TPN

TRANSATLANTIC POLICY NETWORK

ANNUAL STOCKTAKING ANALYSIS ON NATO/US/EU SECURITY STRUCTURES: WHERE DO WE NEED TO GO NOW?

BY

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Alliance security after February 24, 2022:
where do we need to go now?

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The entire world has responded to Russia's invasion of Ukraine with a mixture of shock and horror. Russia has been condemned in the UN Security Council and by an overwhelming vote in the UN General Assembly. As the Russian invasion enters its second month and Moscow ramps up the military pressure by shelling urban populations in Kyiv, Mariupol and Kharkiv while trying to get its forces into the Ukrainian capital, it is time for an initial assessment. Here we see a mix of good and bad which is typical of the opening phases of long and protracted conflicts.

On the positive side of the ledger, we have admired the fighting spirit of the Ukrainians, making a stand for the values of freedom, democracy and the right to belong to the European family of nations. At a time of rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding, it has been inspiring to see that political elites, social celebrities and ordinary citizens are still willing to fight and die for the right to determine their own future. The transatlantic community, despite being strained recently by the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan and arguments over AUKUS, has pulled together in a remarkable display of unity and resolve. President Macron has retracted his comment about NATO being "brain dead" and now says that the alliance is indispensable. Not only the alliance but the broader international community has proved ready, willing and able to adopt draconian sanctions against Moscow, including Indo-Pacific partners seemingly remote from the conflict or neutrals like Switzerland that normally stand aside. The manner in which so many major western companies have spontaneously joined this effort, boycotting Russia or divesting their investments and assets there, has been as surprising as it has been commendable.

Yet on the more negative side we are still witnessing appalling human suffering and a mounting humanitarian crisis affecting the 5.5 million Ukrainians displaced both within Ukraine and beyond its borders. From the perspective of military strategy and operational competence, Russia's performance has been lamentable; but Russia still has the advantage of geographic proximity and the capacity to outmatch the Ukrainian army in reserves and heavy weaponry, despite the considerable Russian losses in manpower and equipment thus far. It is compensating for its military failings by resorting to terror tactics, as in the shelling of cities and deliberate targeting of civilians. Russia's disregard for legal or moral restraints gives it an advantage in controlling the escalation ladder. Moreover, in the G77 beyond the West, there are still too many fence sitters among the world's big, populous countries such as India or South Africa, which have refused to impose sanctions or even condemn Russia's aggression. Finally, we do not seem close to a ceasefire, let alone a Russian disengagement or a political settlement for Ukraine. Moscow has made exorbitant and nebulous demands such as demilitarisation, de-Nazification and the protection of Russian speakers which it would be impossible for Kyiv to concede without giving Russia a permanent controlling role in its domestic affairs. Ukraine will be reluctant also to concede at the conference table what it hasn't lost militarily on the battlefield. Desperate for a military success as the setbacks mount, Putin will also use the peace talks for show while he tries to seize the additional Ukrainian territory, he needs to be able to impose his own terms.

As the war in Ukraine becomes prolonged and unpredictable, the risks for the transatlantic alliance will increase, as will the shockwaves of the conflict as they spread across the world. Thus, the allies will need both a European and a global containment strategy as they deal with a crisis that has major economic and humanitarian as well as military dimensions. Four tasks in the security field stand out:

- To bolster NATO's defences so as to have the military capability to repel any form of Russian attack on land, at sea, in the air, or through space and cyberspace.

- To preserve Ukraine as an independent and sovereign state with international guarantees of its future security.

- To isolate and weaken Russia and China (to the extent that Beijing allies with Moscow) so as to deter them from future military aggression and contain their capacity to harm Western interests on the global stage.

- To reduce Western strategic dependencies on authoritarian states and economies so as to increase the West's scope for autonomous action.

