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MORE THAN BURDEN SHARING

Five Objectives for the 2018 NATO Summit

Mark Newton, Rachel Rizzo, Julie Smith, and Jim Townsend

About the Authors



MARK NEWTON is an Adjunct Senior Fellow with the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). He has worked for 17 years as a leading government official for the U.K. government in international defense and security policy. Prior to assuming his current position, Mr. Newton was the Deputy Director for Military Operations Policy for the U.K. Ministry of Defense.



RACHEL RIZZO is the Bacevich Fellow at the Center for a New American Security. Her work focuses on NATO, Europe, and transatlantic relations. Prior to joining CNAS, she worked at the Atlantic Council's Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, as well as at Goldman Sachs, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, and the U.S. Mission to NATO.



JULIANNE "JULIE" SMITH is Senior Fellow and Director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. She is a contributing editor to *Foreign Policy*, where she co-edits "Shadow Government." From 2012 to 2013, she served as the Deputy National Security Advisor to the Vice President of the United States. Before her post at the White House, she served for three years as the Principal Director for European and NATO Policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense in the Pentagon.



JIM TOWNSEND is an Adjunct Senior Fellow in the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security. After eight years as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for European and NATO Policy, he completed over two decades of work on European and NATO policy in the Pentagon, at NATO and at the Atlantic Council. Before becoming DASD in 2009, Mr. Townsend was a Vice President in the Atlantic Council of the United States and Director of the Council's Program on International Security.

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Executive Summary

In early-July, NATO will host the first full-length summit at its new headquarters in Brussels. It will also be the first NATO summit for President Donald Trump's foreign-policy team. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has laid out the following goals for the summit: to further strengthen the transatlantic bond, to build on NATO's work with partner nations to fight terrorism, to strengthen NATO's Black Sea presence, and to step up efforts against cyberattacks and hybrid threats.

In contrast, Trump will arrive in Brussels with only one thing on his mind: burden sharing.¹ This is hardly a new concern for an American president, or indeed for many European leaders. But in public Trump has veered between tweeting that money is now beginning to “pour in” to the NATO alliance to complaining that the NATO allies, especially Germany, are not doing enough. He will want to hear allies' plans to meet their defense spending target of 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2024, if not sooner.

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Although continuing to push allies to take on a bigger share of the burden is important, the United States should not allow this single issue to eclipse the entire summit agenda. This summit needs to be about more than burden sharing. Other allies will arrive wondering what the implications of Salisbury and Syria mean for NATO's policy toward Russia. NATO faces an evolving and complex strategic environment that will require heads of state and governments to do far more than simply get money in the bank. To the extent that NATO allies have plans to spend more, they need a coordinated approach on improving alliance readiness and mobility.

In addition to addressing the issue of burden sharing, we believe NATO leaders should focus on five specific objectives at this summit, which closely mirror the broad goals outlined by the NATO secretary general.

First, NATO must take concrete steps to make its forces more agile, ready, and deployable. To do so, the alliance must enhance the mobility of NATO forces, especially the ability to surge to and across Europe if

necessary. NATO must also focus on strengthening force readiness. Already on the docket for this summit is reform of the NATO command structure, plus the addition of two new NATO commands focused on maritime and logistics. This comes at just the right time, as these additions will help with the goal of strengthening agility and readiness.

Second, NATO should focus on ways to strengthen its counterterrorism efforts in Iraq and elsewhere. At the July summit, allies should agree to transition all Iraqi-security-related institutional-capacity-building efforts and classroom training to NATO over one year. As past conflicts have shown, developing capable, accountable, and effective security institutions is paramount to the long-term stability of at-risk countries. NATO can do much more in this regard. We propose that NATO create two to four NATO mobile training teams that can travel to Iraqi bases to train the Iraqi military in non-combat areas: counter-IED efforts, military medicine, and bomb disposal. At the same time, NATO should launch a new EU/NATO training course for Iraqi paramilitary forces. Finally, the alliance should establish a new NATO counterterrorism coordination center at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe to de-conflict NATO and EU counterterrorism-related activities across the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region and throughout Africa.

Third, NATO and the European Union must begin to harmonize their defense-planning processes. The two organizations should use the July summit to create a standing NATO-EU coordination body that meets at the appropriate times during the defense-planning processes of both institutions. Meetings should happen at three key phases to ensure harmonization: first, when each institution develops its capability requirements; second, when the capability requests are made to each nation; and third, after the institutions determine where their capability gaps are. Such a formal review will help guard against unnecessary duplication as the EU continues to build its military capability through the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiative while focusing NATO and EU allies on a single set of priorities for both organizations.

Fourth, NATO must strengthen its posture and capabilities in new domains, particularly space, where it is woefully behind in both its understanding of the challenges and its policy development. NATO should start by announcing at the summit that it is recognizing space as a domain of operations. The alliance should also get started on drafting a new cyber doctrine to clarify its response to cyberattacks below the Article 5 threshold.

NATO needs a standing capability to hunt down those who use cyber means to attack it, expose the origin of the attacks, hold to account those responsible, and respond to any attack should the allies choose.

Finally, on the margins of this year's NATO Summit, the Black Sea maritime nations should announce a new Black Sea maritime initiative. These nations (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Ukraine) could announce a regional maritime program with the support of the United States but led by a Black Sea "framework nation," to improve their navies' ability to exercise maritime domain awareness. This could be done through training exercises, and upgrades to their naval vessels, in collaboration with U.S. European Command.

This report serves as a primer for those seeking a deeper understanding of what NATO needs to address at the 2018 summit. It begins with an overview of NATO defense spending today: some of the challenges nations face in reaching the 2% of GDP target for defense spending and where allies stand today. It then expands upon each of the five objectives listed above. The report concludes with an examination of two regional issues: first, NATO's relationship with the Russian government, which is the backdrop for almost all the other conversations, and second, NATO's continued presence in the western Balkans, which is unlikely to receive the attention it deserves.



A member of NATO military security overlooks the 2017 NATO summit welcoming ceremony at the new NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. (Justin Tallis, Pool/Getty Images)

Introduction

Workers are busy putting the finishing touches on NATO's new headquarters, so all is in order for the return visit of President Trump and his 28 fellow heads of state and government for NATO's July summit in Brussels. Different from Trump's "get to know you" one-day summit in 2017, this year's summit is a full, two-day affair of meetings, photo ops, and a long communiqué that will highlight the summit's achievements and goals for the future.

