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Beyond Deterrence: NATO's Agenda after Warsaw

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Key Points

- By moving from reassurance to deterrence, Warsaw concludes NATO's adaptation to the New Normal on its Eastern Flank. The Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) ends the military bifurcation between "old" and "new" members – while still complying with the NATO Russia Founding Act.
- While the EFP overcomes many of the weaknesses of the Wales decisions – particularly with regard to stationing – its actual implementation is still in an early stage and many questions remain.
- To achieve consensus, NATO had to adopt a dual approach of both deterrence and dialogue towards Russia. While this double strategy reconciled the opposing camps, it also means that ambitions for this dialogue vary widely across allies.
- While a strategy for the East is now in place, NATO still lacks a coherent approach to its Southern flank. A strong need to act is felt across the Alliance, but NATO's exact role remains highly disputed even in its "Southern" camp. The summit emphasized Defense Capacity Building as NATO's contribution, but it can hardly be considered a silver bullet.
- In the long term, NATO's efforts will remain meaningless without a significant improvement of its military capabilities – which will require sustaining the recent positive trends in defense spending.
- The Summit also heralded a new initiative on NATO-EU cooperation. While it is the first to be accompanied by a concrete tasker to both bureaucracies, it remains to be seen whether greater progress is achievable this time.
- Ultimately, the impending elections in the U.S., but also in other countries, turned the Summit into some kind of a holding summit. Further decisions on the Alliance's future will have to wait for the next Summit at NATO's new headquarters in Brussels in 2017.

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One week after NATO's Warsaw Summit, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation invited a selected group of twenty experts and officials from nine member states to its annual workshop on NATO's strategic agenda. Apart from discussing Warsaw's decisions and their future implementation, participants were asked in particular to provide concrete recommendations for German policy-makers on how Berlin could contribute to strengthening NATO's strategic outlook. The workshop, which was convened in its third iteration, took place at the Foundation's conference venue in Cadenabbia, Italy. To facilitate an open dialogue, discussions were held under the Chatham House Rule.

Introduction

The landmark decision the Summit will be remembered for is the establishment of the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), which establishes a constant rotational (and thus "persistent") presence of a total of four multinational allied battalions in Poland and each of the Baltic republics. With its decision, NATO closes the military gap between "old" and "new" allies by establishing a credible deterrence posture for its Eastern members. Almost 20 years after NATO invited the first former member of the Warsaw pact to join NATO, this so far largely political enlargement will now be completed also on the military side – just as these states have demanded for years.

With the establishment of the EFP as a "tripwire" on its Eastern flank, NATO concludes the process started in Wales in 2014 by shifting from mere reassurance to actual deterrence. The new posture is a logical consequence of the inherent problems associated with NATO's posture adopted in 2014, and in particular of the limited deterrence value of a VJTF stationed in Western Europe. Wales had provided considerable reassurance measures for the Eastern allies, but simply came too soon after Russia's annexation of Crimea to develop a credible conventional deterrence posture.

On a more strategic level, Warsaw concludes NATO's adaptation to a "new normal" on its Eastern Flank, where Russia has moved from a strategic partner to a strategic competitor. At the same time, the painful process of mustering the battalions for the EFP has also made very clear that the agreed posture presents the maximum the Alliance is willing to provide at the moment. As a matter of fact, only two European countries, Germany and the United Kingdom, could be won as framework nations for these battalions, and the United States had to considerably twist Canada's arm to jump in as the fourth framework nation at the last minute.

To secure a consensus, deterrence had to be accompanied by dialogue.

With its deterrence posture now in place, the Summit also demonstrated that allies expect this military strategy to be followed by a political strategy towards the Russian Federation. As a consequence, the summit communique urges the development of a new dialogue between NATO and Russia and gives great importance to a dual strategy of "deterrence and dialogue". While this double strategy made a consensus about the future of NATO's conventional deterrence vis-à-vis Russia possible, the very different expectations about its future dialogue present a considerable challenge to the Alliance. They also mean that lingering tensions exist about both more general questions like the ideal relative mix of deterrence and dialogue and more specific military questions.

