestic audience; and 'active measures' otherwise known as dirty tricks, such as using covert agents of influence, spreading anti-Western rumours and planting forgeries and fake stories. All these three components of subversion can now be carried out more easily and cheaply using digital means. Russia has continued the Soviet tradition and is active in directing such digital subversive activity against NATO as an institution (for example over forward deployments) and against NATO nations (for example the interference with the 2016 US election and the disinformation campaigns in Europe stoking tensions over immigration and trying to undermine sanctions on Russia over Ukraine).

“““  
**Attackers pick the weakest link in the chain, so NATO must work with the cyber security organisations in member states to raise everyone's game, drawing on the experience of the nations that are furthest ahead in devising and implanting national cyber security strategies**

What should NATO do? In brief, establish common situational awareness of everything that is going on by way of cyber threats against NATO and NATO nations; agree a NATO-wide cyber security strategy that addresses all the vectors of threat; build programmes of action to enhance cyber defence of NATO networks including recent developments in active defence (as is being used for the UK government sub-domain, .gov.uk). It will be essential to address human as well as technical aspects of security; and engage in mutual support to ensure all NATO nations reach the standards of the best.

All of that contributes to 'deterrence by denial' by making NATO a harder target. In addition, there is deterrence of potential adversaries through the threat of offensive cyber capability that a number of NATO nations have already said they are developing. Comparisons with the role of nuclear weapons in NATO strategy

would be highly misleading. But we should think about mechanisms within the Alliance for planning and consultation on the role of offensive cyber in Article V circumstances (including where there is loss of life and damage equivalent to an Article V armed attack).

I would expect the nations that possess offensive cyber capability to reserve to themselves final decisions on use (where there is a parallel with the nuclear weapons declared to NATO) but there needs to be understanding of the general nature of the capability, and integration of this component of warfare into strategy and doctrine for the major NATO commanders (again perhaps some read across to the pioneering 1960s work of the US chaired NPG staff group). Such consultative mechanisms might then take on the task of building NATO doctrine for response to peacetime cyberattacks below the threshold of armed attack. What we can be certain of is that there is plenty here for NATO to work on over the coming years.



---

## COHESION AND SHARED CULTURE: NATO'S KEY ASSETS IN RESPONSE TO THE NEW STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

---

*Professor Malcolm Chalmers*  
*Deputy Director General, Royal United Services Institute*

---

Today's strategic environment is characterised by persistent competition between states, most of all between the West, Russia and China, but also more broadly as nationalist narratives gain traction in many key middle powers. While this competition does not itself lead to war, it makes the international system more vulnerable to unpredictable shocks. Today, some of the most worrying potential shocks are those often characterised as being 'grey zone' – intended to be below the threshold that risks triggering a broader conflict. There can be no all-out winners in the competition between NATO, Russia and China. Nor is its end in prospect any time in the foreseeable future. Rather we can look forward to frequent, and continuing, probing and opportunistic behaviour – subversion, espionage, assassinations, designed to gain tactical advantages in the ongoing struggle.

Much of this behaviour will be reactive – seen by its perpetrators as a necessary response to unexpected threats, even while its adversaries see it as an unprovoked escalation. Thus the two biggest shocks emanating from Russia over the last five years – in Ukraine and Syria – were both triggered by revolutions that threatened to undermine and replace

Russian allies. In response, Russia launched rapid actions that presented NATO allies with a 'fait accompli' – unable to respond directly without risking escalation to wider conflict. Rather, they responded indirectly, primarily through economic sanctions and security assistance.

This scratchy game of proxy conflict is not new. But new technologies are changing and expanding the tools available to both the West and its competitors. And the close economic interdependence between the West, Russia and China (in contrast to the Cold War) also changes the equation. On the one hand, mutual interests can deepen the incentives to avoid escalation. But it also heightens concern over mutual vulnerability – as seen most recently in debates over Chinese ownership of critical national infrastructure and suppliers of key technologies. As a result we may now be at a tipping point, leading to much greater security protectionism, even if this involves reductions in economic efficiency.

