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RESTORING THE POWER AND PURPOSE OF THE NATO ALLIANCE

Deter Our Adversaries, Stabilize Our Partners, and Strengthen the North Atlantic Area through US Leadership in NATO

Ambassador R. Nicholas Burns (Ret.)
and General James L. Jones, Jr., USMC (Ret.)

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Members of the review board welcome this report as an important contribution to the NATO debate and support its overall conclusions. Review board members intellectually contributed to this report and endorsed the final report. However, not all of the report recommendations reflect the views of all members of the review board. Individuals reviewed the report in their private capacity; affiliations are provided for identification purposes only.

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Executive Summary

As NATO leaders prepare to meet in Warsaw this July, the Alliance faces the greatest threat to peace and security in Europe since the end of the Cold War.

Transatlantic leaders must confront a jarring reality: the peace, security, and democratic stability of Europe can no longer be taken for granted. The transatlantic community faces four fundamental strategic challenges—a revanchist Russia, eroding stability in the greater Middle East, a weakened European Union, and uncertain American and European leadership—that threaten the entire community, and by extension global security.

What NATO needs most is determined political leadership backed by a long-term strategy to restore its power and purpose. NATO leaders should agree at their NATO Summit in July on an ambitious set of measures to deter Russia, stabilize threatened allies and partners to NATO's east and south, and strengthen the military capacity of the Alliance in the coming year. NATO nations must resolve, as they did in 1949, to protect and defend Europe and the rules-based international order from these challenges.

To its credit, the NATO nations have begun to respond to these challenges. Allies are gradually moving more forces and equipment to NATO's eastern flank to better deter Russian aggression. The Alliance is delivering on its commitment to field a missile defense program to defend its territory. The United States has led impressively by securing more than $3 billion in funds to bolster NATO's military capacity in Europe's East. This must now be met by an equivalent effort by European militaries. While some allies are reversing the harmful redirections in defense spending in past years, this progress is still dramatically insufficient. NATO is maintaining its commitment in Afghanistan and has launched a mission in the Aegean to strengthen cooperation in the region and to help stem the flow of refugees to Europe. All of these steps have revived NATO and strengthened its collective defense.

But these NATO actions are not sufficiently ambitious to meet the extraordinary challenges before us. NATO needs more consistently strong, determined American presidential leadership. It needs a stronger Germany with a military to match its political and economic weight. It needs the United Kingdom (UK), France, Italy, and other Europeans allies to contribute much more to our collective defense. NATO needs to build stronger strategic deterrence against Russia.

Allied leaders must respond to this fundamentally changed security environment by agreeing to much more ambitious measures to rebuild the Alliance. To restore NATO's power and purpose, NATO allies should:

- **Build up NATO's military presence in the Baltic states, Poland, and Black Sea Region.** At this July's NATO summit, NATO nations should decide to shift a far greater proportion of NATO forces and capabilities to its eastern allies, including the permanent stationing of land, air, and sea forces in the Baltic states, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and in the Arctic as long as Russia maintains its aggressive posture. Deploying four rotational battalions to the Baltic states and Poland, a decision agreed upon at the NATO Defense Ministers meeting in June 2016, started important momentum on this front, but permanent basing and the development of additional infrastructure will be integral for NATO's long-term posture in the east.
    - NATO leaders should reaffirm NATO's fundamental purpose—to advance and defend a Europe "whole, free, and at peace" at a time of renewed danger.

  - Similarly, the Alliance should continue to develop, deploy, and integrate collective missile defense and accelerate cyber capabilities based in the east.
  - NATO should undertake to create a NATO maritime mission in the Black Sea region—led by Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey and including partner countries Georgia and Ukraine—as a response to Russia's illegal annexation and subsequent militarization of the Crimean peninsula.
  - Taken together, these measures should leave no doubt in Moscow of NATO's will and capability to ensure the credibility of its Article 5 collective defense commitment, regardless of the nature of the attack against an ally (e.g., conventional, cyber, or hybrid attack).
  - In sum, NATO allies must continue to hold the line against Russian aggression until a new generation of Russians agree to live in peace with its neighbors in central and Eastern Europe.

- **Commit to greater military spending among NATO allies.** In Warsaw, each of the European allies and Canada should reaffirm their pledges to meet the NATO target of 2 percent of GDP on defense expenditures by seeking parliamentary ratification of this commitment with specific plans on how to reach the target within the next five years. Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands, in particular, should match the commitments made by Romania, France, and Turkey to move toward the 2 percent level, and the UK and Poland, which are currently sustaining that level. European defense spending is still woefully inadequate and not commensurate with the security challenges on the continent. Germany must take the lead in this recovery of Europe's military strength.

  NATO also must take more expansive steps to strengthen its collective defense against the full range of cyber threats.

- **Keep the pressure on Moscow.** At Warsaw, NATO allies should reaffirm their commitment to maintain sanctions on Russia over its egregious violations of Ukrainian sovereignty. And NATO nations should transfer lethal defensive armaments to Ukraine so that it can defend its border. In the Arctic, NATO's littoral and coastal states—Canada, the United States, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland—must work to expand their surveillance and search and rescue capability. This is an area where NATO can offer to work with Russia peacefully to minimize future disagreement and conflict.

