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## THE REEMERGENCE OF LEGACY THREATS TO EUROPE: NATO NEEDS TO CHANGE ITS FOCUS

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**JCSP 43 DL**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

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Maj Kendra Hartery

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## **THE REEMERGENCE OF LEGACY THREATS TO EUROPE: NATO NEEDS TO CHANGE ITS FOCUS**

On April 4, 1949 the Washington Treaty established the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to in part create a counterweight to Soviet armies stationed in central and Eastern Europe after World War II.<sup>1</sup> Its original members were Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and the United States.<sup>2</sup> NATO grew throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first to its current 29 member nations.<sup>3</sup> Changing security concerns in Europe called into question the necessity for the alliance from historians and scholars. The end of the Cold War forced NATO to reevaluate its twenty-first century role to meet its original mandate to provide for multilateral collective European defence. This paper will argue that while NATO rightly changed its focus to combat modern threats, the quintessential treaty organization charged with defending Europe is spread too thin and must re-focus on core roles to answer the reemergence of legacy threats posed by Iran, Russia, Syria, and North Korea.<sup>4</sup>

From its formation until the end of the Cold War, the role of NATO was straightforward. The alliance existed to respond to any aggression by the former Soviet Union, and its satellite countries under the Warsaw Pact, against Europe and in particular the NATO members. The necessity for NATO was unquestioned in that the Western European nations were unable to

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1. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "North Atlantic Treaty Organization," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/North-Atlantic-Treaty-Organization>.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. While arguably an Asian issue, North Korea poses a threat to the United States, allegedly with nuclear missiles capable of reaching parts of that nation, and thereby creating a necessary response for NATO under Article 5 (see article on North Atlantic Council <https://teimun.org/teimun-conference/councils/north-atlantic-council/>)

defend themselves unilaterally against such a threat.<sup>5</sup> “The Alliance did not need to select its mission or choose from a range of contingencies to address.”<sup>6</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty, entered into by the original NATO members on 4 April 1949, contain fourteen Articles that define the scope and the circumstances under which the members would engage in the event of an attack against one or all.<sup>7</sup> The treaty essentially provided a mechanism during the Cold War by which “middle powers” could collectively deter against a Soviet first strike, whether conventional or nuclear.<sup>8</sup> “Middle powerhood [*sic*] was based on four main pillars: proactive behaviour [*sic*] in international relations; willingness to take responsibility for international issues; focus on diplomacy and support for international law; and a steadfast commitment to working within multilateral institutions, particularly the UN and NATO.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore NATO elevated the middle power members to superpower status collectively, and enabled this alliance to compete with the Soviet Union.

The purpose of NATO was further enhanced by the 1967 Harmel Report, named after its main author, Belgian Foreign minister Pierre Harmel. The report recognized the then changing landscape of Europe and directed NATO, with the concurrence of the member states, to take a two pillar approach to NATO’s purpose. The first pillar’s function was to maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to

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5. Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: the Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004), 2, <https://login.lacollegelibrary.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&an=127953>.

6. Jamie Shea, "Keeping NATO Relevant," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Policy Outlook*, April 2012, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping\\_nato\\_relevant.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping_nato_relevant.pdf).

7. “The North Atlantic Treaty,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, April 9, 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm).

8. Kevin Rudd, “Making Australia a Force for Good,” *Labor Herald*, 28 September 2006 <https://web.archive.org/web/20070627041402/http://eherald.alp.org.au/articles/0906/natp28-01.php>.

9. Karolina Maclachlan and Zachary Wolfrain, “Diplomacy disturbed: NATO, conservative morality and the unfixing of a middle power,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 28, no. 1 (July): 43-69, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3828/bjcs.2015.3>.

defend the territory of member countries if aggression should occur.<sup>10</sup> The second pillar of NATO's purpose as outlined in the report was to pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved; détente.<sup>11</sup> Adaptation of these pillars by the NATO members shifted the purpose of the coalition from a strictly military alliance to a military and political entity. Problems in unity and consensus experienced in the post Cold War NATO are not only due to the expansion of membership, but also to this 1967 shift in focus.