Summit work is always done in the months leading up to the actual meeting. By the time Brussels' Zaventem airport is filled with government airplanes from all over Europe, the preparatory papers will have been completed, the movements scripted, and even the press releases on the summit outcomes written. It will then be up to the alliance leaders themselves to bring the summit to life as they reaffirm their commitment to NATO and to demonstrate that commitment by providing a long list of all the things they are doing in its support.

For this year's summit to be considered a success, NATO first and foremost must project unity and a sense of purpose. These two themes must resonate throughout the summit. Citizens on both sides of the Atlantic need to see and hear heads of state and government reaffirm their commitment to shared values and collective security. They need to know that transatlantic leaders are united in their efforts to protect one another. They need to believe that, despite being battered by internal and external political forces in recent years, the rules-based order that has enabled the United States and its allies to flourish since World War II is still strong. Convincing them might seem like an easy task, given that it is fundamental to NATO's existence, but in such discordant and uncertain times it is the most important item on the summit agenda this July.

NATO also needs to project a sense of purpose. That means tackling a number of thorny questions about the alliance's regional priorities and strategies, new domains, institutional relationships, and ongoing adaptation and modernization. Since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has shown many times how it can adapt to a changing security landscape. It must now do so again and with a heightened sense of urgency.

What follows are five objectives that the authors believe NATO leaders should pursue during this year's summit instead of spending too much time trying to justify NATO's existence to the Trump administration or fighting about burden sharing. That said, we begin this paper by providing an overview of the burden-sharing

debate, where NATO defense spending stands today, and what changes might be expected going forward.

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Overview of NATO Defense Spending

NATO defense spending has been a perennial theme of every NATO summit for decades. But President Trump has taken usual U.S. complaints about declining defense budgets in Europe and made them the centerpiece of U.S. interest in NATO. He scared several NATO allies during his campaign when, in an interview with *The New York Times* in July 2016, he hinted that America's commitment to the alliance's Article 5 clause might be contingent on whether the ally calling for assistance had met its 2% target. That particular point has not surfaced since he took office, but NATO allies grew concerned again when at their last summit, in the spring of 2017, the president failed to endorse America's commitment to Article 5, while berating them for failing to spend enough on defense. Those critiques have continued even as he has occasionally boasted that money is now beginning to "pour in" to the alliance because of his pressure.



NATO heads of state gather for a photo at the start of the May 25, 2017, summit at the new NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. (Dan Kitwood/Getty Images)

It is true that European defense spending substantially dropped after the end of the Cold War in anticipation of a long-term détente with Russia, and the decrease was exacerbated years later by the financial crisis of 2008. It is also true that President Trump’s harsh “name and shame” tactics have had some effect on NATO allies’ renewed interest in meeting their goals. According to former British Ambassador to NATO Adam Thomson, “Nobody could quite have expected the way it has been taken up in such an unsophisticated fashion by Trump, but that, too, has had a real impact.”²

This year Britain, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania are all expected to reach the 2% spending goal.

But it was the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine that served as the real wakeup call for Europe. Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea caught the European continent by surprise and spurred a series of decisions both at NATO and in national capitals aimed at strengthening defense and deterrence in Europe. Since then, NATO allies have added over \$18 billion in new equipment and increased the number of troops deployed to various NATO missions to 23,000, which is 30% above the 18,000 deployed troops in 2014.³ At the 2014 Wales summit, NATO leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to reverse the trend of declining defense budgets and raise them over the coming decade, reaching 2% of GDP by 2024. Over the last three years, the NATO allies have steadily increased defense spending, adding a total of \$46 billion to defense. In 2017, NATO collectively increased defense spending by 4.87% in real terms, following increases of 3.08% in 2016 and 1.84% in 2015.⁴ The alliance’s most recent annual report shows that NATO members collectively now spend around 1.45% of GDP on defense.⁵ Alongside the United States, this year Britain, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania are all expected to reach the 2% spending goal. Additional countries are expected to join that list in the coming years.

Germany, however, remains an open question. It faces the combination of a booming economy (which makes the 2% number feel daunting) and a public that is reluctant to support a major bump in defense spending. This puts Chancellor Angela Merkel in a tough spot. Last year, Germany spent just 1.13% of its GDP on defense.⁶ By 2021, it is expected to spend around €42.4 billion, which is a significant increase from the €37 billion it spent in 2017.⁷

Because of high economic growth projections, however, this level of spending will still only amount to 1.15% of GDP, well below NATO’s target. That is unlikely to change by 2024, at which time all allies should have met the 2% target.

Germany is not alone in that regard. Other allies face their own unique hurdles but are trying to contribute to European and global security in other meaningful ways. Norway, for example, spends only about 1.5% of GDP on defense but has made significant equipment purchases to shore up defense in the High North, including F-35s, submarines, and maritime patrol aircraft.⁸ Denmark spends only around 1.17% of GDP on defense but plans to boost that number by \$760 million each year until 2023 for more troops, hardware, tanks, and artillery, in response to Russian aggression.⁹ Denmark is also one of the most active European members of the global coalition to Defeat ISIS¹⁰ Even with the boost in spending, however, it will still fall short of the 2024 NATO target.

While there will be some good news at the summit, in that more NATO members will hit 2% before the end of 2018, Donald Trump will no doubt find some countries’ projections discouraging. U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis and other senior advisors, however, would be wise to stress in their pre-briefs with the president that it is not always how much a country spends on defense, but what it spends that money on and its willingness to use it that count.

President Trump could choose to declare victory, since allied spending is increasing. He and other NATO leaders at the summit should then turn their attention to making substantial progress on the following five objectives.

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Then-Secretary of State John Kerry watches a Royal Air Force Red Arrow fly-by during the 2014 NATO summit in Wales. (U.S. State Department)

Five Objectives for the 2018 NATO Summit

1 Create a more capable, ready, and deployable force

COMMAND STRUCTURE

Command structure is the skeletal framework upon which NATO's military capability hangs. When allies make the political decision to take military action, it is the components of NATO's command structure—the headquarters, joint force commands, and unit commanders—that leap into action, commanding and controlling NATO's military forces to achieve the goal set out by allied political authorities. The command structure reflects the threats NATO must meet and how the alliance plans to meet those threats militarily. When threats change, so does the command structure. After the threat in Europe changed dramatically with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, defense ministers in February 2018 agreed to adaptations in the command structure, which will be solidified at this year's summit.