  NATO should recognize the renewed importance of the so-called "GIUK Gap," the strategic Cold War choke point in the North Atlantic between Greenland, Iceland, and the UK from which Russia could project its naval power and raise tensions with NATO through close-call overflights, airspace incursions, and mock attacks. This could become a new zone of contention between Russia and NATO as Russia ramps up its military presence in the Arctic. To protect Alliance interests, NATO should return anti-submarine warfare and intelligence monitoring capabilities to Iceland, a vital waypoint between North America and Europe and an important linchpin for NATO's presence in the North Atlantic.

  NATO should keep the diplomatic lines open to Russia through regular meetings of our ambassadors and military leaders, through exercises, and summit meetings.

- **Stay the course in Afghanistan.** NATO allies must remain committed to the government and people of Afghanistan by agreeing to retain their forces there indefinitely with no further reduction in numbers for the foreseeable future. This would constitute a strong signal to the Taliban and other extremist groups that NATO will stand by its commitment to the Afghan government and people.

- **Extend greater support to NATO's Arab partners.** Expand substantially NATO's training role in the greater Middle East by:
  - launching significant on-the-ground training and defense capacity building missions in Iraq, Tunisia, and in support of the new government in Libya;
  - expanding defense cooperation with long-time NATO partners Morocco and Jordan;
  - forging a cooperative security agreement between NATO and the Gulf Cooperation Council to include the adoption of common

The North Atlantic Council convenes in December 2015. *Photo credit:* NATO/Flickr.

standards to ensure interoperability for joint exercises and common efforts to enhance cyber and missile defense capabilities; and

- NATO should enhance its civilian and military intelligence sharing and coordination, among allies and with key partners in the Middle East and North Africa, to help prevent and respond to terrorist threats. Terrorist attacks on member states directed by the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) should be considered an attack on NATO that requires a united response from all allies. NATO must demonstrate its relevance to its member states' citizens in the face of this enduring strategic challenge that concerns all allies alike.

- **Link economics and security.** Recognize that restoring economic growth and prosperity is a strategic imperative for the Alliance and the only way to sustain increased defense investments and therefore:

  - Renew NATO nations' commitment to finalize negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) as a geostrategic imperative. This must be a top priority for the next US president.

- **Recommit in all NATO countries to strengthen our collective democratic foundation.**

  - NATO leaders in Hungary, Poland, and Turkey, in particular, must demonstrate their commitment to ensure the full freedoms and civil liberties of their citizens.

- **Restore strong American leadership.** In the United States, the next president has a particular responsibility to rebuild public support for NATO. To do so, the United States should continue to lead in strengthening the

Alliance to ensure it is capable of meeting the challenges of an evolving security environment, and other Allies should meet their commitments to invest more in their own defense. In a collective defense alliance, allies should hold each other accountable to meet their commitments.

However, NATO is not a 'burden' on the United States, but rather a force multiplier for US power and influence around the world. The Atlantic alliance underpins the security, stability, prosperity, and freedom of the entire North Atlantic area and anchors the global security system that the United States established after World War II.

- **Counter those who threaten to withdraw US support for NATO.** While US allies can and should contribute more to their own defense, demagogic attacks on US alliances only strengthen common adversaries. Asserting that NATO is "obsolete" does deep damage to Alliance unity and solidarity. To make this argument, as has happened this presidential election cycle, is to mislead the American people and denigrate the sacrifices of American allies.

  America's global network of alliances is one of our greatest strategic assets and advantages over nations such as Russia or China. The contributions of US allies to regional and global security and prosperity mean significant cost savings for the United States.

  Across the Alliance, governments are challenged at home by nativism, populism, and rising isolationism. NATO cannot succeed if its leaders do not stand up for the democratic values and powerful transatlantic solidarity that have united us for seven decades. The United States and its allies cannot be safe and prosperous in a globalized world if they do not exert international leadership through their alliances and partnerships. If the United States shapes the future constructively with its allies and friends, democratic freedoms in the world will thrive. If we fail to do so, less benevolent forces will fill the void.

We believe that extending NATO and the European Union (EU) membership to the countries of the former Warsaw Pact was among the most important decisions the Alliance has ever taken. Through NATO and EU expansion, we helped to safeguard the liberties and freedoms of central and Eastern Europe. We helped to forge a more united, democratic Europe. These are goals that all post-World War II US presidents have embraced. And, we remain confident that with strengthened American, Canadian, and European leadership, NATO's power and purpose can be restored for the benefit of our 500 million citizens. As former NATO secretaries general, ambassadors, military officers, and supporters of our great Alliance, we are concerned by the enormity of challenges NATO faces in 2016 and the years to come. We remain committed to the strategic aim that we agreed to when Germany was reunified and the Cold War ended in a democratic peace twenty-five years ago—a Europe "whole, free, and at peace."

That is a goal worthy of our Alliance and of defending with our collective strength.

Introduction

The next president of the United States must lead in the restoration of NATO's power and purpose to defend Europe and North America from the most serious security challenges since the end of the Cold War.

