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NON-TRADITIONAL THREATS **AND NATO**

A look toward an expanded role
for the NATO alliance

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Today's world is faced with unprecedented changes. The past century has seen vast urbanisation around the globe and the emergence of technologies that have begun reshaping the structure of entire societies. Furthermore, accelerating climate change has accompanied these tectonic shifts, adding even greater uncertainty to the equation. Governments and international organisations have scrambled to adjust to these new realities and this has led to various frictions arising both in terms of societies and structures. This is true of NATO as well, with voices appearing that question the organisation's vitality and purpose, not to mention various frictions among its own membership. These circumstances were even further complicated by the widespread proliferation of the COVID-19 coronavirus this year – a complex set of circumstances only proceeded to become even more difficult.

All these changes have opened up new means for hostile actors to take action against NATO and the rules-based world order both directly and indirectly. The events leading to the annexation of Crimea, cyber-attacks against Georgia, Estonia, the use of disinformation campaigns and external influences in American, French, German general elections, underlined how hostile powers could exploit unconventional issues in order to destabilise European and American democracies and, in the worst scenario, prepare a favourable ground for military actions. Especially when combined with the ever-present danger of conventional confrontation, non-traditional threats are a real and credible danger to the members of NATO.

Given how these threats often interweave through non-military matters, NATO cannot look to resolve them on its own, given its ostensibly exclusively military role. At the same time, given their often global or at least regional scope, they are challenges demanding a supra-national response. As such, circumstances demand that NATO develop more comprehensive partnerships with topic-relevant actors, while also reflecting on opportunities within its existing structures to better respond to non-traditional threats and threat multipliers that its members face. For the purposes of this paper, non-traditional threats as a concept refers to threats that cannot be fully resolved by conventional force of arms.

1. NATO and the EU – developing cooperation

The nature of the security environment and of non-traditional threats are challenging NATO's posture as they require a tool of policy responses that cannot be produced by an alliance focused only on external defence and military power. Therefore, for NATO, it seems compelling broadening the scope of its mandate and enlarging its portfolio to match the various layers of non-traditional threats (Ulgen, 2019). Due to their nature, non-traditional threats call for tight cooperation and collaboration between NATO and the EU, as well as within NATO itself between its member states.

Cooperation between the EU and NATO in dealing with non-traditional threats seems unavoidable for several reasons: first (and more obvious), 22 states are at the same time members of the EU and NATO. Second, NATO and EU member states are targeted by mostly the same threats. Third, the EU and NATO have the combined capabilities to detect and address non-traditional threats, but on their own, they are less capable of tackling such challenges than when they are working together since neither organisation has the full range of capabilities to tackle contemporary security challenges. The two organisations display comparative advantages that follow a defence versus security nexus and, in some cases, a military versus civilian nexus. NATO is a collective defence alliance that covers the upper end of the military spectrum while the EU is best placed to do security-development and covers the lower end of the use-of-force spectrum. The intertwinement of external and internal security gives the EU a comparative advantage that underlines the importance of NATO-EU cooperation. Thanks to its prerogatives in home affairs, the EU is a crucial threat management actor in the field of hybrid threats, cover security, military mobility, all of which have an important internal security dimension. In the defence domain, NATO operates inside its member states' territories (consider its presence in the Baltics) while the EU's involvement outside its member states is possible only through its CSDP missions.

Since the signing of the Joint Declarations (2016 and 2018) the cooperation between NATO and the EU has significantly intensified. The two organisations agreed to "boost their ability to counter hybrid threats, including by bolstering resilience, working together on analysis, prevention, and early detection, thro-

ugh timely information sharing and, to the extent possible, intelligence sharing between staffs; and cooperating on strategic communication and response.”¹ The signing of the Joint Declarations is a milestone for NATO not only because it formalises its cooperation with the EU, which is crucial to develop effective common strategies, but also because it allows NATO to further build relations with very highly capable non-NATO EU members like Finland, Austria and Sweden. In particular, sharing information and good practices with Sweden and Finland will increase NATO capabilities to deal with non-traditional threats thanks to Swedish and Finnish capabilities development through the adoption of the Total Defence doctrine.

In the last decade, NATO and the EU have been exploring cooperation in several domains, such as dealing with cyber threats, disinformation campaigns, maritime security, etc. For instance, the collaboration between NATO Hybrid Analysis Branch and the EU Hybrid Fusion Cell plays a considerable role in dealing with hybrid threats. These units have proved to have good information-sharing capability by being capable to communicate via the EU version of the NATO Battlefield Information Collection and Exploitation System (BICES) and fully functioning secure Video Teleconference link (Smith, 2019).