1. Bolstering NATO

The first element of this strategy is to ensure that NATO's capacity for deterrence is boosted by more combat forces able to defend territory. In recent weeks this has taken the form of additional troops, ships and aircraft being despatched to reinforce the Baltic States and Poland or Romania along the Black Sea coast. Ten allies have so far contributed to this effort placing now 40,000 troops under direct NATO command. Those sceptical about the future of the transatlantic security relationship have been confounded by the major role that the United States has played in this effort, sending elements of the 82nd Airborne Division and 3rd Armoured Division to Poland and redeploying US Stryker brigades from Germany and Italy to the Baltic states and Romania. Although many other allies have sent useful assets, such as French and UK aircraft to Romania or German and Netherlands Patriot batteries to Slovakia, the United States' contribution still surpasses all the European efforts put together. The US now has 100,000 troops in Europe, the highest level since the mid-1990s. NATO has also mobilised its high readiness Reaction Force for the first time and will establish four new multinational battalions in the Black Sea region, with France offering to lead the one in Romania.

Most of the deployments are on a temporary basis but the receiving allies would understandably like them to stay longer and for NATO to commit to permanent stationed forces. This would oblige the alliance to break formally from the pledge it made to Moscow in 1997 not to station substantial combat forces or nuclear weapons or build military infrastructure on the territory of its new member states in eastern Europe. Yet this was a political undertaking linked to circumstances prevailing at the time. Given Russia's behaviour, there is no reason why NATO should not now abandon it.

Yet beyond showing the flag along its eastern flank NATO faces some longer-term issues that will need to be clarified in its new Strategic Concept due to be adopted at its summit in Madrid in June. First is whether to abandon its current strategy of reinforcement and military mobility across Europe (Enhanced Forward Presence in the NATO jargon) in favour of the deployment of heavy armoured brigades or even divisions in fixed positions close to borders. This will be expensive over the long run and will deprive allies of the flexibility they have enjoyed since the end of the Cold War to use their forces as and where they wish - from deployments in the Sahel or Afghanistan to fighting forest fires or building emergency hospitals for Covid patients at home. The only exception is when they have put forces on rotation into the NATO high readiness forces or the EU Battle Groups.

The decision of Germany to increase its defence spending to 2% of GDP and to devote €100 billion to modernising the Bundeswehr makes it technically possible for NATO to move to a Cold War style forward, armoured defence. Yet how quickly will Berlin raise its new divisions given its traditional problems with procurement and government/industry relations in the defence sector? Given these problems it may make more sense for Germany not to launch new acquisition programmes but to buy existing off the shelf capabilities (as it has recently done with its decision to buy 35 US F35 aircraft) which other European countries are also acquiring and which therefore offer economies of scale and cheaper operating and maintenance costs. Yet if Germany abandons ambitious defence projects with France (which prefers a Buy European approach), such as the Future European Air Combat System, it will put its relationship with France under strain and put at risk French plans for EU self-reliance in the military field. How much of the conventional defence burden in NATO will Germany, traditionally a country averse to war fighting and narrow military approaches to security, be willing to take on? Will this be the opportunity to create more integrated European units with neighbours like France, the Benelux, Poland and Italy, and even with the post-Brexit UK? London recently re-established a permanent army base at Sennelager in Germany and the Russian invasion of Ukraine has certainly forced “Global Britain” to re-engage with continental Europe and its security and refugees much sooner than it expected.

The other issue for NATO is to work according to a single theatre wide strategic plan managed by the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) and the NATO command structure. In reinforcing the alliance’s eastern flank. Allies have sent forces to where they have liked and largely under national command. This would not be optimal in a real war situation. NATO will need to revise its exercises to prepare and train for the new threat level. It will need to ensure that its forward deployed forces are fully integrated with the local forces and the police and border guards to anticipate and respond to any Russian hybrid war tactics. It will also need to step up its joint planning and interoperability with Sweden and Finland whether these two Nordic neighbours decide to join NATO or not. Yet one thing that NATO has done well in this crisis (in addition to the intense and full range of transatlantic consultations at multiple levels and in different formats) is its political messaging vis a vis Moscow. At a time when Russia has become more threatening and reckless, it is essential for NATO to be consistent and predictable. Re-affirming NATO’s core defensive purpose, calm rejection of Putin’s nuclear posturing or the alliance’s refusal to put NATO forces in Ukraine may be frustrating for some who think that NATO can better deter Russia through a posture of “strategic ambiguity”. Yet this would only play into Putin’s playbook regarding an “aggressive NATO” and give Putin the sense that he is being pushed into a corner. This said, NATO strategic ambiguity can still be useful when it comes to how NATO would respond to a Russian escalation in Ukraine itself, for instance Russian use of chemical weapons.

So here are the key questions for NATO.