It is highly disruptive and expensive to change the command structure, and decisions to adapt it are not undertaken lightly. Allies provide and pay for the personnel to man the command structure, and NATO's military budget, also provided by the nations, pays to keep the lights on in the headquarters. Changes to the European security environment since the end of the Cold War have kept NATO's command structure in an almost constant state of flux.



U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis meets NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Pentagon in March 2017. (Win McNamee/Getty Images)

At the end of the Cold War, NATO's "layer cake" command structure had 33 commands and 22,000 personnel. It has taken decades to shrink it to its current size. The last major reorganization was approved in 2011 and reflected both the severe economic downturn at the time and the need for the NATO command structure to deploy to command operations outside Europe. That reorganization resulted in a more deployable and efficient command structure that today is made up of seven commands with personnel in 6,800 posts. However, this command structure will soon change.

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine and aggressive and threatening posture in much of NATO's periphery caused the 2014 NATO summit in Wales to strengthen deterrence in Europe by creating the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), the NATO Response Force (NRF), and the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). NATO's command structure, which had just reached full operational capability from its 2011 revision, was also singled out for attention, with allies agreeing to "ensure that the current NATO Command Structure remains robust, agile, and able to undertake all elements of effective command and control for simultaneous challenges; this includes a regional focus to exploit regional expertise and enhance situational awareness."¹¹

Tensions increased with Russia in the months following the Wales summit. NATO responded by deploying battlegroups to the Baltic nations and Poland, and it became obvious that for reinforcements to reach a conflict area in Europe quickly and safely, there needed to be changes in the command structure. At the Warsaw summit in 2016, allies agreed to conduct a functional assessment of the command structure to see if it was up to the task unforeseen in 2011, that of reinforcing NATO forces in conflict with Russia on the European continent. The result of that functional assessment will be agreed at the July summit and include the following major command structure changes:

Joint Force Command (JFC) Norfolk: This new NATO command will be in Norfolk, Va., already home to NATO's Allied Command Transformation (ACT), which

in a previous life was NATO's Cold War-era Supreme Allied Command, Atlantic (SACLANT). It will have to rebuild maritime domain awareness in the North Atlantic, including alliance anti-submarine warfare capability and convoy skills. Reinforcing Europe from the United States means transiting the Atlantic by ship, much as U.S. forces did in both world wars and during the Cold War. NATO must return to ensuring that it can secure the sea lines of communication across the Atlantic. Convoys are vulnerable to interdiction, especially from submarines. Advances in technology since the last convoys crossed to Europe make both the hunter and the hunted easier to find and destroy. But geography remains the same, and the Greenland-Iceland-U.K. gap promises to be busy should hostilities break out.

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Joint Sustainment and Enablement Command (JSEC): JSEC, housed in Germany, will continue the work already under way to make military movement happen more smoothly and quickly across Europe. It will also work with a similar organization of the European Union. Logistical issues slowing military movement within Europe came as a surprise in 2014, discovered as the United States and NATO began large-scale exercises. The issues were both bureaucratic and practical. Military convoys hit snags at national borders as customs officials asked for passports or needed advance notification of the movement of armed forces across their borders. Logistical problems arose when troops moved into the territory of the East European allies, where NATO had not operated during the Cold War. NATO planners did not know the load-bearing ratings of roads, bridges, and railheads. Rail gauges were different, and even the national railroad companies in older allied members had forgotten how to move priority military freight—a

process now made more complicated by greater numbers of passenger trains.

Cyber operations center: The creation of a cyber operations center at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) is a sign of deeper NATO involvement in cyber warfare. The establishment of the center within the new command structure will give NATO's cyber defense more prominence in NATO military planning and the potential for a more muscular cyber capability during conflict.

NATO has shown its ability to adapt the command structure to face new challenges and threats, and these changes make sense. As summiteers approve the new command structure, the administration may want to remind allies of the important role they play in its success. Allies must follow through with personnel commitments to fully man the new commands, or else changing the structure will not matter. In the past, the United States has not fully met its personnel commitment; it must follow through as well, especially in manning the new command in Norfolk. The U.S. Navy will need to fully participate in the JFC and establish especially close peacetime links with relevant NATO and allied maritime commands so that it is a smooth transition from peacetime command and control to wartime. Allies must also provide personnel who are top performers; the days must end of providing personnel who cannot speak English or who are sent to Brussels either as a retirement posting or just to get experience.

MOBILITY AND READINESS

At the end of the Cold War, NATO allies were ready for a peace dividend, which would allow them to shutter bases, shed some of the expensive legacy systems of the Cold War, reduce the size of their forces, and shift funds from defense budgets back toward domestic needs. Many made such changes even with the Balkans mired in conflict. It was difficult to predict at the time the deterioration in readiness and mobility skills related to fighting a traditional large-scale war of maneuver that would accompany those cuts and how that degradation would worsen in the post-September 11 era. By the time Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, all NATO allies, including the United States, found themselves grappling

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with significant readiness and mobility issues. Since 2014, the alliance and individual NATO members have launched several new initiatives aimed at strengthening the alliance's ability to fight a near-peer conventional war in Europe.¹² Despite those efforts, though, serious readiness and mobility challenges continue to plague NATO allies and will rightly be at the center of the summit this summer.