With the end of the Cold War, the need for NATO was called into question. Critics argue that the military alliance has no purpose, and it has not been needed to resolve conflicts where it recently intervened (Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya).<sup>12</sup> They further point out that in these instances the United States, with perhaps the help of several key European states, could have shouldered the burden alone.<sup>13</sup> Skepticism about the need and viability of NATO was not unfounded at the end of the twentieth century and prior to the rise of asymmetrical threats to the alliance.

In December 1991 the Soviet Union disintegrated into fifteen separate nations following a failed coup d'état.<sup>14</sup> Within a month, the Commonwealth of Independent Republics replaced the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.<sup>15</sup> The threat of nuclear holocaust yielded to a new threat

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10. David Yost, "NATO's Evolving Purposes and the Next Strategic Concept," *International Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2010): 489-522, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=86a4b5d2-827d-4bce-8e57-c73f1c93f846%40sessionmgr101>.

11. Ibid.

12. Younghoon Moon, "The Future of NATO; The Purpose of the Alliance After the Cold War," *Harvard International Review*, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 19-22, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=ca260ce9-fbb7-46f6-9700-eb43ab65a83e%40sessionmgr103>.

13. Ibid.

14. "The Fall of the Soviet Union," The Cold War Museum, accessed May 25, 2018, [http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/fall\\_of\\_the\\_soviet\\_union.asp](http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/fall_of_the_soviet_union.asp).

15 Ibid.

of European uncertainty and instability, and provided the crucible for NATO to reevaluate its role in this new European order. The question of NATO viability was rightly explored since the reason for its initial formation, the threat of Soviet aggression, seemed abated by the dissolution of the USSR. Furthermore, Pierre Harmel in his 1967 report on the future role of NATO, stated that, "... no final and stable settlement in Europe is possible without a solution of the German question which lies at the heart of present tensions in Europe. Any such settlement must end the unnatural barriers between Eastern and Western Europe, which are most clearly and cruelly manifested in the division of Germany."<sup>16</sup> The unification of Germany occurred one year prior to the dissolution of the USSR when East German conservative parties won the elections in 1990 and proceeded to dismantle the state.<sup>17</sup> Economic union with the West occurred in July, and on October 3, 1990 political unification occurred under the previous West German constitution.<sup>18</sup> Harmel's question to the German solution was answered, making final and stable settlement in Europe possible and placing quail on the future need for NATO. By the end of the twentieth century, all Eastern Bloc nations deposed their communist regimes and declared independence.

Amidst this denunciation and doubt from critics, NATO reconceived itself as a cooperative security organization to include two main objectives: foster dialogue and cooperation with former adversaries of the Warsaw Pact, and manage conflicts in areas on the European periphery.<sup>19</sup> The actions of NATO in this post Cold War environment deviate greatly from the original mandate and suggest a desire of the members to engage in extra-European

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16. Pierre Harmel, "The Future Tasks of the Alliance Report of the Council - 'The Harmel Report'," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified December 2, 2009, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_26700.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_26700.htm).

17. "Reunification of Germany," The Cold War Museum, accessed May 25, 2018, [http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/reunification\\_of\\_germany.asp](http://www.coldwar.org/articles/90s/reunification_of_germany.asp).

18. Ibid.

19. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "North Atlantic Treaty Organization," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/North-Atlantic-Treaty-Organization>.

conflicts and crises to remain relevant. This is especially curious given that throughout the entirety of the Cold War NATO forces were not involved in a single military engagement.<sup>20</sup> It is odd that NATO would look for new opportunities to expand its scope after the Cold War when the alliance just demonstrated that deterrence worked to safeguard the coalition. Nevertheless, a new era of NATO engagement began with Operation Anchor Guard, a mission undertaken between August 1990 and March 1991 that deployed NATO Airborne Early Warning (AWACS) aircraft to Konya, Turkey in the event of an Iraqi attack during Persian Gulf I.<sup>21</sup>

While Anchor Guard is in keeping with the reconceived post Cold War focus, responding to a potential threat on the European periphery, many twenty-first century missions and operations are depleting NATO resources in areas far from the European fringe and with a markedly unidentifiable interest to Europe's collective security.