While the concept's explicit reference to NATO's 1967 Harmel report might be taken as evidence of the German Foreign Office's tendency to re-heat outdated historic concepts for its Eastern policy, it also draws a shaky historical parallel: The Harmel report was written in a general atmosphere of East-West rapprochement, and aimed

at reflecting this development in NATO's previous very strong stance towards the East. It thus added dialogue to an already existing strong deterrence. While strategic communication does well to emphasize the parallels to Harmel, the circumstances of the new strategy actually mirror those of NATO's 1979 Double-Track decision much more closely: Just as today, East-West relations were not in good shape. Just as today, NATO felt a strong need to bolster its deterrence in the face of increasing Soviet strength. And just as today, to please its publics and accommodate the more hesitant allies, but also to facilitate genuine concessions from the other sides, NATO added a second leg of "dialogue" to this increased deterrence – which different allies emphasized to different degrees.

NATO still lacks a strategy for its Southern flank.

While the Alliance was able to agree on a common strategy for its Eastern flank – or at least to keep the disagreements under the lid – the Alliance remains in disarray when it comes to its Southern flank. While the concept of "deterrence and dialogue" provides a credible concept for NATO's approach on its Eastern flank, the Alliance lacks a blueprint for its approach to its conflict-ridden Southern periphery. The summit communique thus dedicates considerable space to the South, but offers very little actual substance in return – to the great disappointment of both NATO officials and Southern allies.

In the wake of several important elections the summit presented a "holding operation".

Finally, political developments in key member nations made the Summit a "holding operation". Warsaw concluded NATO's adaptation of the force posture on its Eastern flank and presented a concept for the Alliance's approach towards its New Normal on the Eastern flank, while failing to do so in the South. But the many uncertainties associated with the Brexit vote – which happened just shortly before the Summit –, the upcoming U.S. presidential elections, and next year's elections in Germany and France, prevented longer-term strategic planning. Despite the widely acknowledged need for institutional reform inside NATO, the adoption of Cyber as an operational domain – with unspecified consequences – and the institution of a Deputy Secretary General for Intelligence were the only major organizational reforms at the Summit. It can thus be expected that these important questions about the future of NATO will be center stage at next year's summit in the Alliance's new Headquarters in Brussels.

Conventional Deterrence: Moving on from Wales

The Enhanced Forward Presence is certainly the Summit's premier and most tangible deliverable. While it presents a success for the Alliance, the announcement of its framework nations presents only a first step and has now to be followed by a lengthy process of implementation. Now that the pledges for the framework nations have arrived, member states will have to devise proper plans for their development, structure and characteristics. Given both capabilities and strategic culture of the contributing nations, it is likely that the four battalions will differ significantly from each other. Similarly, also their stage of planning differs significantly: While e.g. the German-led battalion is already quite spelled out – and has indeed already incurred some first changes – little more than the pledge exists for the Canadian-led one.

The small size of the EFP and the adherence to the NATO-Russia Founding Act serve as a signal of restraint towards Russia.

The Enhanced Forward Presence places a tripwire along the Northeastern flank of the Alliance. This tripwire is intended to ensure that any potential incursion triggers a collective response by the Alliance. Its moderate size also makes very clear that NATO has no illusions about its ability to handle a major attack. Unable to mount a serious defense with the EFP, NATO has to follow a strategy of deterrence-by-punishment rather than deterrence-by-denial. By signaling restraint in NATO's response, this limited

capability and NATO's strict adherence to the principles of the NATO-Russia Founding Act at the same time also serve as a confidence-building measure towards Russia.

NATO's deterrence will hinge just as much on the credibility of its general force as on formations like the EFP and VJTF.

The credibility of any deterrence posture ultimately hinges on two aspects: the willingness and capability to follow through with a threat. While the establishment of the tripwire can be understood as a clear sign of NATO's willingness, far greater doubts about its credibility arise from its actual capability to follow through with its "punishment" at least in the short-term – leading critics of the deterrence posture to ask what NATO's tripwire is actually connected to. After all, after the deployment of the VJTF and possibly the NATO Response Force, additional follow-on forces and/or reinforcements would have to be drawn from allies' regular forces, whose mobilization would – if at all possible – take months.

Ensuring capable and ready follow-on forces means a shift of focus from investments on a few expeditionary elements to the general force.