### **Cohesion**

In the face of this complex and fluid environment, NATO is as relevant as ever. It is a remarkable institution, with no equivalent in any other part of the world or indeed in European history. But it is not a supranational institution. Unlike the EU, there is no NATO body of agreed law, far

less a NATO supreme court. Rather, NATO's relevance, as a grouping of sovereign states, rests on the continuing and active consent of its member governments to be effective. Even so, since its creation, NATO has been central in cementing a lasting peace between the major powers of Europe, adding immeasurably to British and European security, and playing a central role in creating and sustaining the US's role as the world's leading superpower. Other elements have played key roles in Europe's Long Peace since 1945 – the triumph of liberal democracy, the restraint imposed by nuclear weapons, the building of the European Union. But the commitments embodied in the NATO Treaty also remain key to Europe's peace.

For a moment, just consider what a Europe in which NATO had lost its relevance (or disappeared altogether) might look like. Would it see a return to shifting bilateral alliances and nationalisms? Enhanced competition between multiple European powers, even as Europe as a whole was getting ever smaller compared with the big powers of the world? And how far would a more divided Europe be easier for Russia and China, both of whom would have a natural interest in dealing with Europeans separately rather than together? Some in the current US administration, led by President Trump, see the appeal in a weaker NATO, allowing them to privilege bilateral relations with favoured European leaders even as they confront others when they are seen as posing a threat to US interests. But such a view does not command the support of most of the US political establishment, who understand how profoundly a strong NATO is in the interests of all its members.

But we do need to recognise the challenge that the rise of nationalism amongst key member states now poses to NATO. And NATO members, while remaining entirely respectful of national sovereignty, can gain from working together to protect their democratic systems from external interference (especially, at present, from Russia). But, while doing so, NATO also needs to respect differences between its members. It is not the role of NATO to police the internal politics of its member states, far less to impose specific political conditionalities (for example on Turkey). And NATO should also be careful to respect the deep-seated asymmetries in defence capabilities and cultures between its members, which are deeply rooted in the nature of the post war settlement. The US, UK and France will continue to spend more on defence – and be more militarily active – than Germany and



Credit: Crown Copyright

“”

NATO should also be careful to respect the deep-seated asymmetries in defence capabilities and cultures between its members, which are deeply rooted in the nature of the post war settlement. The US, UK and France will continue to spend more on defence – and be more militarily active – than Germany and Italy. Burden-sharing targets and processes do have a place.

Italy. Burden-sharing targets and processes do have a place, as they have had since the alliance was founded. But a sense of proportion and mutual respect is needed if these targets are not to undermine the very cohesion that they are designed to promote. NATO is not a protection racket, and the Article 5 security guarantee cannot be made hostage to meeting the two per cent target.

At the same time, member states cannot expect automatic protection from their allies whatever they themselves do. If a NATO state, for example, were to attack another country without consultation or provocation, and then faced a counter attack, it could not then expect NATO to automatically come to its defence. Most member states understand this very well. But it does bear repetition, not least in order to ensure that shared risks must be linked to shared understanding of how these risks are responsibly managed.

### Culture

Finally, much of what NATO does as an organisation needs to be understood not only as being about providing the most efficient collective defence. It is also about deepening solidarity, and a sense of shared strategic and military culture, even as it continues to respect the independence and sovereignty of member states. It is about being both militarily and politically interoperable, enhancing the credibility of the commitment to fight together when the time comes. In the end, the most precious deterrence that NATO has is its remarkable ability to remain united against external threats. That commitment, made seven long decades ago, remains remarkably strong. But it is not without its challenges, not least in a world where nationalist thinking is gaining traction, and in which its competitors would clearly benefit from a less cohesive NATO.



Credit: Kremlin.ru

“”

How far would a more divided Europe be easier for Russia and China, both of whom would have a natural interest in dealing with Europeans separately rather than together?