**Table 1: NATO Operations Since End of Cold War**

OPERATION	LOCATION	DATES	ACTIVE/ INACTIVE	DESCRIPTION
RESOLUTE SUPPORT	AFGHANISTAN*	JAN 2015 PRESENT	A	NON-COMBAT MISSION WHICH PROVIDES TRAINING, ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES AND INSTITUTIONS.
KFOR	KOSOVO	JUN 1999 PRESENT	A	END WIDESPREAD VIOLENCE AND HALT THE HUMANITARIAN

20. Operations and Missions: Past and Present,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified December 21, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52060.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52060.htm).

21. Ibid.

				DISASTER. KFOR TROOPS CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A STRONG PRESENCE THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY.
OPERATION ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR	MEDITERRANEAN SEA	OCT 2001 OCT 2016	I	DETECT AND DETER TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
SEA GUARDIAN	MEDITERRANEAN SEA	NOV 2016 PRESENT	A	MARITIME SITUATIONAL AWARENESS, COUNTER-TERRORISM AT SEA AND SUPPORT TO CAPACITY-BUILDING
AMISOM	<b>SOMALIA*</b>	JUN 2007 PRESENT	A	PROVIDE AIRLIFT SUPPORT FOR AU PEACEKEEPERS, AND PROVIDE CAPACITY-BUILDING SUPPORT, AS WELL AS EXPERT TRAINING SUPPORT TO THE AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE (ASF)
AIR POLICING	ALBANIA, SLOVENIA, BALTIC	2014 PRESENT	A	COLLECTIVE PEACETIME MISSIONS THAT ENABLE NATO TO DETECT, TRACK AND IDENTIFY ALL VIOLATIONS AND INFRINGEMENTS OF ITS AIRSPACE AND TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION
ALLIED	<b>GULF OF ADEN*</b>	OCT 2008	I	COUNTER PIRACY



PROVIDER		DEC 2008		
ALLIED PROTECTOR	<b>HORN OF AFRICA*</b>	MAR 2009 AUG 2009	I	COUNTER PIRACY
ACTIVE ENDEAVOUR	USA & MEDITERRANEAN	OCT 2001 SEP 2016	I	DETER, DEFEND, DISRUPT AND PROTECT AGAINST TERRORIST ACTIVITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
ISAF	<b>AFGHANISTAN*</b>	AUG 2003 DEC 2014	I	DEVELOP NEW AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES, ENABLE AFGHAN AUTHORITIES TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE SECURITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY, CREATE ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO THE FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RULE OF LAW, PREVENT AFGHANISTAN FROM BECOMING A SAFE HAVEN FOR TERRORISTS.
NTM-I	<b>IRAQ*</b>	2004 2011	I	HELP IRAQ ESTABLISH EFFECTIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE SECURITY FORCES
UNIFIED	<b>LIBYA*</b>	MAR 2011 OCT 2011	I	ENFORCE ARMS EMBARGO, ENFORCE NO-FLY ZONE,

PROTECTOR				COUNTERATTACK MILITARY FORCES THREATENING LIBYAN CIVILIANS
AMIS	<b>SUDAN*</b>	JUN 2005 DEC 2007	I	PROVIDE AIR TRANSPORT FOR SOME 37,000 AMIS PERSONNEL, TRAIN AND MENTOR OVER 250 AMIS OFFICIALS
PAKISTAN EARTHQUAKE RELIEF ASSISTANCE	<b>PAKISTAN*</b>	OCT 2005 FEB 2006	I	AIRLIFT CLOSE TO 3,500 TONS OF SUPPLIES, DEPLOY ENGINEERS, MEDICAL UNITS AND SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT
HURRICANE KATRINA	USA	SEP 2005 OCT 2005	I	COORDINATE THE MOVEMENT OF URGENTLY NEEDED MATERIAL, SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN RELIEF OPERATIONS
PROTECT PUBLIC EVENTS	GREECE	JUN 2004 SEP 2004	I	INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT, CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL RADIOLOGICAL AND NUCLEAR (CBRN) DEFENCE ASSETS, AWACS RADAR AIRCRAFT TO SUPPORT OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES
DISPLAY DETERRENCE	TURKEY	FEB 2003 APR 2003	I	DEFENCE OF TURKEY DURING PERSIAN GULF II