While the EFP and the VJTF might thus be the most visible parts of NATO's deterrence posture, its credibility depends not only on the combat value of its forward-deployed and/or high readiness forces, as they will neither stop a full-scale invasion nor provide any credible "punishment" to an invader. Hence NATO's credibility hinges even more so on its overall armed forces and their deployability to the Eastern flank. This acknowledgment shifts part of the focus on the potential follow-on forces that NATO would be able to muster in the case of a contingency. Unfortunately, the combination of underfunding, constant overseas commitments and focusing on a few expeditionary units in the last two decades have often turned exactly these overall forces into a "hollow force". Reestablishing their credibility as a whole presents a formidable long-term challenge for the Alliance. Preparation for high-intensity warfare against a technologically advanced adversary is something most European allies have stopped considerable time ago. A credible collective defense is therefore a long way to go and will require significant investments not only in air defense, special forces, and readiness but also in people, stocks, and logistics. To mount a credible response, NATO will also have to find a way to deal with the challenges presented by Russian Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, which include not only advanced integrated air defense systems and anti-ship cruise missiles in Kaliningrad, but also Russian submarines in the North Atlantic. This might also require independent capabilities such as Anti-Submarine Warfare capabilities to guarantee the transatlantic sea lines of communication.

A military meaningless EFP would undermine rather than underline NATO's deterrence.

While NATO's general forces gain in importance, this does not mean that the EFP can be reduced to a fig leaf. For one, the Enhanced Forward Presence is simply too expensive to serve as a mere tripwire – or even as "sitting ducks". But more importantly, establishing an incapable or highly constrained presence would send the wrong signal to Russia, and might actually undermine and not underline NATO's credibility. Finally, the EFP can make a difference in hybrid scenarios. While the battalions would not be able to stop a full invasion, they can make a significant contribution in the case of a hybrid scenario and therefore have to be military meaningful, robust and well-integrated with host nation forces.

The high cost of rotations will lead to calls for permanent stationing.

By designating its battalions as rotational, NATO continues to comply with the NATO-Russia Founding Act which excludes the permanent stationing of substantial combat forces on the territory of former members of the Warsaw Pact. While some interpret this as lip-service, it actually implies a tremendous cost for the contributors who will have to rotate forces and equipment in and out of the region every couple of months. Germany and the more cautious allies might have secured adherence to the Founding Act, but pressure to move to a less expensive permanent stationing – particularly for the U.S. and Canada – can be expected to increase as costs for the rotations become real.

A credible conventional deterrence cannot be achieved under current investment and spending levels.

Both NATO's 1967 Harmel Report and its 1979 Double Track decision built on a strong defense. The same holds today: The necessary investments in both the EFP and the general force will remain impossible without achieving the agreed 2% GDP ratio of defense spending. The summit communique welcomed the positive trends in non-U.S. defense expenditures which rose by 0,6% in 2015 and are likely to grow by 3% in 2016. But most nations – including Germany – continue to fail to reach both the 2% GDP ratio and the reaffirmed 20% Defense Investment Pledge. Interestingly, it is particularly the Eastern members who are underachieving – with the exception of Poland and Estonia. This divergence between calls for NATO action and domestic underfunding will create problems over time and is certainly something that will be taken up by both candidates in the U.S. elections.

Nuclear Deterrence: Missing Dimension or Pandora's Box?

Key assumptions of NATO's DDPR are no longer tenable – but so far only its conventional deterrence has been reviewed.

The summit communique offers firm, but not new, language on nuclear deterrence and reaffirms NATO as a nuclear Alliance. It also sends a clear message to Russia that the employment of nuclear weapons would fundamentally change the nature of a potential conflict, that there is no difference between strategic and tactical nuclear weapons, and that there can thus be no "nuclear de-escalation" as sometimes imagined by Russian strategists. But while NATO has taken significant steps in the field of conventional deterrence, it has so far avoided taking a closer look at its nuclear posture. This is problematic, as at least two of the most fundamental assessments of the Alliance's 2012 Deterrence and Defense Posture Review (DDPR) – that a) Russia is a strategic partner and that b) it would not use the threat of nuclear weapons for political purposes – are no longer tenable. For Russia, nuclear weapons are an essential "equalizer" that compensates for a perceived weakness on the conventional side. Given the salience that Russia assigns to nuclear weapons, their high level of integration in Russia's overall strategy – in particular with regard to tactical nuclear weapons and "nuclear de-escalation" –, and the growing instances of Russian "nuclear signaling", it is questionable whether the adaptation of NATO's conventional deterrence alone is sufficient. If NATO's posture offered an "appropriate mix" of conventional and nuclear forces in 2012, it can hardly still be appropriate today that both the threat and the strength of the conventional deterrence have changed.