Transatlantic leaders must confront a jarring reality: the peace, security, and democratic stability of Europe can no longer be taken for granted. The transatlantic community faces four fundamental strategic challenges—a revanchist Russia, eroding stability in the greater Middle East, a weakened European Union, and uncertain American and European leadership—that threaten the entire community, and by extension global security.

Russia is no longer a partner, as many hoped it would become with the collapse of communism a quarter century ago. Today, an assertive and predatory Russia is re-dividing Europe from the Gulf of Finland to the Black Sea and beyond. Vladimir Putin aims to roll back western influence and democratic values in Europe. Russia's aggressive military actions in Ukraine and Crimea and threats to Eastern Europe constitute the single greatest challenge to the Alliance since the Cold War.

The rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and the breakdown of order in Iraq and Syria have unleashed a tragic human tidal wave of refugees and a wave of terrorist attacks on western Europe, Turkey, and across the globe. These external shocks have undermined European cohesion, pitted EU members against one another, and fueled a groundswell of anti-establishment, populist anger. There is a very real risk that the breakdown of order in the Middle East could result in the unraveling of the unity and principles that are the foundation of the modern European Union. Finally, the United States has shown uncertain leadership of NATO over the last decade. American political leaders of both political parties and from both the executive and legislative branch have referred to allies as a "burden" rather than the asset they clearly are and have gradually shunted NATO away from a central role in US foreign policy.

In the face of these four new strategic challenges, the United States and Europe must resist the temptation to turn inward and adopt a fortress mentality. The North Atlantic area is prosperous, secure, and free because it is the world's most integrated and open space of free markets, free ideas, and free people. Preserving these foundations is the highest strategic priority of western democracies.

The next president of the United States must lead in the restoration of NATO's power and purpose. . .

It would be strategic folly for the United States to forsake or neglect the rich network of alliances and friendships that underpin its global leadership and power. Alliances are strategic assets that expand and magnify American power. Competitors such as Russia, China, or Iran can only dream of having a rich, loyal network of allies who support their interests and share their values around the world. Thus, criticisms of NATO and threats to dismantle it are unwise and dangerous.

NATO is a permanent political and military alliance and the primary vehicle through which the United States exercises influence in Europe and projects power in the North Atlantic. NATO is the largest collection of US allies in the world and comprises America's most important trading and investment partners. NATO anchors the North Atlantic area to support freedom and prosperity in an uncertain world. NATO also underpins the global security

order, which the United States has worked to sustain as one of the highest foreign policy ambitions since World War II.

The Alliance thus must act to restore its power and unity following Russia's hostile actions in Ukraine and Europe's East. At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, the United States and its allies reassured nervous eastern European allies and vowed to stem the decades of defense cuts that had left the Alliance underfunded and hollowed out.

Yet the steps taken at Wales and their aftermath are woefully insufficient in the face of a more aggressive Putin, a weakened Europe, and a destabilized Middle East. At the Warsaw Summit this July and as a new US administration takes office in January 2017, the United States must recommit to its unquestioned leadership role and rally its allies to take much more ambitious efforts to restore NATO's power and purpose.

The United States should start by placing NATO once again at the center of US strategy in Europe. For too long—and under both political parties—the United States has shifted NATO to the margins of its attention. Too often, US officials have described and treated NATO as "them," when in reality it is an alliance of which the US is a founding member and the natural leader. The United States can no longer afford to be ambivalent about leadership in NATO. The next president should make it a priority and exercise personal leadership in the Alliance.

US leaders deserve credit for committing to strengthen the US military presence in eastern Europe with the $3.4 billion European Reassurance Initiative (ERI). The United States must sustain this effort in the coming years. The Congress should work with the administration to put this funding into the base defense budget to ensure its permanence in the face of the long-term Russian threat we face. The next US administration should continue the surge of US military assets back into Europe, including heavy brigades on the Eastern flank to rebuild our capacity to defend NATO and deter Russia.

Europeans must do their part as well. Current defense spending levels in most allied countries are unacceptably low. All allies should commit at Warsaw to meeting NATO's 2 percent target of GDP allocated to defense by 2020. It is particularly important for large allies like Germany, Spain, and Italy—which have significant capacity and military capability—to move toward greater defense investment. European allies must make their own new commitments to deterrence and forward defense in Eastern Europe. Allies should match US rotations of troop brigades in Northern and Eastern Europe at a 1:1 ratio. Beyond the Warsaw Summit, NATO must abandon its outdated reluctance to building new infrastructure and permanent NATO forces in eastern Europe and dispel any doubt that the allies will take all necessary measures to deter external threats from every inch of Alliance territory.

Missile defense is an integral component of NATO's force posture and deterrence. The current missile defense architecture is aimed at threats emanating from the Middle East, but has taken on added political importance given Russia's nuclear saber-rattling and newly aggressive posture in Europe. The United States should work with its allies to ensure NATO's missile defense architecture and any further missile defense developments remain highly honed, interoperable, effective, and under Alliance command and control. Sustaining this robust missile defense system would strengthen NATO's deterrence posture against Russia and undercut its efforts to create new anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) bastions that penetrate Alliance territory.