The fact that the alliance struggles with mobility issues today is certainly understandable. Once the Soviet Union collapsed, it was difficult to imagine conventional war in Europe, and so planning and exercising large-scale military movements across Europe ceased. That meant that most of the capabilities and logistical details associated with moving large numbers of forces across the European continent atrophied. In the years following the end of the Cold War, NATO members, including some of the new allies that were never part of NATO's Cold War infrastructure, turned their attention toward expeditionary operations outside Europe, which had an entirely new set of requirements. Former U.S. Army Europe Commander Lt Gen Ben Hodges started ringing the alarm bells in the wake of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, urging the alliance to relearn how to assemble and move forces with speed across Europe. That task requires overcoming several complex challenges, including "the time it takes to receive national movement permits, infrastructure problems, complications in cross-border and multinational coordination, and transport support capabilities."¹³

Mobility challenges, however, cannot be solved by NATO alone. National civilian agencies and the European Union also hold responsibility for making the necessary changes. Earlier this year, in March, the European



NATO VJTF forces from Germany and Poland participate in the NATO Noble Jump exercises on June 18, 2015, in Zagan, Poland. (Sean Gallup/Getty Images)

Commission launched a new "Action Plan on military mobility," which will streamline regulatory and procedural issues, identify which parts of the trans-European transport network are suitable for military transport, and develop military requirements for military mobility.¹⁴ NATO and the European Union are now working closely on enhancing their cooperation in this area and will likely release a statement at the July summit, noting progress made to date and the need to do more in the future. This area of NATO-EU coordination shows real promise in terms of pragmatic cooperation. The challenge is ensuring that the European Union simultaneously focuses on both the civilian and military aspects of mobility and that it takes NATO requirements into consideration as it continues to address military mobility challenges.

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While the mobility problems facing the alliance today are understandable, the readiness gaps are harder to accept. Like the mobility challenges, the readiness challenges are rooted in assumptions about the post-Cold War threat environment. But current readiness shortfalls are also a story about poor management. Forces that are at a 90-day or more "readiness to move" are simply not usable in a European conflict where reinforcements may be needed immediately to maintain deterrence or to reinforce forces should deterrence fail. There are simply no excuses for allowing forces to drift into a situation where they lack winter clothing or are forced to exercise with broomsticks instead of actual guns.¹⁵ Similarly, NATO can't afford to have allies that possess attack helicopters that are available only a quarter of the time.

At the July 2018 summit, NATO will unveil new readiness targets proposed by the United States that will ensure that the alliance can deploy 30 mechanized maneuver battalions, 30 combat air squadrons, and 30 major naval combatants within 30 days. This is a tall order, and the United States should push hard for its adoption. But even the 30-day readiness target is too long. The one open question leading up to the summit is whether these requirements will be in addition to existing high-readiness units or will merely build on the progress that the alliance has already made in developing the NRF or the VJTF. This question will be addressed by

allies at NATO headquarters in the run-up to the summit. Once it is settled, NATO will commit to meeting this new 30/30/30 target by 2020. That may not sound like much to outside observers, but this target will push NATO allies to make meaningful changes over the next two years and, it is hoped, make progress toward reducing the 30-day readiness target even further.



An Army AH-64 Apache helicopter is delivered to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve on February 22, 2017. (Timothy Moore/U.S. Air Force)

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2 Agree on Concrete Ways to Strengthen Alliance Counterterrorism Efforts

President Trump declared NATO “no longer obsolete” last year with the expectation that the alliance would do more to fight terrorism.¹⁶ While NATO has been in the counterterrorism fight for many years (as in Afghanistan), it has struggled to gain consensus among its members on the role it should play in meeting the terrorism threat felt by allies in southern Europe. The upcoming summit thus offers an opportunity for NATO leaders to work toward creating a comprehensive strategic vision for NATO’s role in fighting terrorism on the alliance’s southern flank. One role it could start with is to take on and manage all coalition field training and capacity-building efforts in Iraq to free up coalition forces for other missions, particularly counterterrorism.



U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis arrives at NATO Resolute Support Mission Headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan, on April 24, 2017. (Jonathan Ernst, Pool/Getty Images)

The collapsing Islamic State is scrambling to survive and continues to inspire and direct attacks both in the region and beyond. Although the jihadists have been removed from most of the territory they used to control in Syria, Iraq, and, to a lesser extent, Libya, there remains a substantial amount of stabilization and reconstruction to be done. A stable and secure Iraq is one of the most important steps toward bringing balance to the broader region, and NATO can play an important noncombat role here. It is expected that NATO’s activity in Iraq will transition to a formal, noncombat “mission” at the summit.

NATO has developed particular expertise at training local security forces in Afghanistan, and previous NATO training missions have focused on counterterrorism capabilities in Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. NATO should use this expertise to take on and manage all coalition field training and capacity-building

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efforts in Iraq. As a first step, all Iraqi security-related institutional-capacity-building efforts and classroom training could be transitioned to NATO over one year. NATO efforts could also include increasing the number of mobile training teams that can train the Iraqi military in areas such as counter-IED, military medicine, and bomb disposal. Those skills are needed in many more places than just Baghdad, especially to help those Iraqi cities rebuilding after their occupation by ISIS.

The Iraqi security forces also face the continued challenge of preventing ISIS from reestablishing itself in recently liberated areas. To that end, NATO trainers could pursue a joint effort with the European Gendarmerie Force to develop and train a capable Iraqi security force that could act independently to protect and sustain Iraqi rebuilding efforts. As Secretary General Stoltenberg has stated, “it is much better to fight terrorism and project stability by training local forces, building local security institutions, instead of NATO deploying large numbers of our own combat troops in combat operations.”¹⁷

NATO allies also need to do a better job of mapping national counterterrorism efforts across the MENA region to strengthen coordination across individual countries, avoid unnecessary duplication, and identify country-specific gaps. NATO previously agreed to do this in Jordan as an initial test case. The results of that mapping exercise, led by the British, will be one of the July summit deliverables. NATO heads of state and government should add additional countries so that NATO allies can have a complete picture of counterterrorism efforts across the region.

Finally, a new NATO counterterrorism coordination cell at SHAPE should be established for NATO and the European Union to align and de-conflict counterterrorism efforts throughout the south and determine options for developing new joint initiatives. So long as NATO’s southern flank continues to produce instability, the alliance must be steadfast in its commitment to confronting challenges there.

3 Harmonize Defense-planning Processes with the European Union

Calling for greater NATO-EU cooperation is a staple of NATO summits, with leaders often giving the NATO-EU relationship not much more than a hat tip. This finally changed at the 2016 Warsaw summit. Since the European Union produced its “Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy” in 2016, it has gotten serious about improving its ability to take on military tasks “autonomously.” But this has caused Washington to worry about unnecessary duplication with NATO, and so, instead of supporting the European effort to improve its collective military capability, the United States is wary. To ease fears about unnecessary duplication and to win U.S. support, NATO and the European Union should agree at the summit to use an existing committee to formally establish an EU-NATO coordination committee to review each other’s defense planning at appropriate times in their processes to make sure they are not undercutting one another.