- What should be the balance of permanently deployed and rotational forces in NATO's new posture?

- What should be the balance of US/Canadian and European forces in this posture?

- How can the capability development programmes under EU Strategic Autonomy (such as PESCO and the European Defence Fund) be geared to support the European role and responsibility in the alliance? Air and missile defence would seem to be particular priorities given Russia's reliance on long range strikes.

- How can the EU's Strategic Compass, NATO's next Strategic Concept and the third NATO-EU Joint Declaration be harmonised to bring the two institutions more closely together in responding to Russian hybrid operations and influence campaigns and in assisting not only Ukraine but other exposed neighbours such as Georgia and Moldova?

- What should be the balance between forces for collective defence with heavy armour and directed artillery fire and those for expeditionary missions beyond Europe such as counter-terrorism, stabilisation and peacekeeping?

2. Supporting Ukraine

The next leg of a Western strategy is to support Ukraine as long as the Ukrainians are able to continue their resistance. The survival of Ukraine as an independent state means that Ukraine has to hold on to as much territory and its major cities as possible (given the difficulty of getting Russian troops out of occupied territories) and to raise the costs for Russia and its army. There has been much discussion of a no-fly zone over Ukraine; but this would require enforcement by NATO aircraft and quickly result in confrontation with Russia. To impose a no-fly zone, NATO would also need to suppress the Russian air defence system and take out long range S400 and S500 batteries deep inside Russia itself (and perhaps Belarus too). As the Russians would still have superiority in heavy weaponry on land, it is not clear how a no-fly zone would change the war in the Ukrainians' favour. They clearly still want to fly their own aircraft and drones. So better to focus on those things that can help the resistance such as easy to use anti-tank and shoulder-fired anti-aircraft systems, observation and armed drones, electronic warfare, jamming and cyber effects, intelligence on Russian troop movements and intercepted communications and the use of Western special operations forces to train the groups of civilian volunteers from inside and outside Ukraine who have gone to join the fight. It is encouraging that many countries, including now Germany and the Netherlands, are sending lethal arms and other equipment (such as uniforms and medical supplies) to Ukraine and that deliveries are continuing even though Western militaries can no longer fly the supplies directly to Kyiv. Establishing secure supply routes will be essential which means transportation at night and in small consignments to reduce the impact of strikes or interceptions by the Russian forces. Equally important is adapting the assistance quickly and flexibly to the changing needs on the ground (for instance urban fighting and dispersed commando operations) and to provide equipment that serves as true force multipliers for what the Ukrainians can do by and for themselves.

NATO urgently needs a backfill system so that those allies willing to transfer some of their military capabilities to Ukraine can be compensated with equipment from other allies. Poland has requested F16s from the United States in exchange for transferring its MIG 29s to NATO (for forwarding to Ukraine) and Slovakia has asked for air defence batteries in return for supplying its stock of S300s to Kyiv.

So far, the allies have shown a strong financial commitment to helping Ukraine. The US Congress has voted a package of $13.6 billion to fund additional support to US deployments in eastern Europe, for the Baltic states and other exposed allies and for Ukraine itself. Since the Russian invasion, Washington has allocated $1 billion to fund weapons transfers. The EU is setting up a Ukraine Solidarity Fund and the IMF has extended a credit line. This financing, perhaps extending to Lend-Lease arrangements as well as grants will probably be needed on a long-term basis.

Support for Ukraine will also necessitate skilful risk management by NATO. Putin will undoubtedly interpret the alliance's role as direct involvement in the conflict and he may escalate recklessly in seeking to strike back. He may feel himself at war with NATO well before NATO sees itself in open conflict with Russia. So, perseverance, keeping a cool head, effective strategic communications, and anticipating and managing potential escalation points will be crucial for alliance strategy moving forward. Putin is the master of fear mongering and intimidation, as he has demonstrated with his gesticulating of the nuclear threat. NATO unity will be essential in facing him down.

So here are the key questions for the West's Ukraine strategy:

- What should be Western aims for a negotiated settlement between Ukraine and Russia that is not merely a relapse into a lower intensity Donbass style conflict? What kind of security guarantees can the United States and the European major powers give to Ukraine that are not tantamount to a NATO Article 5 guarantee without NATO membership?

