



NATO Foundation
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Background Policy Paper

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NATO is the most successful political-military alliance in history, and yet it is time to focus once again on the purpose of the transatlantic relationship. The Alliance was born as part of a rather coherent environment of international norms influenced by democracy, free market, and international cooperation, based on a relatively rule-based order. Today, rules are often considered less cogent by a number of democracies and authoritarian states, therefore trust and political consensus among Allies is a crucial necessity.

Political vagaries apart, the need to rebuild a consensus has been clearly identified in the reflection exercise *NATO 2030*. It started in December 2019 when political leaders asked the Secretary General (SG) to lead a reflection process to strengthen the Alliance. The 31st of March 2020, an independent expert group was appointed, while in June the SG established his priorities for NATO 2030. The report of the independent group was presented the 25th of November 2020, providing 138 recommendations.

The process continued with a food for thought paper of the SG, published the 11th of February 2021 in preparation of the discussion for the NATO Summit in Brussels (the 14th of June 2021) and with a short set of priorities, preceded by a short introduction. The focus is interestingly on China: *“The rise of China is shifting the global balance of power, challenging the rules-based international order and increasing geopolitical competition. China is not our adversary, but China’s rise presents risks to our security, our democracies and our way of life. This challenge is simply too big for any country to tackle alone.”*

Then are mentioned subjects like cyber and hybrid threats, emerging and disruptive technologies and the security implications of climate change, followed by existing threats like Russia and terrorism.

The eight priorities listed are:

- 1) Reinforce Unity, Cohesion and Solidarity: Increased Funding for Deterrence and Defence Activities;
- 2) Ensure a Common Level of Allied Resilience: Enhanced Focus on Resilience;
- 3) Preserve our Technological Edge: Greater Support for Transatlantic Defence Innovation and Interoperability;

- 4) Increase Political Consultation and Coordination among Allies in NATO: Renewed Political Commitment;
- 5) Take a more Global Approach: Defending the Rules-based International Order and Cooperating with Like-Minded Partners;
- 6) Contribute to the Security and Stability of our Neighbourhood: Strengthened Commitment to Training and Capacity Building;
- 7) Combat and Adapt to Climate Change: Enhanced Global Climate and Security Agenda;
- 8) Cement the Transatlantic Bond: the 2022 Strategic Concept.

Particularly relevant is the issue of political consultation and coordination, because on the one hand it is a matter of more frequent meetings, but on the other, there is a need for a qualitative enhancement of the political engagement within the NAC and from the member countries (political directors' meeting are one component of this improvement).

The idea of periodic consultations of Ministers of Interior and National Security Advisors is quite interesting because it touches rather directly the issue of the closer collaboration with the European Union, whose Justice and Home Affairs sector is very developed and where the blending of terrorism, trafficking and organised crime is firmly in the agenda. Some of these aspects should be considered by the new Strategic Concept, foreseen for 2022.

In this respect, partnerships should be adequately developed since they are a very cost-effective instrument to bolster the security and stability of old and new neighbourhoods, provided that they are properly supported with means, staff and policies.

In conclusion, the Alliance needs more than an incremental and ad hoc adaptation. It needs to reassess in-depth its *raison d'être* in terms of transatlantic relationship and the probable strategic consequences of specific political choices. It should remain as the most important security provider in this fragmented and potentially dangerous environment. The transatlantic bond has proven on several occasions through seven decades to be a formidable added value to project security and stability, but bureaucratic complacency through cosmetic changes is not helpful. It is of course a very ambitious agenda and we

hope that the member states will have the determination to enact real reforms for an Alliance kept abreast with times.

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