# STRENGTHENING C2 AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THE HIGH NORTH AND BALTIC SEA REGIONS

*Lt Gen Stuart Skeates*

*Deputy Commander, Joint Forces Command Brunssum*

Just over 70 years ago, The Washington Treaty was signed by the 12 founding nations at the Departmental Auditorium of the State Department in Washington DC. The 14 articles explain the purpose of NATO, its principles and how it will react at a time of crisis. The focus on the values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are its bedrock and have never been more important. These principles have been the foundation of the strength and unity of the Alliance, allowing it to successfully address the instability that threatens the Alliance, whilst maintaining peace in Europe. As we enter the eighth decade of NATO, the core tenets of NATO's existence remain the same, yet the landscape has changed considerably. Existing threats regenerate and evolve, new threats emerge – currently, NATO faces the twin threats presented by terrorist groups and Russia – as well as the challenges posed by climate change and by state and non-state actors alike. As NATO continues to adapt, it has welcomed new members to support the fundamental principles of cooperative security, collective defence and deterrence and crisis management.

Confronting and competing against these threats means that NATO will have to pick up and maintain its current programme of adaptation. The nature of this adaptation is structural, conceptual and operational and Headquarters Joint Force Command Brunssum has an important role to play since SACEUR has given it the responsibility for coordinating deterrence activity in the High North and Baltic Sea Regions. Alongside our sister command in Naples, which is responsible for Southern Europe and the Mediterranean Region, NATO is now able to orchestrate deterrence across the whole of Europe. Naturally, we cannot do this alone and rely heavily on the capabilities provided by the Single Service Commands (SSC); MARCOM, LANDCOM and AIRCOM. In addition, at the tactical level there is a growing network of regionally-focussed HQs, in our case Multinational Corps North-East (MNC(NE)), Multinational Division North (MND(N)) and Multinational Division North-East (MND(NE)). To supplement these permanent HQs, there are the more familiar deployable elements such as UKMARFOR, the UK JFAC and HQ ARRC which take their place in the NATO Response Force cycle. Their deployment to our Region would be enabled by the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs); small, joint units who are NATO's liaison elements in the three Baltic States, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary.

This describes a broad mosaic of C2 capabilities and entities, all designed to provide the brains behind any future crisis

or conflict. But as I have already mentioned, the challenge today is for NATO to contribute towards a deterrence strategy which will require us to compete in a tense and corrosive hybrid environment. The question, therefore, is how to adapt these structures designed for crisis and conflict – and all that they do to prepare for such – for modern hybrid deterrence. It is worth mentioning two points before explaining how we are doing this at JFC Brunssum. The first is that the NATO Command Structure is a powerful capability in and of itself, not just providing the brain but being a repository of insight and influence for all three NATO tasks: collective defence; crisis response; and security through partnerships. Secondly, and consequently, these structures are not 'overheads' and we must counter the self-harming narratives concerning numbers of HQs. There are certainly efficiencies that can

be made and there is a strong argument using national HQs (such as the Norwegian JHQ or the UK's SJFHQ) in support of NATO. But the benefit of having a comprehensive C2 network is incalculable in assisting NATO's situational understanding and in allowing a rapid and robust response to crises. More immediately for the problem at hand, this C2 network allows NATO to contribute the military instrument far more meaningfully to deterrence; or as NATO describes it, Baseline Activity and Current Operations (BACO).



“““  
To supplement these permanent HQs, there are the more familiar deployable elements such as UKMARFOR, the UK JFAC and HQ ARRC

So how is JFC Brunssum contributing to BACO? In terms of 'Ends', classification prevents exposing much detail but contesting the hybrid space in all domains, including information, space and cyber is the express aim described in SACEUR's Deterrence and Defence in the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA). Describing the two main threats to NATO as being Russia and terrorist groups, it is the first NATO Strategy to have been produced since 1967. As a joint operational HQ, Brunssum is ideally placed to deliver joint activity in cooperation with SSC and MNC(NE) (in essence, our components) and to orchestrate this with national activity (principally training and exercises) as well as International Organisations and when appropriate Non-Governmental Organisations. Brunsum's formal agreements with partner nations, Finland and Sweden, and its strong links to US EUCOM, PJHQ and the Norwegian Joint HQ also allow a significant degree of coordination in the High North and the Baltic Sea Regions.