A debate on nuclear posture carries both risks and promise.

As a consequence, many perceive that it is inevitable to reopen NATO's nuclear dossier and/or to commission a new DDPR. While both a reopening of the dossier and a new DDPR remain unimaginable under Global-Zero Obama, building a consensus on this new process will be a key task for next year's summit in Brussels. However necessary these initiatives are, it is also clear that they will bring up painful questions about stationing, sharing, declaratory policy and arms control, where many – and often opposing – views are held among allies. At the same time, such innovation would have to be accompanied by a public debate, which would be very hard to win. Given the strong sensitivity on nuclear issues among domestic populations – particularly in Germany – this might appear as opening Pandora's box and risks to erode NATO's 2012 consensus.

Dialogue with Russia

Given the ongoing differences in the Alliance about how to deal with Russia, the dual concept of "deterrence and dialogue" proved to be a successful rallying point exactly because it allows individual allies to emphasize the aspect they are most comfortable with. While this solution preserved the cohesion of the Alliance, it also means that allies lack a common understanding about this dialogue. Some allies, such as Germany, deem this dialogue necessary because security in Europe cannot be achieved against Russia – or at least because Russia holds the key to many conflicts in NATO's Eastern and Southern neighborhood. As a result, these allies carry rather genuine intentions and hope to achieve at least some degree of normalization of relations with Russia in the medium to long term. Other allies, particularly those in the East, accepted this dialogue as part of a trade-off for the EFP but don't expect it to be more than a largely technical dialogue focused on risk management.

Allies' expectations about this dialogue vary greatly.

When it comes to the prospect for rapprochement, insisting on the established channels of NATO-Russia dialogue will increasingly present a structural impediment: The Russian Federation has never been a fan of how the NATO-Russia Council works, and has always perceived it as a "pre-cooked ballet" of NATO positions: 28-against-one rather than 28-plus-one or even "at 29". At the same time, NATO often remained disappointed by the discussions as well, largely because consultation failed to provide convergence on most issues. To many observers inside NATO, further investment into its dialogue with Russia indeed appears as the triumph of hope over experience. Still, it is also recognized that very few alternatives exist: Having to avoid the impression that it is deliberately locking into a confrontational stand against Russia, the Alliance is condemned to keep extending its hand to Russia.

Reliance on the established formats will harm rather than profit the dialogue.

But there are also more fundamental reasons why any dialogue through NATO will ultimately disappoint any potential Russian hopes. Even the strongest proponents of a NATO-Russia dialogue must realize that NATO will not be able to address the larger strategic grievances motivating Russian behavior. While NATO and especially its Eastern enlargement might have contributed to these grievances, they remain rooted in Russia's own inability to define a place for itself in the liberal European security order. Even if NATO's prospective dialogue were to be immensely successful, it seems unreasonable to hope that NATO can succeed where the actual institutions designed for such a dialogue – such as the OSCE – continue to fail.

Even a successful dialogue cannot settle the greater strategic question about Russia's place in Europe.

Even a dialogue focused purely on risk reduction does not necessarily imply greater success. While the NATO-Russia Council appears to be a perfect channel for risk-reduction and maintaining constant communication, at a second glance its potential role is much more limited: By design, an ambassadorial-level council cannot handle day to day operations. At maximum, the Council can establish rules of behavior – on the basis of an allied consensus that should not be taken for granted. But even if such rules could be agreed to, the Alliance has no means of guaranteeing their observance.

Russia will seek cooperation with NATO when it suits its interests. Notwithstanding all its limitations, the NATO-Russia Council provides a useful forum for this collaboration. In addition, NATO will use the Council to provide transparency about its military posture – a field where little remains to be expected from the Russian side. But to improve its relations, NATO will likely have to show some flexibility and has to offer Russia something meaningful. Finding a consensus on what to give up – and

Where it suits its interests, Russia will cooperate.

whether a better relationship with Russia is worth it – will present a formidable challenge to the Alliance.

NATO's Role in the South: DCB as the Silver Bullet?

NATO continues to be split about action in the South.