Finally, the United States and Europe must finalize negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. The next president and Congress should move to ratify it. Linking the transatlantic economy—by far the largest in the world—in a space of common regulations and standards would strengthen the North Atlantic area at a time of great challenge.

What's at Stake: America's Enduring Interest in a Strong, United Europe

The United States has a direct stake in Europe's security, prosperity, and freedom. Since President Truman committed the United States to NATO in 1949, the United States has understood that a free and democratic Europe, allied to the United States, is a vital American interest, fundamental to the preservation of the contemporary global security order we led in creating. After twice having to come to Europe's aid during the twentieth century through the bloodiest wars in history, every American president for six decades has understood the advantages of investing in and preserving Europe's peace.

What a great bet that has turned out to be. The transatlantic alliance has paid huge dividends for the United States in a globalized world, just as it did in the Cold War. Europe is the United States' largest trading partner, largest investor, and an engine of US prosperity and job creation. Through NATO, Europe serves as America's most important and capable roster of military allies capable of fighting with US forces. Europe's shared commitment to human rights, democracy, and rule of law underpins the liberal international order that is the centerpiece of American strategy.

NATO is a remarkable asset to American foreign policy. The North Atlantic alliance defends stability from Alaska, British Columbia, and California in the West to the Baltic states in Eastern Europe and south to Turkey on the border of the Middle East. Thanks to NATO, a significant part of the globe is stable, democratic, and at peace. NATO offers the United States twenty-seven fellow allies who share our broad political goals and objectives, and a network of sixty partners around the world who work with the Alliance in Afghanistan, the Mediterranean, and the Baltic Sea. It also offers a continent-sized forward operating base from which the United States can launch and support major military operations in the Middle East, Asia, and across the globe. Particularly in a world of great uncertainty, turbulence, and rising authoritarianism, the NATO Alliance is an essential asset for both the United States and Europe.

Thanks to NATO, a significant part of the globe is stable, democratic, and at peace.

But that asset cannot be preserved and sustained without much greater political and financial investments. During the last two decades of relative calm and prosperity, it was sometimes easy to assume Europe would no longer face existential security threats as it had throughout the twentieth century. Europe faced no peer competitor or strategic challenges. It appeared that a Europe "whole, free, and at peace," as President George H.W. Bush so memorably called it, was the new normal. Freedom was on the march. In this relatively benign atmosphere, the United States was able to focus on other challenges in the Middle East and East Asia. In the absence of a peer competitor, European countries made substantial cuts to their defense budgets, ended conscription, and allowed their military capacity to atrophy.

As a result, the European Union is overwhelmed by its external and internal crises. And the NATO alliance—which buttresses the European project—is scrambling to catch up to a newly hostile strategic environment after years of defense spending cuts and inattention from key member states such as Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands.

The Strategic Context: NATO's Unstable Periphery Unsettles European Allies

The Russian Threat to Europe's North and East

Russia is the primary cause of this new threat to NATO. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014, its cynical war that divided Ukraine, and its support for the murderous Assad regime in Syria undermine the liberal international order and endanger security in both Europe and the Middle East.

At the Munich Security Conference in February 2016, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said "Speaking bluntly, we are rapidly rolling into a period of a new cold war." Following the conference, many analysts and observers were quick to downplay or dismiss his comments. But allies should not be fooled. President Putin is a former KGB operative and has made his views on NATO very clear. He sees NATO as his adversary and the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest catastrophe of the twentieth century. Allies should be crystal clear about the threat at hand and take Prime Minister Medvedev at his word.

Moscow aims to undermine the law-based principles of European security and the liberal international order that the United States and its European allies first established in the aftermath of World War II and expanded after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is not just the NATO countries who have an interest in the preservation of this international system. Democracies and law-based societies around the world have a stake in preserving the global security order.

Given its hostile intent, Russia's $700 billion military investment is a cause for concern and a key reason US military officials repeatedly identify Russia, once again, as America's greatest existential threat. Alliance officials express particular concern about Russia's ability to deter NATO from responding to an Article 5 violation in Europe's East. An imbalance of Russian firepower in Kaliningrad, illegally-annexed Crimea, and Syria may provide Russia an A2/AD capability. This would prevent NATO militaries from operating with freedom, even within Alliance territory. This creates strategic imbalance on the Continent.

Russia's A2/AD capabilities are particularly concerning given Russia's new military tactics in Europe, from provocative snap military exercises with up to 100,000 troops to hybrid warfare, which it has adopted and perfected in Ukraine and Syria. In Syria, Russia demonstrated its ability to project power in the Middle East and put its modernizing military to the test in combat. And in the Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions, Russian jets have taken to the irresponsible and dangerous practice of "buzzing" allied warships operating in international waters in an attempt to intimidate NATO from conducting legitimate freedom of maneuver operations. Coupled with its ability to deny access to NATO militaries in theaters where it had once enjoyed supremacy, this presents a grim picture for transatlantic defense planners for any future military operation.

Russia's threat to the Baltics and Poland is well-documented. But the threat of an accidental conflict between NATO and Russia is just as high in the Black Sea region, where NATO allies Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey are situated. The Russian threat to NATO's southeastern flank was largely overlooked until Russia's military build-up in Syria in late 2015 to support the forces of President Bashar al-Assad. Russia's competition with NATO member Turkey over the future of northern Syria has already resulted in the Turkish shoot-down of a Russian fighter and a dramatic rise in tensions between Moscow and Ankara. Russia's recent militarization of illegally-annexed Crimea is of great concern to allies such as Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania.