The good news is that once these EU measures to improve European military capability get traction, over time they may have the potential to better organize EU members to take on joint military projects that they could not have done singly. The bad news is that if there is not a formal, concerted effort to harmonize NATO and EU planning, both institutions could find themselves working at cross purposes and inadvertently undercut each other’s efforts.

Perhaps the most important of these EU concrete measures is the December 2017 agreement by a subset of EU members to organize into the PESCO coalition



Iraqi security forces train at Camp Taji, a Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve location with the primary mission of training partner forces. (Alexander Holmes/Department of Defense.)

to take on defense initiatives. The decision by PESCO nations to focus on defense is an important signal that EU members are serious about strengthening European military capability and are now organizing (with funding) to make progress in EU priority areas. Seventeen projects have been agreed to date, with initiatives in areas such as training, logistics, and bridging gaps in infantry fighting vehicles, and cyber and maritime surveillance.

The European Union has sharpened its defense planning as well, moving from a loosely organized system of voluntary goals to a coordinated annual review on defense (CARD) system, “through which Member States will share their defense spending plans to better identify shortfalls, be more coherent and benefit from economies of scale.”¹⁸ Although CARD is not as prescriptive as NATO’s defense planning process, which uses peer pressure to motivate allies to meet assigned capability goals, the European Union is becoming more systematic about determining what it needs from EU members to meet its military ambitions, and what the gaps are. Within the PESCO framework, commitments by members to contribute to a project are more binding and so expectations are closer to the NATO level.

Finally, the European Union is putting money behind its projects, creating a European Defense Fund (EDF) to “create incentives for Member States to cooperate on joint development and the acquisition of defense

equipment and technology through co-financing from the EU budget.”¹⁹ Also on offer is help for member states to find the most suitable financial arrangements for joint acquisitions. The emphasis on joint procurement is to help motivate nations to avoid, where possible, purely national procurement, which can result in duplication among member states. The European Union believes the fund could generate a total investment in defense research and capability development of €5.5 billion per year after 2020.²⁰ It expects the EDF will triple the amount of R&D funding among members after 2020 to over €500 million yearly.²¹

Concerns about duplication or a zero-sum relationship developing between EU and NATO requirements are valid. To avoid such problems, both institutions have called for a harmonized relationship that is collaborative, not competitive. There need to be a dedicated set of scheduled meetings between EU and NATO planners to review plans to ensure no unnecessary duplication. Avoiding the possible downsides of these EU measures on similar NATO activities will not just happen on its own.

At the 2018 NATO summit, NATO and EU leaders should announce a formal joint planning committee that meets during three key points in both institutions’ planning processes.



U.S. Admiral James Foggo, commander of JFC Naples, visits students at Iraq’s Explosive Ordnance Disposal School in Besmaya, Iraq, on February 7, 2018. During this visit, Admiral Foggo also visited other parts of the country including National Defense University in Baghdad (JFC Naples Public Affairs)

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- The first meeting should occur when both institutions can discuss what military ambitions they have and the military capability they need to meet those ambitions.
- The second meeting should occur when both institutions can discuss what military capabilities they will ask individual countries to provide.
- A third and final meeting should occur after nations have stated what they will provide, enabling both institutions to determine where the gaps are between what they need and what nations committed. Such a review could uncover common gaps that both institutions could work on jointly filling.

The EU and NATO defense-planning processes are different, and the institutions' levels of ambition are different, too, with NATO focused on high-end warfare and the European Union on stability operations and peace enforcement. Both institutions already have some insight into what each asks its members to be able to do. But concerns about unnecessary duplication (or other inefficiencies) will affect political support for the EU measures, especially from the United States, unless both institutions can take a formal step such as a joint committee that demonstrates to allies that something is being done to prevent it.

4 Strengthen NATO's Posture and Capabilities in New Domains

Malicious cyber incidents are growing more frequent, sophisticated, and damaging. The Russian military was behind the 2017 "NotPetya" cyberattack, which spread from its initial targets in Ukraine to infect U.S. and European businesses, as well as governments, hospitals, and airports. That attack resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in damage. Russia is not uniquely capable here—there are a growing number of capable adversaries and a range of destabilizing factors in play. Peer conflict could include an all-domain operation against NATO allies. The summit offers an opportunity to begin work on a new cyber doctrine to guide the alliance on how to respond to aggressive cyber activity that includes a more robust and forward-leaning approach to seeking out and punishing cyber attackers. Official work on other emerging threats, such as undersea cable vulnerability, and emerging capabilities, such as artificial intelligence, should also be launched at the summit.

NATO must continue its march to face these new and emerging threats. The alliance has made significant progress on its approach to cyber deterrence. At the 2016 Warsaw summit, NATO recognized cyberspace as a distinctive domain of operations. Allies committed to enhancing their national defenses and to strengthen their capability, collectively and individually, to resist these attacks. Now the alliance must use this next summit to make decisions that further strengthen the breadth and credibility of its posture while addressing gaps across all domains.



European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. (NATO)

If a determined adversary wanted to cut off allied access to communications infrastructure (including undersea cables), it could deploy capabilities to attack space and cyberspace at the same time. NATO has not yet recognized space as a domain of operations. It should.

NATO needs a new doctrine to clarify its response to cyber activity and attacks below the threshold of war. NATO also needs the ability to hunt down those who use cyber means to attack it, expose the places those attacks came from, and hold to account the people responsible—as well as respond to any attack at a time of its choosing. NATO should not act alone; instead, this could be another area for fruitful cooperation with the European Union and a key part of the broader international community’s effort to maintain responsible behavior in cyberspace.

NATO has not yet recognized space as a domain of operations. It should.

The creation of a new cyber operations center as part of the adapted NATO command structure is encouraging. The alliance needs a mechanism for harnessing national cyber capabilities, both defensive and offensive. NATO should also integrate cyber capabilities into its planning and operations at all levels. And the U.S. administration should encourage other allies to develop these capabilities and commit to offering them to alliance operations.

