



**NATO Foundation**  
*Defense College*



*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, in some cases they are brutally broken despite ratified treaties. Therefore, trust and political consensus among Allies is a crucial necessity.

A critical element of consensus is evidently the Strategic Concept of the Alliance, one of its most important documents, that will be presented at this year's NATO Summit in Madrid (29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of June). The need to rebuild a consensus was clearly identified in the reflection exercise *NATO 2030*, started in December 2019 and concluded on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2020. The process continued with a food for thought paper of the Secretary General, published on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2021.

The recent tragic events have proven that the Alliance has to reassess in-depth its *raison d'être* in terms of transatlantic relationship and the strategic consequences of specific political choices because it must remain the most important security provider in this fragmented and potentially dangerous environment.

The war has obviously put collective defence in the fore because Putin has clearly broken an already shaky European security architecture, yet crisis management and cooperative security are not abstract alternatives, they are just complementary instruments of a security triad.

Facing such an adversary will need to overcome stale debates and to concentrate instead on concrete capabilities that have to be generated in equal proportions by North American and European Allies alike in the European theatre. Keeping a technological edge in critical sectors like emerging and disruptive technologies, in order to face also cyber and hybrid threats, is of paramount importance, while preserving a robust and adequate industrial and technology base on both sides of the Atlantic.

An important point will be to acknowledge that NATO's security is effectively at 360°, firstly because all-round solidarity produces an indivisible security. This is what made and will make credible Article 5 of the Washington Treaty: indeed, its first invocation in 9/11, against any possible forecast, clearly demonstrated what indivisible security means.

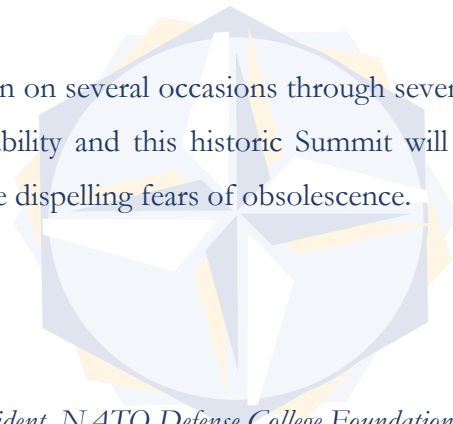
Secondly, because evident infiltrations and encroachments in the Gulf, the Levant, North Africa and the Sahel create security threats or risks that span from the Southern Region, to the Balkans, to Eastern and

Northern Europe. Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative Partners are clearly affected by these developments, touching also food, energy and maritime security in a serious way.

While Article 5 remains the guarantee for Allies, partnerships need much more investment and focussed political engagement in order to strengthen simultaneously political connections, local capacities and political resilience by carrying out co-operative security according to local priorities and not to some externally imposed paradigm. These Partners too deserve the same amount and quality of discreet help that the Ukrainians got in the past and that helped them remarkably in the present, because we cannot afford to have other Partners risking to be jeopardised.

NATO remains by treaty and concrete experience a defensive regional organisation, but this does not preclude a wise global awareness on security links, ramifications and interdependences. China is considered a relevant global power to engage and the past experience of the Harmel method (dialogue and deterrence) will be particularly useful.

The transatlantic bond has proven on several occasions through seven decades to be a formidable added value to project security and stability and this historic Summit will confirm its important function in different and difficult times, while dispelling fears of obsolescence.



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