It is possible to identify three levels of cooperation between NATO and the EU: first, most of the units dealing with the areas of cooperation identified by the Joint Declarations have extensively integrated the EU-NATO dimension into their activities. Namely, points of contact were identified and staff-to-staff dialogue has prompted information sharing and exchanges. Moreover, cross-briefings on issu-

es of common interest are conducted frequently allowing representatives from each institution to sit in discussions organised by the counterpart organisation. Second, political dialogue between European commissioners, the NATO Secretary General and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy have become regular allowing the two institutions to interact at the level of the Security Committee and the North Atlantic Council both in formal and informal meetings. Third, NATO and the EU have increased their operational cooperation on the ground when they deploy missions simultaneously (Tardy and Lindstrom, 2019).

Information sharing presents a crucial mean to counter a variety of non-traditional threats and to improve situational awareness about potential challenges.

People-to-people contacts have become one of the crucial factors in building resilience against unconventional threats. Forums on hybrid threats attended by NATO and EU staff are beneficial not only to discuss and find solutions to improve issues in terms of strategic communications, the resilience of national and energy infrastructure that extends beyond national borders, they also serve to enhance relations and share information between the staff of the two organisations. Informal networks are a necessary precondition for further cooperation between NATO and the EU. In countries like Sweden, Finland and Norway, informal and formal networks between members of different civilian and military organisations were and are essential to increase cooperation and synergy to mobilise civilian and military resources in a whole-of-society approach to national security and defence (Smith, 2019).

Interactions with actors operating in different dimensions (such as specialists or intelligence experts interacting with strategic infrastructure specialists, strategic communications officers interacting with foreign relations practitioners) allow for enhanced situational awareness and develop a cross-fertilisation, which is crucial to effectively counter non-traditional threats. The EU and NATO should develop this cross-fertilisation in order to improve their cooperation (Smith, 2019). The creation of the Hybrid Centre of Excellence is a milestone in NATO-EU cooperation: the centre is a facilitator and a neutral space for the two organisations to work together towards the implementation of the Joint Framework's objectives. The communities of interests and expert networks that the centre facilitates function as informal networks necessary to develop a strategic, comprehensive security approach with operative implications. The participation of NATO and EU representatives in activities, seminars, exercises and workshops aimed at increasing the understanding of hybrid threats from a different perspective will enhance their collaboration in dealing with a wide range of challenges (Smith, 2019).

Another showcase of successful cooperation can be observed in terms of the cyber domain. The EU and NATO have started to perceive one another as complementary partners in the endeavour to build up their cyber resilience. With the aim of improving their operational-level information sharing, the two organisations signed a Technical Arrangement on Cyber Defence in February 2016 between NATO's Computer Incident Response Capability (NCIRC) and the EU's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT). Moreover, the Joint Declarations signed in 2016 and 2018 acknowledge four areas of cooperation: integration of cyber defence into missions and operations; training and education; exercises; and standards. The cooperation in terms of cyberspace has remarkably improved with exchanges between staff in doctrines and concepts, common training and education courses, exchanges on threat assessments, cross-briefing and featuring an annual high-level EU-NATO staff-to-staff dialogue (Lètè, 2019).

2. NATO development – internal practices and member states

With the collapse of NATO's seemingly perennial adversary the Soviet Union, societies in alliance members were sometimes left questioning the purpose of NATO's continuation. This is reflected in terms of both how surveys in a significant number of member states indicate that their societies are ambivalent at best regarding NATO and also in how a median of 50% of respondents across 16 NATO member states indicated that their country *should not* defend an ally against a hypothetical attack by Russia (though they are typically more confident that the USA would come to the victim's defence).²

As non-traditional threats can considerably affect our welfare and security, an approach to counteract negative attitudes to the alliance's role, NATO can step in other activities relevant for societies and their security, even where it may not traditionally be a first responder. Focusing on non-traditional threats and assuring people's safety and welfare, it can gain again relevance among societies rather than remaining what for many might appear only as a hypothetical factor.

Over the past three decades, NATO has shown that it has the capabilities to play different roles and to be an effective instrument to address not only conventional threats but also non-traditional ones. The adoption and implementation of Strategic Concepts in the last decades portrayed changes in the alliance's posture, maintaining its military capabilities but also of adopting new practices that have enabled it to acquire the skills necessary to address emerging challenges. The latest Strategic Concept adopted in 2010 emphasises three essential core tasks – collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security, focusing in particular on the importance on solidarity within the alliance, the importance of transatlantic consultation and the need to engage in a continuous process of reform.³ Furthermore, it indicates that NATO and its members need to focus their attention and efforts on developing more interoperability, force projection, flexibility, technological superiority and mobility, going

beyond their borders and cooperating with partners to counter non-conventional threats. The Strategic Concept represents a new foundation for the future of the alliance and the development of effective capabilities to face a constantly evolving (and in some cases, unpredictable) security environment. The development of new capabilities and cooperation with partners are essential instruments to address and predict non-traditional threats. Moreover, the Strategic Concept constitutes a milestone for NATO posture as it invokes a more active role of the alliance not only as a military security provider but it also stresses the importance of building civilian management capabilities (Ulgen, 2019).