Russia's military resurgence and renewed assertiveness is also a challenge in the Arctic region and the high north. As part of its military modernization, Russia has established an Arctic

strategic command and developed new, or has revived and modernized former Cold War, military bases in the region. The Arctic is also home to Russia's powerful Northern Fleet, which is currently being modernized and includes Russia's sea-based nuclear deterrent. Russia's revised maritime doctrine also points to the high north as the area from which Russia can access the broader Atlantic with maritime forces.

NATO has an Arctic frontier in the high north that must be defended. The United States, Canada, Norway, and Denmark are all Arctic nations, but each ally takes a different approach to security in the Arctic and the appropriate role for NATO. The Alliance should seek to cooperate with Russia on the Arctic where possible as a means of testing Russia's regional intentions, which remain unclear. But NATO must also be prepared to defend its boundaries and interests in the region in the face of growing Russian capabilities. It is time to break the logjam within the Alliance that has prevented serious discussions within NATO about its role in the high north.

Russia's threatening tactics are not merely confined to conventional weapons, hybrid warfare, or snap exercises. Under President Putin, Russia has enhanced its reliance on nuclear weapons and engaged in dangerous nuclear gamesmanship and threats. At the Munich Security Conference in February 2016, NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg properly recalled NATO's continued commitment to both conventional and nuclear deterrence. Russia is also one of the world's most formidable cyber superpowers and possesses the ability to unleash a strategically significant attack on Alliance military or civilian infrastructure. While NATO has taken steps to strengthen the defenses of NATO networks, the Alliance still does not treat cyber threats to individual allies as a whole alliance issue. Finally, Russia also uses its vast energy resources as a weapon in Europe to divide allies from one another. The German-Russian Nordstream 2 gas pipeline is just such an example of Russia's "divide and conquer" energy diplomacy and should be rejected by Germany and the European Union.

In addition, Russian propaganda and suspected financial support for extreme political parties in Europe undermines democratic governance across the EU. To respond to this diverse array of challenges, the Alliance will have to be nimble and flexible and forge a closer relationship with the EU, which has competence in internal security matters.

Nonetheless, unlike its Soviet predecessor, Russia does not seek to actively promote an alternative ideology around the globe, nor are our peoples physically separated from each other. Some trade between Russia and the West continues. We are partners in countering North Korea and in preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. But we will surely remain opposed to Moscow and its irresponsible aggression in Ukraine, Georgia, and cyberspace. Put simply, the United States and its allies should seek to cooperate with Russia where we can, but should confront Russia where we must.

Europe's Fragile Southern Frontier

The breakdown of the security order in the Middle East is a second strategic challenge for the Alliance. The region faces a deadly mix of a violent, unstable, turbulent future exacerbated by continued destabilization from Iran and tensions with Saudi Arabia, declining US engagement, the emergence of outside actors like Russia, and a revolutionary age for Arab citizens.

The Syrian civil war has left the majority of its citizens homeless and the country destroyed. Yet, the tragedy of Syria is no longer contained to the region. For five years, the United States and Europe sought to stay out of the Syrian civil war, seeing insufficient interests at stake to risk our involvement. Yet, the West's inaction has proven to have its own unintended consequences. The abuses of the Assad regime and the absence of power have resulted in vast crimes against humanity and have enabled the rise of ISIS, the most violent and brutal terrorist group on the planet today. The power vacuum has also allowed Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia to take a stronger military role in the Levant through their support for Bashar al-Assad's brutal regime.

The Syrian crisis is not the only southern challenge facing the Alliance. Just four years after NATO's UN-approved intervention, Libya remains a source of instability and extremism as a result of its failed political process. Yet, NATO and its partners who participated in the UN-sanctioned Operation Unified Protector have a responsibility to support the new government in its attempts to restore governance and security to this strategically significant country. Neighboring Tunisia and Morocco remain the lone hopes for success from the Arab Spring and worthy recipients of western support and assistance.

Iran, too, remains a military threat to the Alliance. After all, NATO member Turkey borders Iran. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran

and the international community to limit Iran's nuclear ambitions was an important transatlantic success story. Yet, Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps Command has exported violence through its aggressions in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen, and Iraq. Iran's ballistic missile defense program—which continues unfettered—remains a threat to more distant allies and is the primary reason for NATO's ongoing ballistic missile defense program. Iran's cyber program also has developed in scope and capability, putting Tehran on par with Moscow and Beijing.

The nexus of extremism, migration, and trafficking in the Middle East and Africa has come to have a direct impact on Europe and the transatlantic alliance. Last summer, nearly a million refugees fled Syria and other countries for safety in Europe. The flood of refugees challenged Europe's logistical capabilities, undermined the cohesion of EU member states, and has ultimately fed xenophobia and far-right parties across Europe. NATO is presently active in combating human trafficking networks in the Mediterranean, but remains a relatively minor player in helping Europe confront the refugee and humanitarian crises in the region.