If the threat perception vis-à-vis Russia is the one issue dividing the Alliance, whether and how to stabilize NATO's Southern flank is the other. NATO's increased emphasis on collective defense and its Eastern flank has been watched with considerable suspicion by those allies who not only are skeptical whether Russia represents a real threat, but also feel that the Alliance is underestimating the real and imminent threat of terrorism and mass migration posed by the arc of instability in NATO's Southern neighborhood. They see NATO's inability to take a lead role in responding to the dangers in the South as a challenge to its relevance.

Even Southerners lack a concrete concept for NATO's strategy on the Southern flank.

The key problem of the "Southerners" in the Alliance is that, while the concept of deterrence and dialogue provides a viable approach in the East, no such concept exists for the South. While the Southerners thus want to prevent an exaggerated focus of the Alliance on the East, it remains very unclear what exactly these allies expect from NATO for their own region. Hardly any allies see a leading role for the Alliance in tackling the many challenges in the South, both because it would likely be counterproductive and because the challenges are often socio-economic and political. And yet, threats in the South also have a military dimension. Even without a NATO flag on the operation, they argue that the Alliance can provide useful operational support – as it is already doing in the Mediterranean and Aegean and has pledged in Warsaw to do in Syria.

NATO should be careful to engage just because there is a "need for action".

Still, many allies do not believe there is a role for NATO in the South at all. In their eyes, NATO is a military Alliance with a focus on the East, and has so far neither had a focus nor an institutional framework for engagement in the South. While it has long cultivated its Southern partnerships, they have not been very meaningful – largely because the needs in the South are often not in the military, but in the economic and social domains where NATO cannot bring anything to the table. While in the East the enemy is a state with armed forces, and deterrence and dialogue presents a plausible logic of reaction, the challenges in the South are of such a complexity that NATO is not designed to deal with. NATO can thus do little in isolation in the South and has to follow the lead of others. In this view, NATO should resist the temptation to seek a more active role simply because there is an overall need for action. Instead, the Alliance should concentrate on its ongoing activities in the region and stand ready to support any greater initiatives by other players in the South.

Defense Capacity Building is NATO's key contribution in the South - but faces a terrible track record.

As a result of these conflicting positions, the Summit communique contains a considerable amount of language, yet a remarkable lack of substance on the South. Where it touches on concrete issues, such as in the paragraph on Libya, it ties any potential commitment to very improbable conditions. While there was a strong drive from some Southerners to add more substance, in the end the language was watered down to the point of insignificance – particularly by France, which wants to avoid having to operate through NATO in the South, and Germany, which shares this hesitation but also wants to avoid any deeper military involvement in the South. The only concrete deliverable is thus the deployment of AWACS in support of the Anti-ISIS coalition. Apart from this direct operational support, the summit communique emphasizes *Defense Capacity Building* as NATO's primary and most effective contribution in the South – while hinting at the "dual use" and "360° approach" of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, or Spearhead, in the case of a more

urgent crisis. How exactly this *Defense Capacity Building* – in which Western states on the whole have a frustrating track record – is to be different and thus more effective than previous activities in this field remains unexplored.

EU-NATO Cooperation

The lack of cooperation between EU and NATO has often puzzled observers. At the Warsaw Summit, NATO and the EU launched yet another initiative to finally get this relationship to work. As unsurmountable as differences have proved in the past, the changes in the European security environment and the evolution of both organizations might have paved the way for more progress: While in the past both competed to establish themselves as institutions for military crisis management, NATO is today concentrating on deterrence on the Eastern flank and the EU is increasingly focused on more civilian crisis management in the South. At the same time, NATO requires the civilian support of the EU in the East, while the EU might require operational support by NATO in the South. Optimists point to this increased compatibility and the fact that this Summit's declaration is the first accompanied by a concrete tasker to both organizations – which might force the bureaucracy to overcome some of its resistance.

Cooperation in the South will be the first reality check of the new spirit between NATO and EU

Skeptics, however, point out that it remains to be seen whether more progress will actually be achievable – with engagement in Libya as a first test case. NATO's ambitions for its role and the EU's appetite for granting it are likely to differ, and the EU usually prefers not to share too much visibility. At the same time, skeptics also point to the fact that NATO's new passion for capacity building is also a strong focus of the European Union – which has struggled just as much as NATO in achieving lasting results particularly in the military domain – and worry about the organizational competition that might arise in this field.