The current security environment demands a sound policy response founded on a robust inter-agency process involving several agencies and institutions operating in various domains and at different levels. The need for a tight and growing cooperation among several actors has made more difficult the task of coordination and planning related to unconventional challenges not only at the international level but also at the domestic one. In order to effectively address these “new” threats, NATO has to ensure the engagement and collaboration not only of the military establishment of its member states but also the of the civilian and political sector. Current circumstances dictate the need for such engagement, given the context of Brexit, which could serve to distance the UK from its continental partners despite efforts against this, and numerous other issues, ranging from hybrid threats, climate change and COVID-19 to failed states and migration. At this juncture, NATO is well placed to be the principal transatlantic political forum where its member states and partners can engage in discussions in order

to develop efficient strategies and coordinate their responses (Ulgen, 2019). In addition to this, due to the nature of non-traditional challenges, connecting NATO with civilian crisis management systems on the basis of broadening its security agenda would give the alliance a more assertive role in a range of different activities (cybersecurity, maritime security, etc.). In this sense, NATO should develop further private-public partnerships with civil society organisations involved in several activities like combating disinformation, cyber defence, etc. (Beaulieu and Salvo, 2018).

Energy security is another domain that demands intense cooperation among national, supra-national and private actors. The defence of critical infrastructures (e.g. electric grid or energy supply chain) is a crucial factor for NATO and European countries. NATO should engage further in terms of energy security and participate actively in the defence of critical infrastructures and take into account vulnerabilities presented by energy supply reliance with regards to potential hostile actors. This is particularly true for the Baltic States, who, given deployment of Russian area denial systems in their proximity and the very thin land corridor connecting them to the rest of their allies, are particularly vulnerable. At the same time, NATO needs to take into account not only directly the security of energy and resource provision, but also the actual capacity to provide emergency assistance and, if need be, supply its forces in the area. The Central Europe Pipeline System serves as a successful example of such a system being in place – during peacetime and when its capacities aren't needed for military use, it can even function as a commercial object, supplying airports around Europe with fuel and thus reducing maintenance costs on an object that would

otherwise be yet another drain on financial resources during a financially sensitive time period, even if it occasionally did see use.

When speaking of energy security, one cannot ignore its close connection to climate change and environmental security. Of course, a military alliance is not designed to be the first responder to climate change challenges, but it cannot disregard the phenomenon – not only due to its not insubstantial side-effects on military operational activities but also due to very tangible consequences on allied member states' security. Climate change can be the primary cause and fuel conflict, with the events in Syria between 2005 and 2011 presenting something of an example of this. The country was hit by severe droughts thus provoking the migration to cities of farmers looking for new employment opportunities. Increasing competition over jobs and already scarce resources was a significant variable that could have contributed to the unrest and subsequent war in Syria.⁴ Since the mid-20th century, in recognition of environmental challenges, NATO established the Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society, which was merged in 2006 with the NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme (SPS Programme). The aim of this programme is to endorse and exchange best practices and knowledge both in the military and civilian sectors on environmental, health and social issues not only among northern allies but also with its partners. In recent decades, allied states have set up a number of expert working groups focusing on how NATO can address various environmental challenges. These bodies' work can be divided into two broad categories: (i) environmental security, namely the handling of security challenges provoked by the natural and physical en-

vironment, (ii) environmental protection, that is to say, protecting the environment from the detrimental impact of military activities. The Environmental Protection Working Group and the Specialist Team on Energy Efficiency and Environmental Protection, for instance, focus on addressing the impact of climate change, supporting partner countries in building national capabilities, ameliorating energy efficiency and reducing fossil fuel full dependence, promoting environmentally friendly management practices in training areas, etc. Through the adoption of the NATO Military Principles and Policies for Environmental Protection in 2003, the alliance established guidelines that allied members have to respect during military activities so as to reduce the impact of military drills and activities on the environment.

The alliance is not only focused on military activities' effects on the environments. It has also sought to actively engage with coordinating civil emergency responses and planning for environmental disasters. After the earthquake in Turkey and Greece (1999), NATO launched the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre with the goal of increasing the understanding of the role that militaries can have in disaster management and relief programmes.⁵ The Centre also coordinated national assistance in several occasions (wildfires, floods, mudflows) both in allied and partner countries (Algeria, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Moldova). More recently (2014), northern allies adopted the "Green Defence" framework with the aim of increasing its operational effectiveness through a reduced and differentiated use of energy.⁶

As climate change is a matter that affects all the allied member states without exception, NATO will find it easy to develop cooperation

with national governments and civil society in order to find common solutions and develop plans to cope with the impact of global warming. For instance, the Emerging Security Challenges Division and the Secretary General's Policy Planning Unit are promoting discussion with experts to assess climate change consequences. The shared interest in addressing climate change effects could give NATO a way to improve its relations and cooperation not only with supra national institutions but also with civil actors such as NGOs acting in this field (Ruhle, 2020).