The 'Means' for this approach are the authorities granted to JFC Brunssum to achieve all of this and, for the first time in many years, these have been granted. The Joint C2 Concept of Operations and the accompanying Domain C2 Concepts will clarify roles and responsibilities for BACO as well as all other types of operation. Regardless of formal command relationships, as ever with NATO the most important 'Means' is unity of effort. It is striking, although not

especially surprising, that those allies in our regions (including partners) recognise JFC Brunssum's authority to coordinate and synchronise activity in BACO as NATO's military contribution to deterrence and are very keen to do so.

But it is the 'Ways' which we at Brunssum have been focussing on these past six months under the Commander's initiative of 'Strengthening C2 and Relationships in Implementation Area (North)'<sup>2</sup>. First and foremost it recognises that command, control and coordination of all these interlinked bodies has become exceedingly complex. Secondly, it recognises that the increasing political and security responsibilities must be matched by increasing effectiveness to allow NATO and allies to respond at the speed of relevance and in a coordinated way. Thirdly, it preserves the sovereignty of specific capabilities and activities that are provided for national defence, although often these support NATO requirements. Fourthly, and consequently, it does not aspire to centralising command but achieving unity of effort among allies and partners with a common purpose. And finally, it exploits JFC Brunssum's capability 24/7/365 as an operational headquarters that is joint, multi-national and interagency by design.

In the relatively short period of implementation, there has been positive and encouraging progress. The most important consideration has been the provision of clear leadership for NATO's contribution to deterrence in our Regions. This has meant providing the vision, the thought leadership and taking responsibility for doing the hard yards or coordination. It also means clarifying the existing C2 relationships in the Brunssum area, many of which are based on legacy decisions made in good faith but which have been overtaken by adaptation. In this sense, reaching out to establish relationships with joint and operations staff in the Allied and Partner Nations (particularly Sweden and Finland) has been equally valuable. Given that the majority of NATO's contribution to deterrence

---

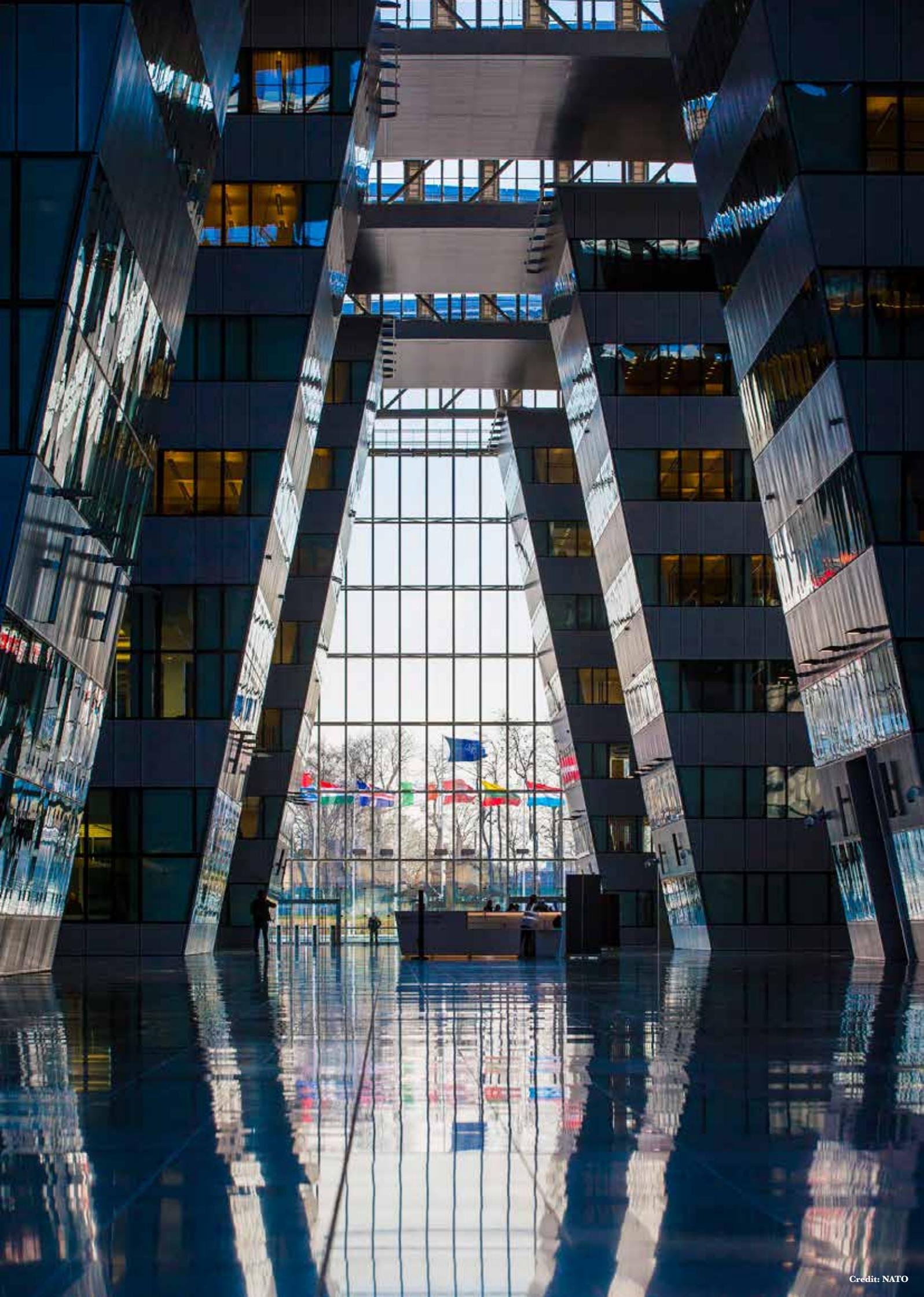
<sup>2</sup>Implementation Area (North) is an historic phrase used to describe the area contained within the Graduated Response Plans for which JFC Brunssum is responsible: Iceland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary. It may also comprise US, UK, Denmark, Greenland, Sweden and Finland according to permissions and circumstance. Allies who provide the framework nation apparatus for NATO organisations such as NFUUs and eFP can also be included in specific circumstances.