OPERATION ESSENTIAL HARVEST	MACEDONIA	AUG 2001 MAR 2003	I	DISARMED ETHNIC ALBANIAN GROUPS OPERATING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY
AMBER FOX	MACEDONIA	AUG 2001 MAR 2003	I	PROTECT INTERNATIONAL MONITORS OVERSEEING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEACE PLAN
ALLIED HARMONY	MACEDONIA	AUG 2001 MAR 2003	I	PROVIDE ADVISORY ELEMENTS TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT IN ENSURING STABILITY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY
EAGLE ASSIST	USA	OCT 2001 MAY 2002	I	DEPLOY AWACS TO HELP PATROL THE SKIES OVER THE UNITED STATES IN NATO'S FIRST EVER ARTICLE 5 MISSION
DEADEYE	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	AUG 1995	I	AIRSTRIKES AGAINST BOSNIAN SERB AIR FORCES
DELIBERATE FORCE	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	AUG 1995	I	AIRSTRIKES AGAINST BOSNIAN SERB C2 INSTALLATIONS
JOINT ENDEAVOR	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	AUG 1995	I	DEPLOYMENT OF STABILISATION FORCE (SFOR)
ALTHEA	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	DEC 2004 PRESENT	A	ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT IN REFORMING ITS DEFENCE STRUCTURES.
ANCHOR	TURKEY	AUG 1990	I	DEPLOY NATO AWACS TO

GUARD		MAR 1991		KONYA, TURKEY IN THE EVENT OF AN IRAQI ATTACK DURING PERSIAN GULF I
ACE GUARD	TURKEY	JAN 1991 MAR 1991	I	DEPLOY ACE MOBILE FORCE (AIR) TO TURKEY IN THE EVENT OF AN IRAQI ATTACK DURING PERSIAN GULF I
ALLIED GOODWILL I & II	RUSSIA	FEB 1992 MAR 1992	I	INTERNATIONAL RELIEF EFFORT FLYING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE EXPERTS & MEDICAL ADVISORS TO RUSSIA AND OTHER COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES NATIONS USING AWACS TRAINER CARGO AIRCRAFT
AGILE GENIE	<b>CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN &amp; LIBYA*</b>	MAY 1992	I	PROVIDE INCREASED AWACS COVERAGE OF CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN TO MONITOR AIR APPROACH ROUTES FROM THE NORTH AFRICAN LITTORAL

\* Indicates the operation occurred outside NATO territory or European periphery

Of the twenty-nine NATO operations and mission listed in Table 1 above, ten occurred outside of the continent of Europe or North America, and many were either strictly peacekeeping, or humanitarian in nature, posing no security threat to member states under the

North Atlantic Treaty. “As its post Cold War missions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and more recently Libya reveal, NATO has identified its own security with the well-being of distant countries, the great majority of which will never be NATO members.”<sup>22</sup> This may have been a sustainable focus for NATO entering the twenty-first century were it not for the reemergence of legacy threats requiring the type of response that NATO was derived to deliver. These peacekeeping and humanitarian missions stretch NATO too thin to focus on the old yet new threats mounting from Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Russia.

**Fig. 1: Iranian MRBM Sites & Ranges**



22. Jamie Shea, "Keeping NATO Relevant," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Policy Outlook*, April 2012, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping\\_nato\\_relevant.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping_nato_relevant.pdf).