There is awareness within NATO that its achievements over the past few decades are still insufficient to address the impact of climate change and its consequences for the alliance's security. Provoking famine, desertification, loss of land and livelihood, global warming poses very tangible threats and challenges to NATO that require to be addressed effectively. Therefore, NATO is called to adopt a coherent environmental security agenda focusing on how to develop strategies and improve cooperation among allied countries and partner states.⁷ This agenda should guide the alliance toward the adoption of an approach to climate change based on its core tasks: crisis management, cooperative security and collective defence. Regarding the collective defence side, as previously mentioned, NATO should enlarge the NATO Pipeline System to Eastern European allies as a crucial tool to guarantee energy supply to the military apparatus in times of crisis. This project not only contributes to the creation of a more secure and reliable energy delivery system to the region but would also be a contribution toward reducing NATO's climate footprint, given how pipeline transportation of fuels serves to cut greenhouse

gas emissions by up to more than 70 per cent compared to typical land transportation (Jankowski, 2020).

Even if NATO was not designed to address events such as floods, hurricanes, storms, earthquakes, it was capable of adopting two crucial mechanisms and means to meet these challenges. On the one hand, during the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit, allied members adopted seven baseline points to increase civil preparedness and ameliorate their resilience. In the future, the alliance is to focus on how global warming consequences could have repercussions on resilience and civil preparedness on issues such as food and water resources, critical infrastructures in areas hit by disasters, energy supply and member states' capabilities to address uncontrolled migration flows. On the other hand, the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre was established as the main civil emergency response mechanism and to improve the coordination of requests and offers of assistance in case of natural disasters.⁸ Moreover, NATO could give more visibility and emphasis to the Green Defence Framework, operationalising its various suggestions in domains such as energy efficiency procedures and perhaps considering the applicability of green standards across NATO agencies, NATO HQ and even NATO Command Structure. NATO could call member states for a deeper scientific cooperation through the Science for Peace and Security Programme and enhance its presence at climate-related events, thus reinforcing its diplomacy efforts (Ruhle, 2020).

Another successful demonstration of NATO's potential to contribute outside the military domain was presented during the current pandemic. The Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre proved to be an effecti-

ve instrument for coordinating the allied responses to the virus. NATO proved to be able to effectively assist allied countries against an enemy that it had never faced.⁹ This was done through medical and logistics assistance to its member states through “facilitating the airlift of crucial medical supplies and equipment, matching requests for support with offers from Allies and partners, and delivering innovative responses.”¹⁰ NATO has conducted more than one hundred airlifts since the spread of the virus began, it has tasked military medical personnel with assisting civilian systems, built more than 25 field hospitals, provided over twenty-five thousand beds and facilitated inter-allies medical logistics and shipments through its Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (Ozawa, 2020). While this might not be necessarily within the immediate remit of NATO activities, it can at the same time be perceived as a display of emergency readiness, even if we are to reject any potential for the alliance expanding the scope of its activities.

While the COVID-19 virus is not a classic security threat, NATO cannot disregard its potential effects in the short and long term as the crisis is not over and will have a severe impact on several interconnected domains. NATO could celebrate a variety of successes in its role in handling the COVID-19 crisis, but the effort started with a worrying facet. China and Russia stepped into the empty space left by the EU and NATO – when Italy and later Spain were considerably hit by the crisis in February and March; initially, none of the European or NATO countries took the initiative to help them while deliveries of medical supplies and equipment did arrive from China and Russia.¹¹ This lack of empathy (even if only initially) is a tangible threat to the future

of the alliance for two main reasons: on the one hand, it risks a loss of credibility and unity among allied societies. While nations that are described as ‘enemies’ helped Italy and Spain, the EU and NATO countries were not quick to do the same. On the other hand, leaving Russia and China freedom to manoeuvre allowed them to launch significant disinformation campaigns that could damage EU and NATO image in the short and long term (Ozawa, 2020). While their assistance efforts were somewhat discredited later by the sometimes poor quality of supplies delivered, the initial image proves potent.

Acting more promptly to address the impact of COVID-19 would have allowed NATO to gain relevance among the public and show it that the ally poses a crucial means not only for guarantying their military security but also to assure people’s welfare.¹² In addition to this, the pandemic has showcased the importance of increasing societal resilience. In order to contribute in this respect, NATO could offer access to its armed forces expertise in surge planning, command and control systems and regional infrastructure to institutions outside the traditional military apparatus. Another challenge is that countries across Europe, as well as the United States, proved to be very slow in re-purposing their industrial apparatus for the creation of medical equipment and supplies. As a concrete case, the pandemic highlighted in Germany a slew of strategic deficiencies in personnel availability, reserve capacity and, as mentioned above, supply chain reliability; this demands diversification of suppliers and an emphasis on ensuring adequate reserves, both in terms of human resources and goods (Rogg, 2020). In this sense, NATO could develop plans with allied countries in order to identify enterprises

to whom national governments could turn for re-purposed output in times of crisis (O'Neill, 2020). In addition to this, helping partner countries and allies to increase their resilience and build capabilities to address better the consequences provoked by climate change could become a legitimate and effective tool in NATO's Defence Capacity Building approach (Ruhle, 2020).