- How can the Ukrainian army be sustained over time as an effective fighting force (and not merely as localised pockets of resistance) until it can fight Russia to a standstill and negotiate better peace terms?

- How can the UN agencies and international forces be inserted into Ukraine to secure humanitarian corridors and the provision of relief supplies to besieged civilians without repeating the mistakes with “safe areas” made during the Bosnian conflict in the 1990s?

3. Isolating and weakening the Putin regime

Given that open conflict can be potentially catastrophic and only a last resort, sanctions against Russia clearly must be the third leg of the strategy. At the outset, invoking sanctions seemed to many observers to be the face-saving default option for countries not wishing to give Kyiv military assistance or become involved in the fighting. Yet the unified and simultaneous way in which they have been applied, and the inclusion of measures such as limits on Russia’s access to the SWIFT interbank clearing system, or on Russia’s Central Bank operations or the decision of the London Stock Exchange to stop trading in Russian assets, has confounded many sanctions sceptics. Countries well beyond Europe, such as Australia and Japan, have imposed sanctions too; and even neutral Switzerland, which usually stays strictly on the side-lines, has decided to align itself with the EU. Most remarkably of all, the private sector, which usually tries to stay out of politics and protect both market share and bottom line, has acted against Russia without being compelled to do so by governments. Shell, BP and Total Energie are divesting their Russian assets and pulling out of joint ventures with the likes of Rosneft. Apple will stop selling its iPhones, Puma its sports shoes and Airbus and Boeing will freeze the sale of spare parts or maintenance services to Russian civil aviation. Citibank will pull out of Russia while Google and Facebook take RT and Sputnik off their platforms. Others have dumped sponsorship deals with Gazprom or other Russian companies. The rouble has lost 30% of its value, the Russian stock market has seized up, and even valuable commodities like Russian oil have become toxic with shipping and insurance restrictions (despite a barrel of oil now approaching $120). The spectre of Russia defaulting on its foreign currency denominated debt, for the first time since 1918, has been raised by the IMF.

Yet the link between sanctions and changes in political behaviour is a tenuous one, and sanctions take a number of years to produce their full impact. Countries learn to adjust over time and find work arounds and evasion techniques as Iran, Cuba and North Korea have long demonstrated. Russia itself has followed with some success its import substitution strategy, especially in the food sector, since the EU and the US imposed sanctions on Russia after its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. Russia's low level of foreign debt and its wealth funds and financial reserves give it some cushion, although those reserves can be sequestered as around 50% are held in foreign banks. Moscow is clearly looking to Beijing for a bail out and is trying to stem the haemorrhage by preventing foreign companies from divesting their Russian assets and Russian citizens from taking large amounts of foreign currency outside the country. The fact that oil and gas exports have not been sanctioned so far, and the spiralling prices for these commodities, may give Russia a lifeline if it can keep its major markets. India has just bought $3 million barrels of Russian oil and Gazprom is now pumping at maximum volume towards Europe. Putin and his inner circle will no doubt seek to exploit the grey zone of crypto currency exchange dealing on the Russian SU-EX market and use smaller shell companies not on the sanctions list to keep the money flowing. Usefully the US Treasury has set up a Klepto Tracker Task Force to clamp down on the Kremlin's trade in crypto currency and other illicit financial flows. Yet the paradox of sanctions is that the very time they need to produce their full impact is also their worst enemy. The news cycle moves on, emotions and outrage fade, and the wall of unity of the international community starts to fragment. China has already refused to go along with the sanctions, as has India, Turkey, Israel and countries in the Gulf and Africa.

Consequently, there are two things that the Western democracies have to get right. First to front load the full sanctions package to maximise the pain on Russia and give it less time and scope to adjust. Second, to keep domestic public opinion, worried by rising inflation and energy bills, on side for as long as possible. Governments must avoid a situation where standing up to the Kremlin becomes the scapegoat for falling living standards and $5 a gallon at the fuel pump. That is why maintaining pressure on OPEC to increase oil output, releasing 60 million barrels of oil from strategic reserves and perhaps even burning more coal on a short-term basis now make strategic sense to give us time to adjust supply to demand, and even if they will not prove popular with environmentalists. Belgium has also announced that it will delay the decommissioning of its nuclear power stations. Speeding up the green transition can help to offset this temporary reversal in the phasing out of fossil fuels; but some difficult Realpolitik choices will need to be made in choosing the lesser evil over the greater, as in engaging Saudi Arabia on oil output despite its execution of 81 individuals in mid-March.