is training and exercises, this approach creates the mechanism to coordinate (and if possible synchronise) the larger and more joint exercises, most of which have been planned years in advance, to achieve the right effects.

What does this look like? Once again, it is important to emphasise that it does not equate to JFC Brunssum 'commanding' or taking ownership of national activities. To date, most allies have volunteered to align their exercises to NATO requirements. As a start point, we have focussed on ensuring that between HQ JFC Brunssum and the lead joint HQ there is shared situational awareness, concurrent monitoring of indicators and warnings, and alignment of StratCom. This has had the effect of linking up JOCs (preferably with a Common Operating Picture), intelligence collection branches (important for information sharing) and communications divisions (to reinforce social media messaging). Since May 2019, Brunssum has achieved this during the US-led Baltic Operations (BALTOPS), Exercise BALTIC PROTECTOR (the UK-led JEF deployment to the Baltic Sea, pictured below), the German-led Exercise NORTHERN COAST and the UK's eFP fleet rotation (Exercise TRACTABLE). Looking forward to next year, US DEFENDER 2020 offers a further opportunity to expand this linkage and, particularly with US EUCOM, deepen it. The benefits in terms of NATO's ability to take command rapidly of a deploying force, regardless of the providing nation, are obvious. As we know, deterrence aims to change an adversary's calculations, making the costs of a potential course of action outweigh the benefits. The benefits of smoothing the seam between national and NATO responses to crisis in our regions are self-evident.

The 'Strengthening C2 and Relationships' initiative is only a start and, based on the principle 'think big, start small' Brunssum will continue to develop ways of organising NATO for deterrence and reassurance in IA(N). As part of this, we must integrate national activity, particularly with allies in our regions and key framework nations such as US and UK. In time, the aspiration is to have the ability to target and modulate activity to achieve the desired reassurance or deterrence effect in all domains.







---

## CHACR MISSION STATEMENT

**To conduct and sponsor research and analysis into the enduring nature and changing character of conflict on land and to be the active hub for scholarship and debate within the Army in order to develop and sustain the Army's conceptual component of fighting power.**