NATO should also review its own planning process; at present it does not give enough attention to the growth of new threats. The alliance should expand the planning process so that it prepares for the full range of possibilities, including cyber disruption and disinformation, and ensures that allies spend their defense budgets on capabilities that matter most for 21st-century deterrence and defense. At the same time, NATO must consider how to face adversaries that are developing military uses for artificial intelligence. It should also look at how the United States and close allies harness these capabilities. NATO is the organization that binds allies’ advanced militaries together. NATO’s Allied Transformation Command should launch an artificial-intelligence initiative, perhaps an organization outside the NATO bureaucracy along the lines of the U.S. Department of Defense’s Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx),²² aimed at developing interoperability standards and keeping NATO and its members on top of this key area for the future.

A further risk is the vulnerability of allied undersea cables. A large-scale outage of these cables would affect critical governmental and business operations at a substantial financial cost. Potential adversaries are looking for vulnerabilities. NATO allies must continue to develop their maritime posture to match and understand how an adversary’s navy may be used to interdict

these vulnerable communications links. This should be part of the consideration when setting up the new NATO Maritime Joint Forces Command. Tackling this threat will also require NATO to enhance cooperation with the private sector.

NATO’s adversaries—state and non-state—are doing more to exploit the chinks in its armor. The alliance need not only protect itself, but encourage further national investment in cyberspace and space to prevent any potential strategic advantage accrued by our adversaries.



Participants from 25 nations took part in Exercise Cyber Coalition 17, NATO’s largest annual cyber exercise, in Tartu, Estonia, between November 27 and December 1, 2017. (Dan Bardsley/NATO)

5 **Announce a Black Sea Maritime Initiative on the Margins of the Summit**

Six countries border the Black Sea: Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine. Of these six, three are in NATO, and Russia recently invaded the other two, Georgia and Ukraine. Among other things, this effectively ended their bids to join NATO. This aggression by Russia in the Black Sea area returned NATO to a war footing and pitted a newly aggressive Russia against an alliance that was now scrambling to strengthen its deterrence. Part of that scramble to strengthen deterrence can be a Black Sea regional maritime initiative to improve the Black Sea navies, executed by the Black Sea maritime nations in a “framework nation” format, supported by the United States and other allies, and announced at the NATO Summit.

Despite the Black Sea region’s being the area where Russia showed its teeth, much of the immediate alliance effort to shore up deterrence was focused farther to the northwest, on the three Baltic nations. Seen as vulnerable due to their small size, weak militaries, and proximity to large Russian military forces, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia have been targets of Russian intimidation. To strengthen deterrence, NATO rushed battlegroups to the three Baltic nations and Poland in 2017. NATO exercises and training have become a constant feature in the Nordic/Baltic region.

But in the Black Sea region, despite the Russians’ seizure of Crimea and much of the Donbass region (not to mention part of Georgia), there was not a surge of NATO forces into the region comparable to the one in the Baltics. Initially, there was an upswing in the number and size of U.S. and NATO exercises in the Black Sea region, and in 2015 NATO stood up the Multinational Division Southeast to command and control an Article 5 operation at the division level. At the 2016 NATO summit, the Black Sea area received additional attention when allies endorsed a “tailored forward presence” for NATO’s southeastern flank built around a Romanian framework brigade. The alliance agreed also to “strengthen the readiness and interoperability of air and maritime forces in the Black Sea region.”

But on the Black Sea itself, the NATO line is thin, and those few U.S. and other allied ships and aircraft that enter the Black Sea are routinely harassed by Russian aircraft. With Crimea now in their pocket, the Russians plan to protect it and to project dominance over the Black Sea. To do these things, Russia has stood up a new army corps in Crimea and is planning to deploy a number of ship classes into the area, including Kilo class

submarines, frigates, and patrol boats, many armed with the Kalibr cruise missile. Russia has also deployed the sensors and the anti-access missile systems to develop an anti-access/area denial bubble over much of the Black Sea, especially the approaches to Crimea.²³

NATO pledged in 2016 to strengthen the readiness and interoperability of maritime forces in the Black Sea area. While the most NATO can do to help Black Sea navies is to conduct exercises and training, the Black Sea nations need more than that to modernize their fleets. For its part, Turkey will likely oppose NATO initiatives to strengthen the Black Sea navies because of Ankara’s belief that Turkey is the sole guardian of the sea and its difficult relations with some of the Black Sea countries. Additionally, Turkey has said it does not want to do something in the Black Sea that would be seen as provocative by Russia or would cause problems for Turkomen living in Crimea.

NATO’s Allied Transformation Command should launch an artificial-intelligence initiative, perhaps an organization outside the NATO bureaucracy along the lines of the U.S. Department of Defense’s Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx), aimed at developing interoperability standards and keeping NATO and its members on top of this key area for the future.

Given the lack of materiel assistance NATO could provide and the potential for a Turkish veto, a NATO effort to help the Black Sea navies will likely not amount to much more than exercises and training. This situation leaves it to the Black Sea regional nations themselves to come together, supported bilaterally by the United States and other allies, to organize their own regional maritime cooperative initiative. Unfortunately, except for that of Turkey, the Black Sea navies are small, with most of the naval vessels being patrol craft or corvettes, many dating to the Cold War. Bulgaria and Romania are the only two nations with larger and more modern ships: Bulgaria with three former Belgian frigates (one is non-operational) and Romania with two former U.K. frigates. However, these frigates need modernization as well.

Romania and/or Bulgaria could be the framework nation(s) for a regional initiative, working with allies to coordinate assistance efforts to help the Black Sea nations modernize the frigates and other craft, as well as developing exercises and training, and coordinating operational schedules. The goal would be for the framework nation(s) to lead a cooperative effort, taking advantage of allied assistance, economies of scale, pooling/sharing, and other efficiencies so that the Romanian/Bulgarian frigates could operate together, and for a longer period, in the Black Sea, along with other, smaller Black Sea craft.