## **Iran**

Iran's proliferation of nuclear weapons capability via short and medium ranged missiles poses a direct threat to NATO members. The alliance must redirect a focus to this emerging threat since Iran shares a sizable border with a member state, Turkey. As Fig. 1 illustrates, Iran's medium range ballistic missile sites (MRBM) are capable of reaching NATO members in southeastern Europe. Their presence provides a destabilizing effect on the security of NATO member states.

What Fig. 1 does not show is the long-range ballistic missile threat Iran potentially poses. According to a 2012 report by the U.S. Department of Defence, Iran may be capable of flight-testing an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) by 2015.<sup>23</sup> While there are no open source reports suggesting that Iran actually achieved its 2015 long-range capability, the United State's recent withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (known in North America as the "Iran Deal") is likely to reinvigorate any proliferation plans that may have lay dominate during the Iran Deal. An ICBM capable Iran threatens all of Europe and North America. NATO successfully deterred an attack from the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War; it must now deploy a similar deterrent strategy to prevent an attack for the southeast via Syria and Iran.

## **North Korea**

The threat posed to the NATO alliance by North Korea is a formidable challenge. In theory and practice NATO has always concerned itself with the defence of Europe against communist aggression. NATO has only recently elected to engage in extra-European missions given the perceived peace and stability on the continent relative to the Cold War era. In

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23. Ibid.

December 2016, the North Atlantic Council acknowledged the threat North Korea places on the world: “The North Atlantic Council on Thursday (15 December 2016) strongly condemned North Korea's continued development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles and its inflammatory rhetoric, saying North Korea’s actions are breaching relevant UN Security Council resolutions and posing an increasing threat to international peace and security.”<sup>24</sup>

Acknowledgement is a good first step, but it still leaves NATO with no answer to the threat.

In a report issued in November 2017 by a panel of experts chaired by ex-NATO International Security Assistance Force Commander, General John R. Allen, NATO is not ready for future war. The panel proposed several recommendations and warnings to NATO including:

- The need to build relationships with influential rising powers like China
- The need for NATO to embark on a process of adaptation
- Enhancing political tools and partnerships to reinforce military goals<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps the most daunting aspect of the panels report is the acknowledgement that, “...NATO’s adversaries already consider themselves at war with NATO and the values for which it stands.”<sup>26</sup>

This report makes clear that North Korea poses a direct threat to NATO and that NATO must establish a war footing to counter any aggression from this nation.

## Syria

The threat posed to NATO by Syria is a double-edged sword for the alliance. The ongoing civil war places Russia and Iran squarely against the interests of NATO in that those

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24. “NATO Allies and Partners Condemn North Korea’s Nuclear Programme,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, last modified December 15, 2016, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_139418.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_139418.htm).

25. Mark Chandler, “NATO 'Not Ready for Future War',” *Daily Express (London)*, November 28, 2017, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/885193/North-Korea-Russia-China-NATO-World-War-3-army>.

26. Ibid.

countries support the regime of Bashar al-Assad and the western powers support his removal. According to Moscow, the situation in Syria escalated to a shooting war. In a joint attack of Syrian targets on April 13, 2018 by US, British, and French forces, Russia claimed Syria used its Soviet-era air defence systems to intercept 71 of the 103 cruise missiles launched by the allies in the attack.<sup>27</sup> While allied forces dispute Moscow's assessment of the attack, it nevertheless indicates that Russia has a vested interest in repelling any attack against its ally in Syria. Furthermore, while this claim is directed at only the US, UK, and French forces involved in the attack, given that these nations are members of NATO, the rhetoric is by extension directed at NATO. It is not hyperbolic to conclude that NATO is currently in a proxy war against Russia in Syria. However, the Syrian threat to NATO does not end there.