Previous hopes for a Russia strategy mixing competition with partnerships and cooperation need to be abandoned. As do hopes that cooperation outside Europe in areas such as Afghanistan, piracy or the Iran nuclear file would dampen the Kremlin's determination to overturn the post-1990 European security order. Russia's animus towards NATO has not diminished just because the alliance allowed Russia to enter the NATO building and take its seat in the NATO-Russia Council. Whatever the mistakes of the past, such as not sanctioning the Kremlin more vigorously after the annexation of Crimea or allowing "Londongrad" to thrive as a hub of shady Russian financial transactions notwithstanding pledges made at G7 summits to shut it down, NATO countries now are united by a common fear of what Putin is willing and able to do to them. Taking away that capacity and weakening Putin's grip on Russia must now be the focus of Western policy. The instruments - economic, diplomatic, military and also legal in terms of tying up Putin and his regime in a host of criminal proceedings-are there.

Lawfare already is progressing well. Two former UK prime ministers, John Major and Gordon Brown, are spearheading a campaign to establish a special criminal court to investigate Putin and his regime for crimes against humanity and war crimes as well as the easier to establish crime of aggressive war. The US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, has announced that the US is gathering evidence from Ukrainians recording Russian exactions on social media. At the request of 39 countries, the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, has also opened an investigation into Russian war crimes and the International Court of Justice has acceded to a case brought by Ukraine to order Russia to stop its invasion. Most surprising of all, even the UN Human Rights Council, not normally known for standing up to the bigger authoritarian powers, has agreed on an investigation. Of course, Russia is ignoring these moves and has withdrawn from the Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights, stripping its citizens of important legal protections. Yet as and when indictments are issued against Russian political and military leaders and officials, they will become persona non grata in the international community. Their ability to travel or raise money will be restricted and other governments or companies will want to avoid the reputational risk of dealing with them. The spectre of war crimes trials in The Hague could help to split the Putin regime and encourage defections.

In the long run, export controls could be more instrumental in undermining the Putin regime than sanctions. Denying Russia access to key technologies and scientific know how will make it more difficult for Russia to rebuild its army and modernise it after the grinding it has taken in Ukraine. NATO and its partners need to establish a mechanism similar to the Coordinating Committee or COCOM that operated in Paris during the Cold War and which maintained a black list of critical military and civilian technologies subject to tight export controls. A successor mechanism, called the Wassenaar Agreement, exists in The Hague and brings together 42 countries. It could be expanded and strengthened to more comprehensively deny critical technologies to Russia and other authoritarian states that manifestly challenge the rules-based order.

Finally, China. Future historians of Russia's war against Ukraine may well view how the West handles China as the determining factor in whether we end up with a second global Cold War or a more competitive but still largely multilateral international order. China has given rhetorical support to Russia but its actions so far have been more ambivalent. It abstained in the UN votes, has called for a ceasefire and offered to mediate. Beijing seems surprised by the extent of Putin's invasion and by the speed and far-reaching nature of the sanctions. Like Russia, it was expecting the West to be more divided. It fears the possibility of US secondary sanctions if Beijing gives military assistance to Russia or helps Putin to circumvent the sanctions. This said, it knows the opposition of the EU to US secondary sanctions in the past (Iran) and that major sanctions against China may be a step too far for EU governments and businesses experiencing the blowback from sanctions against Russia. On the other hand, Beijing knows that Russia will emerge weaker from this conflict and be even more the junior partner in the relationship. This is in China's interest so its assistance to Moscow will undoubtedly be a double-edged sword for the Kremlin.

The US is now actively seeking to limit China's support to Russia. President Biden has already warned President Xi of the consequences. Washington knows that there are multiple stakeholders in China, particularly in the banks and large companies, that do not want more confrontation with the West. Yet accurately gauging Beijing's intentions and identifying the political levers, interest groups and pressure points to deter Beijing from forming an axis with Moscow will be the overriding diplomatic challenge of this crisis.

So here are the key questions for the West's Russia and China strategies:

- what are the benchmarks for lifting the sanctions against Russia? Should the sanctions apply only to Russia's actions in and vis a vis Ukraine or to Russia's international behaviour more generally?