The breakdown of order in the Middle East has also dramatically worsened the terrorist threat to Europe and North America alike. In 2015, Paris, Brussels, Ankara, Istanbul, and San Bernadino were all victims of tragic terrorist attacks inspired by or linked directly to ISIS in Syria and Iraq. As a result of these attacks and the threat ISIS poses to the region, many NATO nations are active members of the anti-ISIS coalition, but NATO itself has no formal role in the coalition.

Even in the event of a durable ceasefire or a peace agreement that abets the violence in Syria, the Alliance will have to assume years of instability and tension along its southern flank, with the likelihood of spillover effects for NATO allies.

Even in the event of a durable ceasefire or a peace agreement that abets the violence in Syria, the Alliance will have to assume years of instability and tension along its southern flank. . .

Europe's Internal Divisions Leave a Weakened and Distracted Europe

NATO's turbulent external environment is not only a security threat but a political challenge as well. The threats to Europe's periphery have inflamed politics in Europe, undermined the cohesion of NATO and the EU, and fueled the rise of right-wing populist movements in Europe. Neo-isolationist sentiment in the United States is rising on the left and right of its political spectrum.

The most immediate challenge to Europe's internal cohesion is the management of the refugee crisis. Failure to achieve a common European position to share the burden among partners could bring about the weakening of the Schengen region, which facilitates the free flow of people and goods within the EU. Europe's failure to maintain a common position on refugees would also threaten the political stability of key NATO allies, such as Greece and Turkey, and it threatens the leadership of Europe's most powerful leader, German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Europe's second great challenge to its internal cohesion in 2016 is the possible exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union. A "Brexit" scenario would undermine British power and influence in the world and leave a less market-oriented, reform-minded European Union. It would also undermine the "Special Relationship" between Washington and London. The United States and other allies are right to oppose a "Brexit," which would not only curb Britain's welcome influence on the continent, but could fray EU cohesion by inspiring copycat referenda in Scandinavia and elsewhere.

The third challenge to European cohesion is to maintain common support for the EU sanctions against Russia as long as the conditions for the Minsk II agreement are not met. The sanctions against Russia are the clearest manifestations of Europe's solidarity and show of economic strength with the United States and Canada against Russian aggression. The sanctions have had a dramatic impact on Russia's economy. They have also hurt important sectors of key European economies. But Europe's failure to renew sanctions would weaken NATO's military effort to reinforce deterrence measures against Russia and showcase weakening resolve on the conflict in Ukraine. Thanks to

Saber Strike 2015 Opening Ceremonies in Lithuania, June 8, 2015. *Photo credit:* US Army Europe/Flickr.

Chancellor Merkel's leadership, Europe has held firm on its Russia policy. It is important that she continue to play this important leadership role in the European Union.

The fourth major division within Europe is the rise of nationalist, populist Europhobic parties across Europe. Populism and demagoguery are prevalent all across the Atlantic alliance, from Viktor Orbán to Marine Le Pen. At the moment, however, the trend appears to be most developed in Central Europe, particularly Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary, where monoethnic societies have rejected EU obligations to take on a share of the burden in the refugee crisis. But the rise of the Alternative für Deutschland, the Front National in France, the UK Independence Party, and other movements across Western Europe is just as serious. NATO's strength comes not only from its military force but also its common values and commitment to democracy and the rule of law. The rise of illiberal attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic is a significant challenge for the Alliance's future.

In the face of these challenges to Europe, NATO and the European Union must seize on the historic opportunity afforded by a likely Cyprus settlement later this year to forge renewed political ties and practical cooperation between the two organizations. NATO and the EU have yet to figure out how to use one military capability for two organizations. This is foremost a political problem, not a military problem. Political obstacles to stronger NATO-EU cooperation result in duplication of precious defense resources and leave Europe less safe and secure. The removal of the Cyprus problem as an impediment to closer NATO-EU ties could create even more acute cultural obstacles to cooperation. Determined leadership by NATO and EU leaders will be required to leverage the historic opportunity of a prospective Cyprus settlement and, once and for all, break through the bureaucratic obstacles to closer collaboration.

Restoring the Alliance through US Leadership: From a Reactive to a Proactive Alliance

The United States must also take steps to reinforce its own commitment to leadership in NATO. Over the last decade, US leaders have moved NATO from the center to the margins of US national security policy. Our alliance is only as strong as the allies' commitment to it—and this begins with the United States, its natural leader. NATO has strategic direction when the United States leads the Alliance to align and mobilize our allies. NATO is effective when the United States works through the Alliance rather than circumvents or even undercuts it. NATO is not an instrument to which the United States outsources challenges. Rather it is US investment in NATO that helps catalyze our allied investment and contributions. In essence, NATO is a force multiplier for US capabilities and interests.