Defense Capacity Building can easily end up in a Beauty Contest between NATO and EU

Projecting Stability: NATO's Future in Global Crisis Management

The core task of crisis management has probably been the most visible aspect of NATO over the last twenty years. It has shaped the public perception of the Alliance in an era when most believed that collective defense presented a relic of the past. Just as much as a return of collective defense appeared almost unimaginable then, a return to crisis management seems highly unlikely today. The experiences in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya have turned crisis management into what can almost be termed a toxic brand. But they have also more generally called into question military contributions to security. The result of this dissatisfaction with the crisis management of the past two decades has been a return to considerably lighter approaches, as is evident e.g. from the Obama administration's increased focus on special forces and air strikes. And even where actual operations have been agreed, their limited size has meant that allies have preferred to handle them on an ad-hoc basis rather than through NATO.

Member states appetite for larger crisis management – be it through NATO or others, is at an all-time low.

Consequently, NATO's buzzword "projecting stability" emphasizes *Defense Capacity Building* and partnerships rather than enforcement and intervention. While it is often treated as a silver bullet, the problem with this "softer approach" is that it has so far failed to deliver better results than the "old" crisis management. Moreover, in the years after its establishment, member states have been very hesitant to commit resources to NATO's *Defence and Security-Related Capacity Building Initiative* and have preferred to handle their efforts bilaterally.

NATO's "Projecting Stability" is more on the soft side and centers on Defense Capacity Building

A return to heavier crisis management can never be excluded.

In the Summit communique, NATO pledges to retain the ability for more intensive crisis management. While it is hard to imagine a situation that would trigger a sizable commitment, one should keep in mind that previous operations were not the result of careful and deliberate planning, but rather reactions to strategic shocks which can happen at any time. In addition, NATO does well to remember that – while the current environment seems to favor smaller ad-hoc coalitions rather than unwieldy organizations – the Alliance has often inherited operations once the coalitions that initiated them proved unable to deal with the complexity of the effort. Finally, the retention of the appropriate capabilities is also required to prevent the unlearning of the hard-won lessons of the previous campaigns.

NATO and the U.S. Elections

While Trump presents most allies' nightmare, Clinton is often wrongly perceived as a savior.

The impending U.S. presidential elections are one of the primary factors that turned the Warsaw Summit into a holding operation. Donald Trump's general disdain towards Alliances, his coziness with Putin, and particularly his open questioning of America's article 5 commitments has led to fears for the future and viability of the Alliance under his possible presidency. Many allies are also worried that Trump might represent a more dismissive general perspective towards Europe and NATO that is now taking shape in the United States – one in which Europeans no longer hold the central role they once used to have. But at the same time there also exists considerable hope that a possible Clinton presidency would be more active and less hesitant than the Obama administration and put an end to a perceived lack of leadership by the U.S. that has caused considerable frustration over the last years. In addition, Secretary Clinton's decision-making style is likely to be much less insular than Obamas – making her much more accessible to the allies.

On the other hand, the strong primary challenge from the left will keep her focused on domestic issues – and thus likely to follow through with many policies of the Obama administration. And even when it comes to foreign policy, Clinton hardly had a more Euro-centric view than Obama. After all, she was one of the architects of the pivot to Asia. Finally, while Clinton's rhetoric is certainly more interventionist than Obama's, that doesn't necessarily mean that her leadership style will be any different. Instead, her explicit praise for the German leadership style suggests that Clinton might "lead from behind" as well – and cause all the frustrations that come with this model.

Any president will inherit a depressed defense budget and a political landscape that prevents larger change.

In addition to personal proclivities, there also exist strong structural factors that limit the potential for positive change. First, none of the candidates will be able to end the polarization of U.S. politics and the fracture between Democrats and Republicans. Second, without overcoming this polarization in Congress, none of the candidates has a meaningful prospect of turning around the declining trend in defense spending. While the need for a consolidated budget is increasingly recognized on both sides of the aisle, the nexus between domestic and defense spending established under the Budget Control Act will make a consensus very difficult for both Republicans and Democrats. Any budget increases will thus have to rely on the supplemental budget – and thus be subject to the constraints this budget imposes on long-term planning.

Third, and even more worrisome, under both possible presidents NATO – and European partners as a whole – will increasingly be seen as irrelevant, and even as a liability, in Washington. Across the political spectrum, there exists enormous concern in the United States about Russia and its intentions. As a consequence, the

The deployment of a rotational armored brigade presents a tremendous U.S. commitment.