Bordering Syria to the north is NATO member nation Turkey. With the second biggest armed force in NATO, Turkey straddles the fault line between east and west.<sup>28</sup> The most recent strife between Turkey and its NATO allies involves the Turkish incursion into Afrin, a Kurdish enclave in northwest Syria.<sup>29</sup> The problem for NATO with this incursion is the threat it poses to any potential US backed security force deployed to the region. Turkey is opposed to any Kurdish stronghold on its border, whereas the western powers and NATO welcome a successful Kurdish population to engage their adversary al-Assad. Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdogan promises to, "...strangle before it is born a 30,000 strong American backed security force composed largely of YPG Kurdish fighters whom Turkey regards as terrorists."<sup>30</sup> While Syria poses a clear military threat to NATO, the alliance must engage in diplomatic combat to keep the

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27. Tom Barnes, "Syria News: Russia Claims Majority of Missiles Were Intercepted During Overnight Air Strikes," *Independent (London)*, April 14, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/syria-air-strikes-russia-missiles-shot-down-intercepted-shot-down-latest-update-a8304421.html>.

28. Peter Schrank, "Turkey and NATO Are Growing Apart," *The Economist*, Feb 1st 2018, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/02/01/turkey-and-nato-are-growing-apart>.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.



members together. Any action against Syria threatens to split the alliance apart, assuming that consensus could even be reached in the face of Russian and Iranian backed Syrian military aggression against Europe.

## **Russia**

Jamie Shea, the Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges at NATO, writing in the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Outlook, explained that as recently as 2012, "...NATO does not see Russia as a threat and views Moscow's threatened countermeasures to the Alliance's missile defense deployment as an unjustified waste of resources on Moscow's part."<sup>31</sup> Yet since this article was published in April 2012, Russia annexed Crimea and engaged Ukrainian troops on the Russian-Ukrainian border. These actions caused NATO to reevaluate its assessment of Russia. In his remarks to The Netherlands Atlantic Association on 8 April 2016, NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow expressed his assessment of Russia thus: "Russia illegally annexed Crimea and sought to destabilise [*sic*] eastern Ukraine by orchestrating and sponsoring an armed insurgency, and by directly introducing Russian troops and equipment...Russia's behaviour in and towards Ukraine [is] a new low in the post-Cold War settlement we [NATO] had perhaps started to take for granted."<sup>32</sup> Vershbow is not only in his belief that Russia is destabilizing the security situation in Europe. In the annual Munich Security Report released in February, 2018, Russia and Europe are moving closer to all out war with the creeping erosion of negotiated arms control, the pressure placed on disarmament treaties like INF and new START, and the effective death of conventional arms

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31. Jamie Shea, "Keeping NATO Relevant," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Policy Outlook*, April 2012, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping\\_nato\\_relevant.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping_nato_relevant.pdf).

32. Secretary General Alexander Vershbow, "NATO at 67: What (Complex) Agenda for NATO's Warsaw Summit?" (lecture, The Netherlands Atlantic Association, The Hague, The Netherlands, April 8, 2016).

control agreements like the CFE treaty.<sup>33</sup> The report sums up Vershbow's 2016 strategy for NATO engagement with Russia this way, "Maintaining that it does 'not want a new arms race' with Russia, the Alliance [NATO] continues its dual-track strategy of deterrence and dialogue."<sup>34</sup> Though the Cold War is over, Russia is a serious threat to NATO interests.

With twenty-nine named operations in as many years, and six of those still active, the alliance that successfully stood toe-to-toe against communism, and defeated the threat with a deterrent strategy that did not fire a single shot, is now spread thin to repeat this strategy; even though the changing situation in Europe calls for it. To be successful and viable in the twenty-first century, NATO must refocus on its core tasks and take a three-pronged approach to ensure the security of Europe: 1) Withdraw from peacekeeping missions, 2) Recommit to 2% of GDP for peacekeeping, 3) Adopt an aggressive deterrence strategy.

### **Withdraw from Peacekeeping And Humanitarian Missions**

NATO cannot afford to provide training to security forces in Afghanistan through Operation Resolute Support, or provide humanitarian assistance in Somalia through Operation ANISOM, when its eastern and southeastern flanks are threatened by destabilizing forces and conflicts. "NATO, the EU, and states, 'that take on the most hazardous and potentially violent missions... are already overstretched, and they should remain so for many years to come'".<sup>35</sup> In 2009, NATO deployed 73,000 military personnel in peace operations.<sup>36</sup> When considering that

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33. Tobias Bunde et al., *Munich Security Report 2018: to the Brink – and Back?* (Munich: Stiftung Münchner Sicherheitskonferenz (gemeinnützige) GmbH, 2018), 1-88.