- can the US and the EU agree on the scope of potential secondary sanctions against China and/or other countries giving direct assistance to Russia? What should these sanctions be and what will trigger them?

- how can countries sitting on the fence be incentivised to support Western policy towards Russia?

- how can Lawfare be effectively used to isolate, divide and undermine Putin and his regime?

- what kind of international export control mechanism can best restrict Russia's (and China's) access to sensitive technologies?

- how can Western intelligence and police, organised crime and financial tracking services cooperate most effectively to block Russia's efforts to circumvent sanctions?

4. Enhancing Western strategic autonomy

The final piece of the jigsaw is to reduce our dependency on the finances and economies of the authoritarian powers.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been a valuable lesson in the extent of this dependency. Much of this debate has focused on the energy security situation in the light of the 40% of the EU's gas and 29% of its oil that come from Russia. The US and the UK are now stopping their purchases of Russian oil and the European Commission has a proposed a plan to cut the EU's imports of Russian gas by two thirds over the next 12 months. Germany is constructing two LNG terminals; the UK is thinking again about fracking and Norway has increased gas production by 5% to help the EU to diversify its supply. The EU has approached other suppliers in Qatar, Algeria and Nigeria and there is an incentive to improve the EU's relations with Turkey to enable the considerable gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean to be optimally exploited. Higher gas and oil prices should also ramp up the production and exploration of unconventional fossil fuel sources in the US. A major transatlantic challenge is to build an LNG gas infrastructure between the US and Europe so that the US (and Canada) can overtime replace the current volume of Russian gas. Ukraine has just been connected to the EU grid but the Baltic states are still connected to the Russian grid and Finland is totally reliant on Russia gas. So, in terms of inter-connectors there is still work for the EU to do; and as the EU decouples from Russian fossil fuel companies, it must take care not to create new dependencies by doing deals with Russia to develop new fuels such as hydrogen.

Yet Russian involvement in the global economy extends well beyond energy to other minerals such as nickel, uranium and palladium, and to grain and fertiliser supplies where Russia is the dominant producer of urea. Belarus also produces much of the global supply of potash. So, we need a transatlantic strategy on rare earths and precious minerals and metals, especially as it takes time to open new mines on both sides of the Atlantic.

Indeed, every week has brought its share of examples of dependency on Russia - from the European Space Agency not being able to launch its probe to Mars because of its partnership with Roscosmos and use of the Soyuz rocket to Russian sponsorship of medical research and sports events. So, a comprehensive transatlantic mapping of critical vulnerabilities and dependencies is required.

Fortunately, in this last priority area the transatlantic community is in better shape than in the other areas. The Covid 19 pandemic and the growing competition with China have pushed the allies into repatriating production and supply chains, for instance in semi-conductors and pharmaceuticals. They have also reviewed foreign direct investment screening and devised anti-coercion instruments to push back against economic bullying and unfair trade practices. In the wake of rising food prices, they have examined their food security and how to increase domestic agricultural production. Consumer behaviour is also adjusting to rising energy and food prices and to the ways of conserving energy and using resources more efficiently. The new EU-US Trade and Technology Council is helping to make supply chains more resilient and to harmonise technical and product standards in a way to boost transatlantic trade. This is important as the more North America and Europe decouple from the Russian and Chinese economies, the more they will need to compensate by growing trade among themselves.

As part of their new Joint Declaration the EU and NATO could usefully agree to establishing a common mechanism for mapping and assessing the critical vulnerabilities, potential choke points and dependencies of the transatlantic community and issue an annual report with recommendations for remedial action.

So here are the key questions for enhanced transatlantic strategic autonomy:

- Which are the West’s critical dependencies on Russia (and China) beyond energy?

- Which dependencies can be remedied through supply diversification and which require supply chain repatriation, domestic production or sourcing and stockpiling of reserves?

- How can Europe and North America better integrate their supply chains and support each other's economic resilience? How to optimise the role of the TTC in this regard?

- How can NATO and the EU work better together to enhance whole of society resilience?