A challenge that NATO faces in respect to adopting new postures to address non-conventional threats is that many civilian and private actors are not accustomed to working with military organisations. So as to overcome this lack of familiarity, NATO is called to take the initiative to further develop communication and trust with its civilian counterparts. Indeed, the lessons learnt from Kosovo and Afghanistan show that where the military take the initiative, the two parties can successfully work together. In order to act effectively, when cooperation with civil society or the private sector is needed, they should start their collaboration with a shared analysis of the challenge to address, understand the points of views of the counterpart and develop a common strategy to solve the problem. This cooperation will be useful also because it will enrich NATO's understanding of the challenges that non-military organisations face (Aaronson et al. 2020). Furthermore, in order to avoid overlapping of efforts and waste resources, it is crucial for NATO and civilian organisations to understand which body can coordinate more effectively all the necessary tools to address a specific issue. Unity of effort is necessary to develop a comprehensive approach to deal with non-traditional threats.

Technological development represents a central means to address and to predict several non-traditional threats. In this sense,

engaging with the private sector and industry is crucial to develop effective tools. To find ways to ensure that industry is incentivised to respond to the alliance's needs favourably poses a crucial hurdle for the alliance. Moreover, the industry should be encouraged to reach NATO regularly by its own initiative if it believes it is desirable. NATO has to develop a continuous and open channel of communication with strategic industrial actors. According to Aaronson (et al., 2020) NATO "should consider what, if anything, it might provide to industry. On this latter point, recent US experience might be illustrative. Senior command and Department of Defense (DOD) officials regularly engage defence, technology, space, and industry members by providing insights into DOD activities and goals, speeches on leadership, and lessons learned that might be applicable to industry. In exchange, they receive unprecedented access to high-level management and expertise, and even engage with various private organisations for assistance." Through the give and take nature of such activities, both the military and civilians may be encouraged to overcome predispositions concerning each other and reach mutual understanding. Civilian participants might make progress toward questioning their prejudices, if any, concerning cooperating with the alliance.

In terms of its internal development, a prominent facet of NATO's evolution has been the creation of its centres of excellence, with the first fully accredited centre opening its doors in the year 2005 and the number having swelled to 26 across the alliance's member states in 2020. To note, the first to receive accreditation was the Joint Air Power Competence Centre in Kalkar, Germany, while the latest is the Maritime Security Centre in Yenilevent/

Istanbul, Turkey this year. Each of the centres has been tasked with individual areas of competence, offering training, expertise, research and doctrine development (albeit to different extents, depending on the centre) to the alliance. The direct benefits of insights, training and expertise are not the only offerings that the centres of excellence bring. The NATO experience has shown that multi-national centres with multi-national staff and support are better resourced and more

likely to establish and maintain technical and scientific credibility, building a reputation of excellence (Roberts, 2014). As such, centres of excellence could be seen as a platform for building familiarity and further developing cooperation between citizens (academic, military and political communities) of various states, which can have a positive influence on general allied cohesion, no matter how small each contribution.

3. Obstacles

In the last decade, NATO and its partners have faced several obstacles in addressing and predicting non-traditional threats due to their ever-changing characters,

nature and unpredictability. A very clear initial example is how the latest Strategic Concept was created under conditions very different to what developed over the latter half of the 2010s, following the peak of the Russian interference in Ukraine and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula.

Despite the development of a fruitful cooperative relationship between NATO and the EU, they are confronted with a number of difficulties. While there is ongoing development of a division of labour approach between the EU and NATO, where the alliance focuses more on its core role of being a hard security provider, nonetheless the two partners often duplicate their efforts and work independently on the same issues thus leading to needless resource wastage. In a time where European states and the US have been and likely will continue to be severely impacted by the economic crisis sparked by the coronavirus, the transatlantic partners should look to further improve their cooperation in order to avoid overlapping of efforts and to ensure better coordination of their efforts. As such, the EU and NATO should move beyond complementary cooperation and into making more use of their synergies. Developing a Joint Task Force will help them to coordinate better the work of their bureaucratic apparatus operating in the same dimensions (Beaulieu and Salvo, 2018).

Another challenge in cooperation between the European bloc and NATO is how the number of EU entities involved in EU-NATO relations makes the partnership a multi-level exercise rather than a collaboration between two actors. The European Defence Agency, the General Secretariat of the Council and the European External Action services are engaged at the same time with NATO. Simultaneously, different NATO entities are involved in dialogue with the EU. This produces different layers of dialogue that can alter the bilateral nature of the relationship, leading to useless duplications of efforts and waste of precious resources (Thardy and Lindstrom, 2019)