34. Ibid.

35. Tim Guldemann, "Peacekeeping under Strain: Coping with Evolving Contradictions?," *Peace and Conflict Review* 4, no. 2 (2010): 1-11,

<http://www.review.upeace.org/pdf.cfm?articulo=102&ejemplar=19>.

36. Ibid.

this number represents roughly the entire armed forces of Canada, it is an unsustainable commitment for NATO in the long-term. This is not to say that these missions are not important, or that they do not constitute some response and assistance from western nations. However, those nations willing and able to provide support must do so unilaterally and beyond their NATO commitment to ensure that the alliance has the forces necessary to meet its emerging legacy threat; the threat for which the alliance was created in the first place.

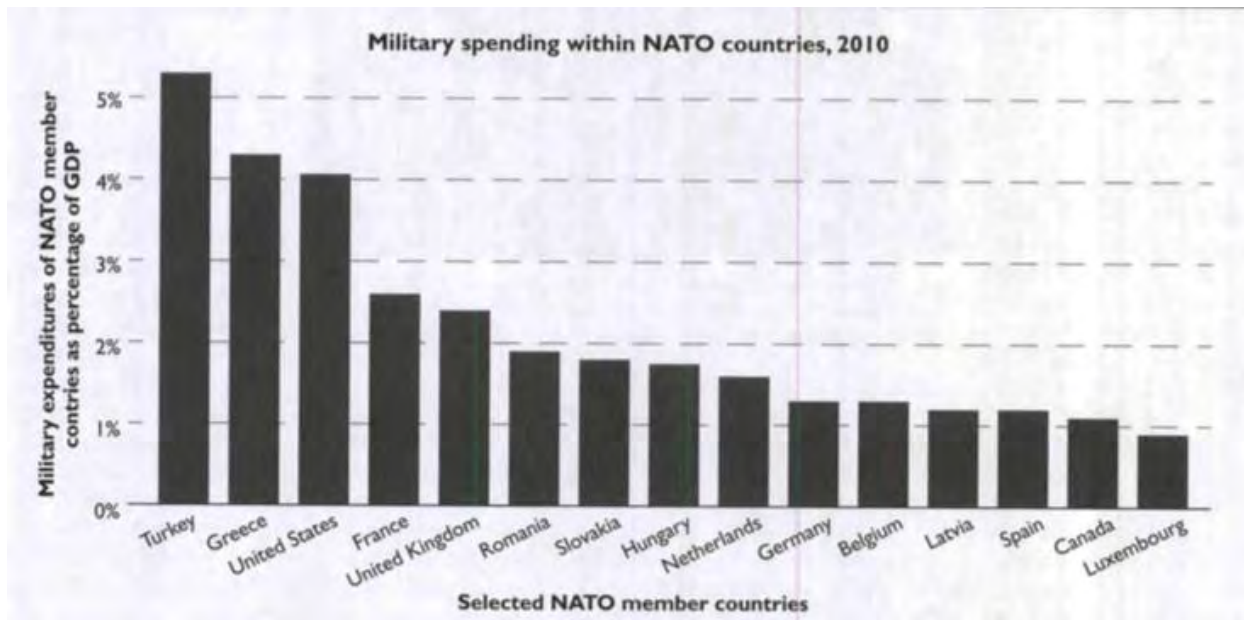
### **Recommit To 2% of GDP For Defence**

“The Cold War created the impression among Europeans that they could have defense [*sic*] on the cheap; and this has been a hard habit to shake off, even as military forces have been used more and more.”<sup>37</sup> To meet the lurking threats to NATO, the member nations must spend the appropriate amount for their collective defence. The larger economies within NATO will always carry the biggest burdens for the alliance’s security. However, all member nations must express their commitment to defence by spending the appropriate amount for their security.