The Arleigh-Burke class guided-missile destroyer USS Jason Dunham departs the Black Sea on April 14, 2015. The ship's presence there reaffirmed U.S. commitment to strengthening joint capabilities with its NATO and Black Sea partners. (Weston Jones/U.S. Navy)

The United Kingdom and Belgium could play important roles in helping to modernize their former frigates. The United States could help fund the modernization by requesting from Congress a foreign military sales grant for a five-year period for \$50 million a year that could be used to purchase U.S. equipment for the frigates. The U.S. funding would be provided if the nations themselves and/or allies contributed matching funds. The United States could also assist the maritime initiative with training, exercises, and mentorship tailored to the needs of the frigates, working through USEUCOM and NAVEUR. Excess US Navy vessels appropriate for the size and mission of the Black Sea navies (such as patrol craft or minesweepers) could be offered under the Excess Defense Articles program. Not all allies might agree with this initiative's being done as a NATO initiative; therefore, NATO could be in a support role, providing assistance (such as exercises and training) wherever North Atlantic Council approval would not be required. But NATO support, even if unofficial, would help such a project be more acceptable politically at home.



A U.S. Army paratrooper works with Georgian soldiers in May 2015 as part of Exercise Noble Partner in support of Georgia's participation in the NATO Response Force. (A.M. LaVey/U.S. Army)

There is more work to be done to strengthen deterrence in the Black Sea region, where Russia has already struck twice. Whether Russian President Vladimir Putin has designs on Black Sea nations or not, he could ratchet up tension in the Black Sea area to distract NATO from his actions elsewhere. It is easy to strengthen land forces in the Black Sea region; it is harder to strengthen the maritime posture on the Black Sea itself, because the allied navies are small and in disrepair. But the Russian Black Sea navy is also weak, at least until its modernization plans can be implemented. Therefore, stronger allied navies in the short to medium term could have an impact on the balance of naval forces on the Black Sea. It is worth the effort and resources for Romania and Bulgaria to lead a "framework nation" effort with Georgia and Ukraine to rebuild and modernize the Romanian and Bulgarian frigates, and update the smaller craft of Georgia and Ukraine. But they will need help, which the United States and other allies should be able to provide, and announcing such a regional initiative at NATO could show some unofficial NATO support as well.

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Beyond the Five Objectives

RUSSIA AND THE BALKANS

Beyond the objectives outlined above, concern about Russia will be hovering in the background of many conversations at the July summit. Russia's aggressive actions against Georgia and Ukraine have profoundly changed the security environment in Europe and reminded NATO why it was created. The NATO-Russia relationship is not formally on the agenda, but it will no doubt cast a dark shadow across the summit. The topic of the Balkans, once a prominent feature of summit discussions, is also absent from the agenda, despite increasing tensions there and the possible reversal of all the progress toward democratization made there since the wars of the 1990s. While there are no easy initiatives to launch or pending decisions that must be addressed in July, the alliance must wrestle with ways to deal with the instability and possible conflict that could be sparked from these two areas.

RUSSIA: THE SPECTER AT THE SUMMIT?

For more than 25 years, NATO and Russia have struggled to navigate their post-Cold War relationship, lately arguing about who was at fault for the relationship's deterioration and where the relationship was headed. After the Cold War, NATO attempted to build a partnership with Russia, and there was even talk that one day, Russia might join the alliance. Russia joined NATO's Partnership for Peace in 1994, and in 1997 the NATO-Russia Founding Act committed to "build together a lasting and inclusive peace." In 2002, the NATO-Russia Council was established to develop and implement partnership initiatives. But Russia's military action in Georgia in August 2008, followed by the March 2014 invasion of Ukraine—the first time since the Second World War that one sovereign nation has forcibly taken territory from another in Europe—significantly changed the relationship for the worse. Ahead of the September 2014 Wales Summit, then-Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said, "We are faced with the reality that Russia considers us an adversary." That was a major turning point in the post-Cold War NATO-Russia relationship; practical cooperation between NATO and Russia ceased.

The NATO-Russia relationship is not formally on the agenda, but it will no doubt cast a dark shadow across the summit.

At the 2014 summit, NATO agreed to implement the RAP, which focused on "assurance measures" in the eastern part of the alliance and longer-term changes to strengthen force posture, known as "adaptation measures." Those adaptation measures included tripling the size of the NRF, to 40,000 troops; creating the VJTF, of around 5,000 troops; and establishing small headquarters in the Baltic and Eastern European states (NATO Force Integration Units) to organize exercises and training.



Russian military police stand guard at the Asipovichy military training ground on September 18, 2017, in Asipovichy, Belarus, during the Zapad 2017 military exercises. (Brendan Hoffman/Getty Images)

By the time of the Warsaw summit, in 2016, the security environment in Europe had worsened, with NATO summit leaders saying Russia's aggressive actions "are a source of regional instability, fundamentally challenge the Alliance, have damaged Euro-Atlantic security, and threaten our long-standing goal of a Europe whole, free, and at peace."²⁴

Since 2016, the situation has continued to deteriorate. The Kremlin has consistently flouted international norms and become expert at exploiting the thin line between peace and war by using energy coercion, bribery and corruption, disinformation campaigns, assassination, propaganda, and military intimidation. Russia continues to violate the national airspace of European countries and mounts sustained campaigns of cyber espionage and disruption, including meddling in elections and possibly attempting a coup in the Western Balkans. This is coupled with an expanding and modernizing nuclear arsenal. In the words of incoming U.K. Chief of Defense Staff Gen Sir Nick Carter, the country might use a hybrid of "little green men, big green tanks and huge green missiles."²⁵

The Brussels summit is confronted with a worsening Russian relationship without any good options for improvement. The NATO Russia Council meets only sporadically, without much to show for it. On the military front, Russia's actions across Europe suggest it would be foolhardy for the alliance to assume the country would not have the will to do more.

Within NATO there are disagreements on how to treat Russia. On the one hand, some allies are readying themselves should Russia pick a fight, but a few allies sympathize with the Russian narrative of NATO encirclement and humiliation by the West. NATO must be careful not to exaggerate the threat Russia poses. Most of its military strength lies close to its borders, although its capability has grown significantly in recent years. It has a small and struggling economy. And it is an isolated country - particularly following the chemical weapons attacks in Syria and the UK - whose few friends, like the Assad Government and Iran, are also liabilities, although it is trying to grow client states from the Baltics to the Caucasus. But it should not diminish the threat either - NATO must ensure that Russia continues to face the consequences of its destabilizing and illegal actions.

Demonstrating alliance unity on Russia is critical. NATO must avoid any outward displays of division, and militarily it must strengthen its deterrence in the absence of a political solution. A united response by the West to Russian malfeasance, whether in Salisbury or Syria, has been shown in recent months. The Brussels summit must result in a clear statement that makes plain that NATO can deal with any adversary that tests it, while giving thought to ways to reduce risk going forward.