Furthermore, cooperation between NATO and the EU remains difficult as it encounters obstacles at institutional and member states level. Fully-fledged EU-NATO cooperation in dealing with non-traditional threats is

only possible if both the organisations have a shared perception and situational awareness of the threats that they are facing. This can only be reached through regular sharing of not only non-classified information but also of classified details. While informational interactions between staffs have significantly improved, NATO and the EU nevertheless remain two separate bodies upholding restrictive information-sharing procedures that impede the emergence of a culture of sharing situational awareness or non-traditional threats assessment. The reluctance to share information also arises because of the different memberships of some of NATO or EU's countries. Some EU member states might not want to share information with NATO and vice versa or not want to share their information at the supranational level. EU and NATO standards and practices for securing information are very different and do not encourage trust and information-sharing tradition. Cooperation between the transatlantic partners still depends on their member states' approach to supranational organisations: national governments are often hesitant to work with institutions in certain areas as they are still considered a crucial domain of national interests and they are not always convinced that NATO or the EU can provide assistance that fits their national needs (Lètè, 2019)

Cooperation between NATO and the EU can also be undermined by institutional mandate maximisation. Competition occurs because the two organisations often are intent on acting autonomously and everywhere. The inherent tendency of organisations to maximise their mandate arises not only from the officials from the institutions but also from the representatives of their members. For instance, a nation's position on a particular

issue can be viewed differently by its ambassador to NATO than by the ambassador to the EU (Szewczyk, 2020). This might be more of a micro-level challenge, but divergences in communication and approaches can lead to greater alterations at the macro level later on.

Naturally, non-traditional threats present particular challenges not only for the cooperation between NATO and the EU but also separately for the two organisations internally. The character of unconventional challenges underlines their respective structural differences that can create some complications for closer cooperation. Indeed, when both the institutions are focused on reflections regarding their functioning, purpose and future, something truly necessary in the ever-changing security environment, it will hard for them to focus on and develop inter-organisational cooperation (Smith, 2019).

Despite NATO and the EU strengthening their collaboration and information sharing to address non-traditional threats, their efforts are underfunded and lack high-level coordination. In addition to this, the absence of a formal mechanism to share NATO classified information with its European counterpart poses an obstacle to for more systematic cooperation (Beaulieu and Salvo, 2018). Furthermore, neither institution is keen to engage in a debate aimed at establishing clearly "who does what, when and where beyond NATO's collective defence primacy as codified in the EU's Lisbon Treaty." This implies that the division of tasks is ad hoc and lacking in any strategic direction (Thardy and Lindstrom, 2019). Similarly to information sharing challenges in relation to the EU and partner institutions, the lack of information sharing among NATO member states themselves poses a great challenge to NATO effectiveness in dealing

with non-traditional threats (e.g. the US did not share too much information about Russian influence in American 2016 presidential elections. Same did Germany and France). The reservations of some allies in discussing their own vulnerabilities with other member states exacerbate NATO organisational impediments to face non-traditional threats in a well-coordinated and timely manner.

It is undeniable that the vast increase in the number of non-traditional threats and the ongoing emergence of new ones has prompted the EU and NATO to launch common initiatives to address them and to increase their mutual consultations and coordination in several domains. Nevertheless, while the recent progress in NATO-EU cooperation and coordination is commendable, it is possible to argue that the two organisations need to evolve from today's coordination approach to a more ambitious and integrated joint model of collaboration if they aim to respond adequately to the current security environment. The "new level of ambition for their operational cooperation should include common planning and action to protect stability and manage crises in the future" (Szewczyk, 2019).

In addition to the obstacles met in the cooperation with the EU, in the last few years NATO has been facing four different trends - the rise of populist political forces in the United States and in several European countries, differences in threat perceptions, burden sharing difficulties and the challenge of sub-threshold threats – which altogether could impact significantly its cohesiveness and effectiveness as a military and political alliance (Ulgen, 2019). Moreover, acquiring the capacity to tackle a broad range of threats than traditional ones would imply that NATO move towards more

internal issues and more security-type activities, as opposed to defence-focused ones (Tardy, 2019). Enlarging NATO's portfolio and broadening its activities necessarily brings issues raised by its members concerning capacity and resources, legitimacy, resources, and political backing. Moreover, many actors are already involved in the civilian security field and NATO would face competition in areas where it would enter from a weaker position (Tardy, 2019). The alliance was created as a military and defensive alliance. Expanding its role to other domains could bring NATO to lose its focus and become a less credible actor. The alliance needs to be perceived by external powers as a military ally ready to defend by the use of military force its member states against foreign aggression. Excessively expanding NATO's role could provoke a loss of credibility.

This credibility and public support for NATO come together in the shape of one aspect that cannot be overlooked – defence funding. For a protracted period of time, numerous member states in the alliance have not adhered to the 2 per cent of GDP expected defence funding guideline, with estimates showing that in 2020, only around half of member states are going to be reaching this mark.¹³ While there has been an upswing in defence funding since 2014, in no small part as a response to Russian actions against Ukraine, there is potential for this positive funding trend to be impeded if not reversed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Given the economic hardship NATO member states are or will be facing due to the pandemic has the potential to make justifying continued increases to defence and security (other than where it pertains to health-related matters) a complicated issue.