NATO members—as well as other US allies—have come under criticism from leading figures of both political parties for failing to take on an appropriate share of the security burden from the United States. There is no doubt that European allies and Canada must raise their defense budgets in response to Russian aggression and other strategic challenges from the rise of China to the turmoil in the Middle East. In the words of former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Europe's "geopolitical holiday should be over," in the face of the many challenges to its security. The European allies should all commit to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense by 2020. But the United States is the natural leader of the Alliance and has always taken on a greater than normal share of the security burden, given the vastly larger scale and size of the US military. Contrary to some ill-informed criticisms in the public debate today, NATO preserves stability in the world's most prosperous region, secures a roster of loyal allies who support the US politically and militarily around the world, and offers the United States access to bases abroad. Moreover, NATO itself is a relatively inexpensive investment for the United States, particularly when compared to the alternative. Washington only pays 22 percent of direct NATO expenses.

American legislators are right to ask why the United States should invest in permanently stationed troops in Europe if the Europeans themselves are not willing to carry this burden. It is unacceptable that only five allies—including the United States—currently meet NATO's 2 percent of GDP threshold for defense spending.

Europe's lack of strong political leadership is ultimately responsible for many of the crises facing the continent today. The United States can influence European politics and lead its European allies. But ultimately, European countries themselves are responsible for showing solidarity with one another, for investing in defense, and for taking an active interest in their neighborhood.

It took Russia's annexation of Crimea and simmering war in Ukraine to shock the Alliance into confronting the new strategic reality in Europe and generating renewed political will. At the NATO summit in Wales in 2014, allies took important steps to restore modest increases in defense spending. But it was not enough. Europe needs to act more boldly and decisively to rebuild its military capacity.

The United States has taken the lead. In light of Russia's hostile actions, it has quadrupled the ERI funding in the 2016 defense budget from past years to $3.4 billion to rebuild its military capacity in Europe. This is an important US commitment to European security and the effort to bolster the US deterrence posture in Europe. The tripling of US ERI funds will ensure a US heavy brigade is permanently in rotation in Europe.

A number of European countries have made commitments to bolster their defense spending. The United Kingdom released an ambitious new white paper on security that reinforces its pledge to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense and to renew defense investment after a decade of worrisome declines. Poland followed suit, joining the club of allies that met this benchmark in mid-2015,

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg meets with President Obama. *Photo credit:* NATO/Flickr.

Romania has pledged to be at 2 percent by 2017, and Latvia and Lithuania are moving to 2 percent by 2020. In the aftermath of the 2015 Paris attacks, France has committed to a defense increase up to 1.8 percent of GDP. Germany, too has promised important new investments in defense, although they are not scheduled until after federal elections in 2017. Under current plans, Germany will add 7,000 soldiers to its military and reinvest $148 billion on new equipment out to 2030. Despite these positive steps, Germany's defense spending will still fall far short of the 2 percent benchmark. As Europe's largest economy, Germany must take dramatic steps to raise its defense spending.

According to the NATO annual report, in 2015, sixteen NATO members not only stopped their cuts to defense but increased their spending in real terms. Twelve of these countries are forecast to have increased their spending as a percentage of GDP in 2015. Less happily, only five allies presently meet the 2 percent defense spending benchmark: the United States, the United Kingdom, Estonia, Greece, and Poland. Unfortunately, Italy, Croatia, and Bulgaria are still reducing defense budgets, in spite of promises taken at Wales to stop further cuts. This is simply unacceptable if the Alliance is to meet the challenges before it.

An important positive signal within the Alliance leading up to the Warsaw summit is the agreement among allies to invite Montenegro to membership in the Alliance. The invitation to Montenegro is significant because it signals that NATO will keep its door open to aspiring members and potential aspiring members. Montenegro's NATO accession will send a message to Russia that the West stands by its principle that countries must be free to choose their security alliances.

Recommendations

- **Build up NATO's military presence in the Baltic states, Poland, and Black Sea Region.** At this July's NATO summit, NATO nations should decide to shift a far greater proportion of NATO forces and capabilities to its eastern allies, including the permanent stationing of land, air, and sea forces in the Baltic states, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and in the Arctic as long as Russia maintains its aggressive posture.

  Deploying four rotational battalions to the Baltic states and Poland, a decision agreed upon at the NATO Defense Ministers meeting in June 2016, started important momentum on this front, but permanent basing and the development of additional infrastructure will be integral for NATO's long-term posture in the east.

  - NATO leaders should reaffirm NATO's fundamental purpose—to advance and defend a Europe "whole, free, and at peace" at a time of renewed danger.
  - Similarly, the Alliance should continue to develop, deploy, and integrate collective missile defense and accelerate cyber capabilities based in the east.
  - NATO should undertake to create a NATO maritime mission in the Black Sea region—led by Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey and including partner countries Georgia and Ukraine—as a response to Russia's illegal annexation and subsequent militarization of the Crimean peninsula.
  - Taken together, these measures should leave no doubt in Moscow of NATO's will and capability to ensure the credibility of its Article 5 collective defense commitment, regardless of the nature of the attack against an ally (e.g., conventional, cyber, or hybrid attack).
  - In sum, NATO allies must continue to hold the line against Russian aggression until a new generation of Russians agrees to live in peace with its neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe.