THE WESTERN BALKANS: FORGOTTEN AT THE SUMMIT?²⁶

During the 1990s, NATO was involved both militarily and diplomatically in the present-day Western Balkans. During the ethno-religious conflicts that erupted in the aftermath of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the alliance enforced economic sanctions and no-fly zones, and in 1995 established its first major United Nations-mandated peacekeeping operation, the Implementation Force (IFOR). As violence continued, however, NATO finally agreed to take offensive action, which came in the form of a 78-day bombing campaign against the regime of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević in March 1999. NATO then converted IFOR to the Kosovo Force (KFOR), which deployed in June 1999 on a peacekeeping mission. Almost 20 years later, KFOR is still in operation. Approximately 4,500 troops (representing 31 countries) still have a permanent presence in the Balkans to “help maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of

movement for all people and communities in Kosovo.”²⁷

The actions NATO took almost 20 years ago played a major role in helping the Western Balkans overcome a period of strife, violence, and humanitarian disasters. But besides its KFOR presence, which still plays an important role, this region doesn't feature prominently in NATO's top priorities today. In fact, once the violence subsided, most Western powers assumed that the Western Balkans were well on their way to a future of liberal democracy in the safe orbit of the West. Europe and NATO thus turned their sights on regions deemed more pressing, moving away from the Western Balkans because of their “belief in the inevitability of the region's ultimate trajectory.”²⁸ Those beliefs held true for a while: Slovenia, Croatia, Albania, and Montenegro have all joined NATO, Slovenia and Croatia are both members of the European Union, and Kosovo gained its independence.²⁹ But in recent years, a number of troubling developments in the Balkans have put the region's once promising future into question.



U.S. Marines from the 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion drive by flags of NATO allies with messages of thanks painted wall in Kosovo on July 5, 1999. (U.S. Marine Corps)

The region has again slipped dangerously close to destabilization. Tensions that came to a head in the 1990s continue to fester; bilateral disputes, especially between Macedonia and Greece, remain unsolved;³⁰ organized crime and corruption run rampant; and the region suffers from high unemployment and slow economic growth. To add to the woes, some Balkan leaders worry that EU membership will remain forever out of reach.³¹ In a visit to the region in March 2018, European Commission President Jean Claude Juncker endorsed the goal of Western Balkan accession into the economic block, beginning with Serbia and Montenegro in 2025, but added that they have a lot of work to do and that “more importance needs to be paid to the substance than the

Once the violence subsided, most Western powers assumed that the Western Balkans were well on their way to a future of liberal democracy in the safe orbit of the West.

calendar.”³² In a more recent trip for the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Sofia, Bulgaria on May 17, EU leaders adopted the Sofia Declaration³³, which lays out follow-up actions to help “boost connectivity within the region and with the EU.” While this is a welcome step, many of the countries in the region are still trapped in the proverbial chicken-and-egg dilemma: the region needs European support to help boost economic growth and root out corruption, but European leaders are not keen on welcoming countries not yet considered “functioning market economies.”³⁴

The Western Balkans are therefore left in a strange state of limbo. The lack of strong institutions has led to increased attention from such malicious actors as Russia. Russia has invested heavily in the real estate, mining, banking, and energy sectors, increasing regional reliance on Russia’s foreign direct investment. Russian state-sponsored media companies such as RT and Sputnik spread anti-Western narratives through regional disinformation campaigns; Moscow places continuous pressure on Serbia’s leadership, warning that joining NATO will lead to an “us or them” scenario;³⁵ and the Kremlin is widely believed to have orchestrated the coup attempt in Montenegro in 2016.³⁶ In fact, when Montenegro joined NATO just a few months prior, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that its accession was imposed upon it by the West, adding, “In the response to the hostile policy chosen by the Montenegrin authorities, the Russian side reserves the right to take retaliatory measures on a reciprocal basis.” Today, Russia seems bent on ensuring that the Western Balkans’ future lies neither in the West nor in NATO.

The question then becomes: what, if anything, should NATO do about it? There is little appetite in Europe or the United States to increase NATO activities throughout the region or to actively push for another round of NATO enlargement. But it is unwise for the West to continue to turn away and ignore the obvious signs of malaise.

At a minimum, NATO leaders must do a better job of actively calling out Russian meddling throughout the Western Balkans. It is no longer enough to just passively refer to false news reports or the intimidation of regional

leadership. Instead, NATO must actively combat Russia’s anti-Western narratives. This can be done effectively starting with the NATO’s public affairs office. It has worked hard over the last couple of years to highlight, through the #WeAreNATO Campaign, the alliance’s role and impact in various regions. Placing greater emphasis on NATO actions in the Balkans could go a long way in the court of public opinion. High-level visits or “away days” in the Balkans could help signal to the Russians that NATO is closely watching Russian influence operations across the region.

Second, although there may be little appetite for NATO enlargement today, NATO leaders should reiterate convincingly that their door remains open. While NATO is a consensus organization, requiring the agreement of all 29 members to welcome a new country (no easy feat), NATO leadership must repeat that sovereign countries determine their own future. Russia must not be allowed to use arguments of threat or encirclement to deter Western Balkan members from actively pursuing NATO membership. This holds true for EU membership as well.

NATO leaders must do a better job of actively calling out Russian meddling throughout the Western Balkans.

Conclusion

Allied heads of state and government will come together in July at the new NATO headquarters built on the site of a former Belgian Air Force base once used by the German Luftwaffe and bombed by the Allies in World War II. Today those nations sit together around a large table at NATO and make decisions that protect the Western institutions built on the lessons learned from that war. For most of NATO's existence, the institutions and values that make up the rules-based order in the West were accepted at face value and never questioned. That has changed with the rise in nationalism and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic who cast doubt on the continuing necessity of these institutions. In such a peculiar and unsettling time, when the leaders of the West come together as they will this July at NATO, the one thing they must accomplish is to show unity and exude confidence in the institutions and values of the rules-based order. If they can project this confidence and so push back on the political ignorance of this time, then the summit will be worth all the money that went into building a new headquarters on an old site that now has a new life.

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