Ultimately, NATO has to improve its crisis management. The pandemic has revealed that we were not adequately prepared for sudden emergencies and that NATO's members have to improve their effectiveness and response times in handling crises. The outbreak of the pandemic has furthermore revealed a dangerous and worrying lack of empathy among NATO and European countries. When Italy was hit by the virus in February, there was generally a lack of empathy and reluctance to help the country. This lack of cohesion represents a danger for the future of the alliance

and makes European countries more permeable to the influences and effects of non-traditional threats and hostile actors. We have to reinforce the common values on which NATO was built: freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Building on NATO's capacities and partnerships for handling non-traditional threats and showing people that it can protect them against not only conventional threats but also against non-traditional ones could be a useful instrument to strengthen the alliance's unity and cohesion.

4. Recommendations and Conclusions

This paper has sought to showcase how there is a variety of angles that NATO has approached non-traditional threats and challenges from over the years, with greater or lesser success. A key narrative tying them all together is how a number of the developments are predominantly still only pending, insufficient or insufficiently firmly positioned to adequately ensure thorough safety and solid partnerships with key partners.

As such, there is no better single descriptor for what NATO is lacking than “cohesion.” This challenge weaves its way throughout all of NATO, both its conventional military and non-traditional aspects, but is perhaps more pronounced in terms of responses to non-traditional issues, given that these are less firmly institutionalised. There is a variety of beneficial initiatives underway, but they would be greatly reinforced if they were driven by a more singular unanimous will – something that is currently insufficiently demonstrated in the NATO alliance. This is a challenge that a core partner of NATO – the EU – also faces. And just like would be the case for the EU, a crucial recommendation is to not only focus on building capacities for NATO’s core functions, it is also necessary to reflect on the underlying basis that the alliance has been built on – an alliance of states unified for a single purpose of mutual defence in the protection of their democratic values. In the end, it is not solely a military project, it is also a political one and thus, an increased focus on democratic values and cohesion would be prudent.

Naturally, NATO only has so much in the way of capacities (and remit) to build cohesion between its member states and their societies, but at the same time, given the less integrational nature of NATO, wide-ranging efforts might not be necessary. On the one hand, public outreach is one approach that could be employed – increased display of and more visible and better vocalised engagement with current issues such as climate change, pandemic management, energy and financial risks, as well as other challenges, will serve to illustrate the enduring relevance of the alliance even to those consciously or unconsciously still blind to the significance of the alliance’s military element. More actively engaging with

societies within NATO, building a sense of being a stakeholder is key here. Just as the European Commission has representations in European Union member states, NATO could look to do something similar, with the representations focusing on public events, networking and contributing to the emergence of mutual understanding of both NATO and of host member states' societies to the extent that is relevant to the alliance.

NATO's efforts could manifest not only in terms of public outreach, seeking to build society to society links and understanding, but also in terms of redoubled efforts to reconcile the alliance member states' disparate interests and worries, if only slightly. In a time when some speak of the waning of the democratic world order, NATO must take its place as one of the shields of democracy, even if this might not be done by way of armed might. By building confidence in itself, in its continued existence and in democracy itself, the alliance could prove to be a major net contributor. And in a time when, even in spite of looming dangers presented by China and Russia, there is often little that can be done by conventional military means, measured contributions outside the military domain and firm partnerships are the best approaches available. As per the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, "*They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilisation of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.*" Perhaps it might be necessary for some further self-reflection within NATO and the construction of more thorough frameworks to handle challenges to the core principles of the treaty. There are arguments that the alliance is already something of a standard-setting body¹⁴ and so,

it could potentially look for approaches to reaffirm its commitment to democracy, even as it deteriorates in some of its member states. While direct involvement in electoral processes, election monitoring for example, would perhaps evoke unsavoury parallels, there is a role for NATO to play in relation to elections as well – monitoring suspect groups and efforts to manipulate electoral processes and populations, contributing its own capacities and networks to the individual member states' to better resist such efforts.

This runs in parallel to the continuing necessity of ensuring readiness, resilience and stability within NATO member states. An emphasis on complying with Article III is key here, especially as demonstrated by the insufficiencies observed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Paired with how the events of the past decade have showcased time and time again, in Georgia, Ukraine and elsewhere, that comprehensive defence and security capacities remain of the essence, more so than they have for a long time, there is no room for complacency. With the ever-greater prevalence of factors that go beyond NATO's traditional remit, caution and alertness are of the essence not only for the organisation as a whole but also within individual member states.

In order to contribute to the alliance members' resilience against non-conventional threats, the alliance should facilitate information sharing processes and good practices among the institutions of its member states operating in the same sector. NATO centres of excellence can work to deepen further cooperation with member states' national institutions with the aim of clearly identifying their vulnerabilities and developing effective strategies to solve their problems. Tight cooperation between

national institutions and CoEs can have a positive secondary effect: namely, it allows the CoEs to identify best practices adopted by one state and to share them with members that face same problems or threats. CoEs play a crucial role as they can provide education, consultation, training and research not only to NATO staff but also to civil sector personnel in member states. The centres are an integral part of the training and educational support community to bolster and contribute to NATO's ability to identify, prioritise, respond and implement the defence capabilities of its member states. CoEs can also offer multinational solutions and capabilities in order to meet NATO's transformational goals (Roberts, 2014).