U.S. has committed to provide for a persistent, "heel to toe" rotational presence of an armored brigade combat team – a deployment today maintained in only two locations around the entire globe (South Korea and Kuwait). This marks a reversal of U.S. Army policy, which had cut its last two heavy brigades in Europe just five years ago. In contrast, the European response to the crisis on its Eastern flank presents an enormous disappointment and has cast significant doubt on whether Europe still is a viable military partner. Not only do many Europeans apparently not understand the threat posed by Russia, but even those that understand the threat have failed to provide a serious response.

To make sure, burden-sharing has been a perennial problem in the Alliance. But for the last twenty-five years, U.S. defense experts had expected that a credible threat to European security would change the trajectory of European defense investment. Such a threat does now exist – but has failed to produce a radical turnaround in European defense policy. The Enhanced Forward Presence serves as a case in point in this regard: Even after almost two years of painful debate, Europeans could muster framework nations for just two multinational battalions – forcing the U.S. to provide a battalion of their own and pressure Canada to join in as the fourth ally at the last minute. The lingering question from a U.S. point of view is this: If the current crisis did not suffice to trigger greater European investment, how will change ever be achieved?

Assuming the main burden of Europe's security is becoming more controversial.

At the end of the day, the burden of "rescuing" Europe will again fall to the United States. Due to American interests in Europe, it is very unlikely that the U.S. would withhold its solidarity – no matter if under Trump or under Clinton. But Europe's over-reliance on the U.S. also presents a tremendous disappointment at a point in time when the United States finds itself under severe budgetary strain and pressured in many contingencies. But it is also very risky for Europe, as the changed force posture of the United States – which has considerably decreased its number of forward-deployed assets – means that its response will be slower, bloodier and more painful than Europeans usually expect a U.S. reaction to be.

Would Trump be willing to defend the post-WWII international order?

Uncertainty exists thus on the relative amount of either positive or negative change that would come with a Clinton or Trump administration. The more fundamental problem with Trump is his stand towards the international order established after World War II, which adversaries like China and Russia want to remake in their own image. Trump and populist movements in almost all member states openly argue that this global order and the liberal system of rules associated with it – which has benefited the U.S. and Europe tremendously – are broken and do not present a viable model for the future. Much more than whether he would work towards maintaining this order, the question thus seems to be whether he and his allies actually present an inside threat to the international order.

Germany

Germany can consider the Warsaw Summit a success for its priorities.

The German government ought to be pleased with the results of the Summit as they clearly reflect German priorities. Most notably, the inevitable emphasis on deterrence was paired with a strong emphasis on further dialogue with Russia. Largely to satisfy German demands, the Summit also explicitly reaffirmed the sanctity of the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The Alliance also reconvened the NATO-Russia Council and tried hard to arrange the second meeting since the unlawful annexation of Crimea even before the Summit. (It took place shortly thereafter.)

Germany's contributions have earned it a leading role, but it is not making the most of it.

The proactive role played by Germany in the Alliance – and particularly its central investments in the reassurance and now deterrence measures – have thus clearly paid off. Since the start of the Ukrainian crisis, Germany has earned itself a leading role in NATO – and the influence that comes with this leadership. At the same time, some allies also express considerable frustration with Germany's management of this new role and complain that its leadership is sometimes clumsy and always very hesitant and slow. But most allies also recognize that leadership is a learning process – and that Germany is still learning to fulfill an unfamiliar role.

Especially after Steinmeier's remarks, allies ask themselves whether the current proactive policy is Merkel or Germany.

While the allies are generally very pleased with the increased responsibility Berlin has started to take on since 2014, there exists considerable anxiety across the Alliance about how permanent this change in German foreign and security policy will be. Is it just the current government or are we dealing with more substantial change? Is Germany's perceived traditional "Russia First"-policy really over? Particularly foreign minister Steinmeier's latest remarks about NATO's "saber-rattling" have spurred this anxiousness. Much more than just in these remarks, allies have well noted Steinmeier's uneasiness with the Alliance and the almost spiteful way in which he avoids referring to the Alliance – including in his *Foreign Affairs* article „Germany's New Global Role: Berlin Steps Up". While it is understood that some of this already forms part of pre-campaign posturing, for many it is unclear how much of it constitutes more genuine antipathy and an insurgency of the traditional Russia-friendly forces in German foreign policy. At the same time, allies are concerned about NATO's Eastern strategy becoming subject to the electoral campaign – particularly because the right-wing *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) has strong anti-NATO and pro-Russian leanings. This uncertainty about Berlin's political standpoint is reinforced by the strong divergence between the Foreign Office on the one and the Chancellery and Defense Ministry on the other hand.