- **Commit to greater military spending among NATO allies.** In Warsaw, each of the European allies and Canada should reaffirm their pledges to meet the NATO target of 2 percent of GDP on defense expenditures by seeking parliamentary ratification of this commitment with specific plans on how to reach the target within the next five years. Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands, in particular, should match the commitments made by Romania, France, and Turkey to move toward the 2 percent level, and the UK and Poland, which are currently sustaining that level. European defense spending is still woefully inadequate and not commensurate with the security challenges on the continent. Germany must take the lead in this recovery of Europe's strength.

  NATO must take more expansive steps to strengthen its collective defense against the full range of cyber threats.

- **Keep the pressure on Moscow.** At Warsaw, NATO allies should reaffirm their commitment to maintain sanctions on Russia over its egregious violations of Ukrainian sovereignty. NATO nations should transfer lethal defensive armaments to Ukraine so that it can defend its border.

  In the Arctic, NATO's littoral and coastal states—Canada, the United States, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland—must work to expand their surveillance and search and rescue capabilities. This is also an area where NATO can offer to work with Russia peacefully to

minimize future disagreement and conflict. NATO should recognize the renewed importance of the so-called "GIUK Gap," the strategic Cold War choke point in the North Atlantic between Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom from which Russia could project its naval power and raise tensions with NATO through close-call overflights, airspace incursions, and mock attacks. This could become a new zone of contention between Russia and NATO as Russia ramps up its military presence in the Arctic. To protect Alliance interests, NATO should return anti-submarine warfare and intelligence monitoring capabilities to Iceland, a vital waypoint between North America and Europe and an important linchpin for NATO's presence in the North Atlantic.

NATO should keep the diplomatic lines of communication open to Russia through regular meetings of our ambassadors and military leaders, through exercises, and summit meetings.

- **Stay the course in Afghanistan.** NATO allies must remain committed to the government and people of Afghanistan by agreeing to retain their forces there indefinitely with no further reduction in numbers for the foreseeable future. This would constitute a strong signal to the Taliban and other extremist groups that NATO will stand by its commitment to the Afghan government and people.
- **Extend greater support to NATO's Arab partners.** Expand substantially NATO's training role in the greater Middle East by:
    - launching significant on-the-ground training and defense capacity building missions in Iraq, Tunisia, and in support of the new government in Libya;
    - expanding defense cooperation with long-time NATO partners Morocco and Jordan;
    - forging a cooperative security agreement between NATO and the Gulf Cooperation Council to include the adoption of common standards to ensure interoperability for joint exercises and common efforts to enhance cyber and missile defense capabilities.
    - NATO should enhance its civilian and military intelligence sharing and coordination, among allies and with key partners in the Middle East and North Africa, to help prevent and respond to terrorist threats; and
    - terrorist attacks on member states directed by ISIS should be considered an attack on NATO that requires a united response from all allies. NATO must demonstrate its relevance to its member states' citizens in the face of this enduring strategic challenge that concerns all allies alike.
- **Link economics and security.** Recognize that restoring economic growth is a strategic imperative for the Alliance and the only way to sustain increased defense investments and therefore:
    - Renew NATO nations' commitment to finalize negotiations for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) as a geostrategic imperative. This must be a top priority for the next US president.
- **Adopt a proactive, not reactive mindset.** In the twenty-first century, NATO must shape the security environment. NATO cannot afford to sit back passively as others influence the security environment in and around the North Atlantic area. The cost in blood and treasure will be lower if NATO engages through partnerships and cooperative security to ensure a more secure environment. NATO should ensure that its engagement is holistic, encompassing security, good governance, and prosperity.
- **Recommit in all NATO countries to strengthen our collective democratic foundation.**
    - NATO leaders in Hungary, Poland, and Turkey, in particular, must demonstrate their commitment to ensure the full freedoms and civil liberties of their citizens.
- **Restore strong American leadership.** In the United States, the next president has a particular responsibility to rebuild public support for NATO. To do so, the United States should continue to lead in strengthening the Alliance to ensure it is capable of meeting the challenges of an evolving security environment, and other Allies should meet their commitments to invest more in their own defense. In a collective defense alliance, allies should hold each other accountable to meet their commitments.

However, NATO is not a 'burden' on the United States, but rather a force multiplier for US power and influence around the world. The Atlantic alliance underpins the security, stability, prosperity, and freedom of the entire North Atlantic area and anchors the global security system that the United States established after World War II.

- **Counter those who threaten to withdraw US support for NATO.** While US allies can and should contribute more to their own defense, demagogic attacks on US alliances only strengthen common adversaries. Asserting that NATO is "obsolete" does deep damage to Alliance unity and solidarity. To make this argument, as has happened this presidential election cycle, is to mislead the American people and denigrate the sacrifices of American allies.

  America's global network of alliances is one of our greatest strategic assets and advantages over nations such as Russia or China. The contributions of US allies to regional and global security and prosperity mean significant cost savings for the United States.

  Across the Alliance, governments are challenged at home by nativism, populism, and rising isolationism. NATO cannot succeed if its leaders do not stand up for the democratic values and powerful transatlantic solidarity that have united us for seven decades.

  The United States and its allies cannot be safe and prosperous in a globalized world if they do not exert international leadership through their alliances and partnerships. If the United States shapes the future constructively with its allies and friends, democratic freedoms in the world will thrive. If we fail to do so, less benevolent forces will fill the void.

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