At the same time, cross-fertilisation of ideas between the centres of excellence should be encouraged. While the centres are explicitly expected to not overlap in their areas of expertise, there is great value to be had by making use of diverse perspectives that can be had from up to 26 different centres (and so – 26 different topics). A positive direction to potentially proceed could be the creation of combination reports by diverse centres of excellence, thoroughly examining topics, challenges and ideas from a variety of perspectives. By ensuring that the centres of excellence, which are scattered across NATO's various member states, interact to a greater extent, the alliance could ensure even greater acceleration to its transformation and development. The NATO Centres of Excellence Directors Conference is an excellent initiative that could perhaps be expanded in scope in order to engage in more detailed discussion, analysis and introspection.

A general reaffirmation of NATO's purpose and its continued development will inherently

contribute to the better handling of non-traditional threats. NATO is already developing in a number of directions that will help ensure its members are secured from the detrimental impact of non-traditional threats, expanding its scope, to the extent that it is genuinely necessary. It is a fairly scattered and uneven process, however. If the above recommended directions can be pursued with at least limited vigour, Europe, the USA, NATO partners and neighbours, likely even the entire globe could benefit from increased stability. NATO might not be equipped and perhaps should not be equipped to handle all non-traditional threats, but simply through the virtue of guaranteeing stability and promoting resilience, it can be a significant factor in ensuring its member states are less susceptible to whatever may come in the future, be it short or long term. And where it can contribute without diluting its fundamental purpose, it definitely should.

In the end though, while there are opportunities for NATO to act and develop so as to better ensure the protection of its member states, there are two fundamental, unavoidable factors that cannot be ignored. First and absolutely foremost comes the aspect of funding. Lacking greater funding for itself and with not all member states elevating their defence funding to the guideline amount presented by the alliance, various initiatives and approaches are simply impossible to pursue. There is no simple and quick solution to this and only through purposeful and long-lasting efforts can change be achieved to this end. Continuing contributions outside of the military realm, especially in high profile situations like the one related to COVID-19 could prove helpful in convincing societies that structures seemingly exclusively related to defence have a role to play even when not under ar-

med assault from a hostile state or non-state entity. If the publics of NATO member states can be convinced and made more aware, perhaps it can be expected for their representatives also to be more receptive to calls for increased military spending.

Secondly, while this text has argued in favour of NATO approaching challenges outside of its traditional remit, by no means must these efforts come at any expense of the core military defensive role the alliance holds. There remain a number of genuine armed threats to NATO member states to this day and military preparedness and capacity remain essential – at its heart, while efforts outside the mi-

litary realm might be beneficial for the alliance's health in the long term, they are eventually there mostly to serve as a means to further reinforce the ability of NATO as an alliance to defend its members from assault by hostile external actors. No efforts should undermine the alliance's ability to deter foes by way of its military capacities or, if it comes to that, the alliance's ability to combat foes, once again by way of its military capacities. At the end of the day, the NATO alliance's continuation and the safety of its member states are guaranteed by the certainty of its force of arms, all else only serves to supplement and reinforce this, especially in the long term perspective.

Endnotes

- ¹ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133163.htm, last accessed on October 24, 2020.
- ² <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/02/09/nato-seen-favorably-across-member-states/>, last accessed on November 21
- ³ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm, last accessed on November 21
- ⁴ Jankowski, Dominik, and Julian Wieczorkiewicz. "Op-Ed: Toward a 'Greener' NATO." *Berlin Policy Journal*, 15 June 2020, www.berlinpolicyjournal.com/op-ed-toward-a-greener-nato/.
- ⁵ https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_91048.htm, last accessed on November 28, 2020
- ⁶ Jankowski, Dominik, and Julian Wieczorkiewicz. "Op-Ed: Toward a 'Greener' NATO." *Berlin Policy Journal*, 15 June 2020, www.berlinpolicyjournal.com/op-ed-toward-a-greener-nato/.
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- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/4/pdf/2004-Factsheet-Russia-Myths-COVID-19_en.pdf, last accessed on November 21, 2020.
- ¹¹ Chollet, Derek, and Jamie Fly. "As the Pandemic Rages on, It's Time for NATO to Step Up." *The Hill*, The Hill, 2 Nov. 2020, www.thehill.com/opinion/international/523875-as-the-pandemic-rages-its-time-for-nato-to-step-up.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/pr-2020-104-en.pdf, last accessed on December 12, 2020.
- ¹⁴ Babones, Salvatore. "The Quad's Malabar Exercises Point the Way to an Asian NATO." *Foreign Policy*, 25 Nov. 2020, foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/25/india-japan-australia-u-s-quad-alliance-nato.

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