The state of the Bundeswehr is of grave concern to many allies.

Finally, allies worry about the state of the Bundeswehr. The problems Germany experienced in mustering a battalion for the VJTF and the shortfalls and limitations in assets foreseen for missions in Mali or Syria have not gone unnoticed. While allies welcome the positive trends in defense spending, they generally do not think it is even close to what is actually needed – especially when it comes to defense investment. The fact that Germany, for instance in its White Book, embraces additional responsibilities – often called the Spider-Man Doctrine: "with great power comes great responsibility" – is welcomed by all allies, but it must be matched by the required capabilities. Without his capabilities, as aptly described by one conference participant, Spider-Man ultimately remains "just a guy in a silly costume".

Recommendations

In addition to the suggestions outlined throughout this paper, a number of specific policy recommendations can be discerned, delineating tasks both NATO in general and Germany in particular should undertake in order to address the Alliance's future challenges:

- To sustain German leadership within the Alliance, Foreign Minister Steinmeier and the Foreign Office have to stop promoting an independent agenda to the detriment of NATO. While campaign-related rhetoric, political posturing and departmental preferences are commonplace, the Foreign Office has to make clear that it is fully behind NATO's purpose and strategy.

- With Brexit now underway, both European and American expectations on Germany are likely to increase further. But even if its partners appreciate greater German leadership, this doesn't mean that it won't cause considerable balancing – which Berlin is still uncomfortable with. In future, Germany will simply have to, as one participant put it, "suck it up" and start to live with this inevitable paradox of leadership.

- To build a credible conventional deterrence, Germany has to sustain its exemplary efforts in building its contribution to the Enhanced Forward Presence. Most importantly, it has to make sure that its contribution will be robust, military meaningful, and well-integrated with the Lithuanian armed forces.

- In the field of nuclear deterrence, the best allies hope for is a continuation of Germany's current relatively tacit and open-minded cooperation.

- To ensure a successful dialogue with Russia, of which Berlin has been one of the strongest proponents, Germany has to make sure the Alliance stays committed to it. At the same time, Germany has to be careful not to tie this dialogue to any potential concessions on NATO's deterrence, which would rapidly undermine the consensus for the dual approach of deterrence and dialogue.

- To strengthen NATO's response in the South, Germany should provide stronger support for NATO's Defence and Security-Related Capability Initiative. While it has been launched two years ago already, Berlin has so far preferred to provide its assistance bilaterally. Particularly in the defense context, Germany should start to align its *Ertüchtigungsinitiative* (Enable and Enhance Initiative) – which in 2016 amounted to 100 million Euros – with the efforts of the Alliance.

- To contribute to better EU-NATO relations, Berlin should help ensure the continued compatibility of both organizations. After Brexit, many expect new dynamism for the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy. With the UK about to depart, it will be a key German responsibility to ensure that the principles of no decoupling, no duplication and no discrimination continue to be upheld.

- To improve the burden-sharing in the Alliance, Germany has to pressure the underperforming Eastern allies to increase their defense expenditures. With its significant contributions to deterrence in the East, Berlin is in a good position to signal that the EFP is only sustainable if matched by an appropriate domestic effort of the host nations.

- Finally, aiming for the 2% and particularly fulfilling the Defence Investment Pledge is of paramount importance for preventing "hollow forces" – a sad reality that is also very present in the Bundeswehr. A continued negligence of military capabilities will undermine the credibility of NATO's deterrent posture in the medium term. While the 2015 increase of the German defense budget is welcome, it must be turned into steady and significant increases over the coming decade.

1| *For the reports of the previous iterations, please see Matlé, Aylin and Scheffler, Alessandro, "After the Wales Summit: An Assessment of NATO's Strategic Agenda", in: Facts & Findings, No. 162, November 2014, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_39528-544-2-30.pdf?141112155636 and Matlé, Aylin and Scheffler Corvaja, Alessandro, "From Wales to Warsaw: A New Normal for NATO?", in: Facts & Findings, No. 187, October 2015, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_42717-544-2-30.pdf?151109084530*

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