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37. Jamie Shea, "Keeping NATO Relevant," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Policy Outlook*, April 2012, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping\\_nato\\_relevant.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/keeping_nato_relevant.pdf).

**Fig. 2: NATO Defence Spending: Losing the Two Percent**



As Fig. 2 illustrates, as of 2010 only five of the then twenty-eight NATO members committed to the collectively agreed upon defence-to-GDP ratio of 2 percent or more. Furthermore, the United States may some day tire from carrying the lion's share of the NATO burden (roughly 75% of NATO defence spending).<sup>38</sup> As former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates expressed in 2010, "Future US political leaders, those for whom the Cold War was not the formative experience that it was for me, may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost."<sup>39</sup> To keep the alliance in tact, and more importantly, to demonstrate to NATO's adversaries that the members are serious about defence and its deterrent strategy, NATO members must commit to their collective defence through appropriate military expenditures.

38. Younghoon Moon, "The Future of NATO; The Purpose of the Alliance After the Cold War," *Harvard International Review*, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 19-21, <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/cfc.idm.oclc.org/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=ca260ce9-fbb7-46f6-9700-eb43ab65a83e@sessionmgr103>.

39. *Ibid.*

## **Adopt an Aggressive Deterrence Strategy**

Through deterrence, NATO effectively prevented World War III and staved off the spread of communism throughout Europe. However, deterrence seems to be in a state of crisis insofar as it can serve as a viable option for NATO's collective defence mission.<sup>40</sup> "The basic ingredients [for deterrence] remain: a potential aggressor's cost-benefit calculation might be influenced by the threat of a punitive response, or by the realisation [*sic*] that the defender's preparations are so advanced and effective that the costs of carrying out the aggression would be too great." This is the response posture that NATO must take in providing for its collective security. There is a tacit willingness to do so as expressed by Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow's comments regarding a future NATO strategy of deterrence and dialogue. However, NATO's actions seem to run contrary to this proposed posture.

For deterrence to work, NATO must show her adversaries that the alliance is militarily strong, unanimous in purpose, and financially willing to advance with military action should détente fail. As an example, a redeployment of peacekeeping troops assigned to ANISOM to a southeastern European position would demonstrate to Russia a NATO commitment to enforcement of the Helsinki Final Act, Paris OSCE Charter, and the NATO-Russia Founding Act. NATO would then likely draw a Russian response that would demonstrates Russia's seriousness about it actions in Ukraine. NATO is beginning with some initial positive steps in this including tripling the size of the NATO Response Force to over 40,000. However, NATO must show a willingness to counter aggression through strength in order for diplomacy to have a chance.

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40. Paul Cornish, *Integrated Deterrence: NATO's 'First Reset' Strategy* (Bratislava: GLOBSEC Policy Institute, 2017), 1-16, [https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/gnai\\_-\\_integrated\\_deterrence.pdf](https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/gnai_-_integrated_deterrence.pdf).

NATO rightly refocused its attention and defence posture in the post Cold War environment to counter threats posed by non-state and state actors alike in the asymmetrical battlefield (terrorism, cyber, etc.) While prudent, this posture must be re-evaluated, as NATO is now spread too thin to deter threats from legacy adversaries like Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Russia. NATO is taking steps to improve its defence posture against this emerging threat, from innovations in modernization, to re-structuring of military command staff. However, the alliance must do more. By withdrawing from peacekeeping operations, recommitting to appropriate military expenditures, and returning to a defence posture of deterrence, NATO will remain viable and will remain poised to meet the new twenty-first century threats and challenges.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Table 1: North Atlantic Treaty Organization. "Operations and Missions: Past and Present." Last modified December 21, 2016. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52060.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52060.htm).

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Fig. 2: Moon, Younghoon. "The Future of NATO; The Purpose of the Alliance After the Cold War." Harvard International Review, no. 3 (Winter 2013): 19-21  
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