Conclusion

Although the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a catastrophe for Ukraine and Europe more generally, there is a silver lining. The multilateral system has discovered a new energy and sense of purpose. NATO has been revived and refocused on its core mission. The EU and the US have pulled together with daily coordination of their policies and actions. The EU is facing up to its geo-political role and has agreed as a bloc to supply Kyiv with nearly €500 million worth of weapons from its European Peace Facility. The G7 has taken on a more day to day operational role and the democracies of the Atlantic and the Pacific have been united with a few exceptions such as Israel which is attempting to play a mediating role. The UN has also been reasonably robust with the General Assembly finding a new lease of life, the World Health Organisation highlighting Russia's destruction of hospitals, the Food and Agriculture Organisation stepping up to handle the fallout from reduced Ukrainian and Russian grain exports, the International Maritime Organisation intervening in the shipping crisis and the International Criminal Court swinging into action. The narrative of a 21st century contest between the democracies and the authoritarians, which some may have been sceptical about before 24 February, has now been validated. There is an opportunity here for the transatlantic community not only to better defend itself but also to build a more effective and values based multilateral order able to react more systematically to rule breaking and aggression. Whether it will have the wisdom and skill to do so in the testing years ahead is another question.

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Annex One

The Strategic Compass of the European Union for Security and Defence

The EU Strategic Compass was adopted by EU Heads of State and Government last March. It is the most comprehensive and honest assessment that the EU has produced on its security and defence needs hitherto. Previous strategy documents were strong on levels of ambition and aspirations but rather weak when it came to identifying the EU's capability gaps and resource allocations. The documents, such as the EU's Global Strategy of 2016, were too general to serve as useful planning guidance for national foreign and defence ministries, let alone for the EU's own External Action Service and Military Planning Staff. The Compass compensates for this by coming up with a host of new structures and units as well as new capabilities such as a EU Rapid Deployment Force of brigade size. There is also more focus on the defence of the EU area itself as well as EU citizens and hard-core physical assets such ss critical infrastructure and information and communications technology and not only more abstract concepts such as interests and values. The EU's desire to be a responsible and engaged global citizen, contributing to conflict resolution and peace building, is still prominent; but now in a more realistic balance with the defence of the EU homeland.

Transatlantic observers will welcome other features of the Compass too. One is the first agreed EU joint threat analysis. It was revised several times in the document's final drafting to reflect the impact of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As such, the analysis is now much more in line with the NATO Joint Intelligence Assessment and products from the US National Intelligence Council. For the first time the EU formally recognises the significant challenges posed by state actors such as Russia and China and calls threats by their immediate name or affiliation rather than describing them in abstract terms, such as terrorism or proliferation. The broad threat analysis makes clear that the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy has to be geared to meeting threats from across the full spectrum, and not principally the less military, non-conventional challenges such as cyber, hybrid warfare, illegal migration, human insecurity or terrorism that were at the forefront of previous EU debates.

Full spectrum threats equal full spectrum capabilities. The Compass lays down a number of new proposals in this regard. In addition to the Rapid Deployment Force, the EU would like to set up a Defence Innovation Hub and an Observatory on Critical Technologies. It plans to hold an annual Defence Ministers meeting on capability development, improve its land, maritime and air platforms, particularly by moving to more digital, automated and unmanned systems, and set up a civilian planning capability. It also plans to improve its intelligence collation through a Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity, to increase its counter hybrid rapid response teams, strengthen its cyber diplomacy toolbox, and develop a system for space situational awareness. These capabilities are distributed over categories such as Act, Secure and Invest.

The Compass does not play too much on the notion of European Strategic Autonomy, which is rarely mentioned. The concept is now applied as much to China as to Russia or to the need to reduce the EU's security dependencies on outside actors through better foreign direct investment screening and risk management modelling. This reflects much recent work in the EU Commission on supply chain and energy autonomy through the reshoring of critical production and raw materials extraction and the diversification of suppliers and transport routes and infrastructure, such as LNG terminals. At a time when Europe's territorial integrity is threatened by Russia and NATO's Article 5 collective defence commitment is more important than it has been for several decades, the tenor of the Compass is more on how the EU can contribute to the overall western defence effort rather than on how it can go it alone and solve problems in its neighbourhood largely by itself, using its own capabilities, instruments and characteristically EU civ-mil integrated approach.

NATO gets more mention in the Compass than in many previous EU texts and this time round the focus is more on substantive EU-NATO cooperation rather than on simple, procedural references to the Article 5 obligations of those EU states that happen to be NATO allies as well. The EU commits to more frequent political dialogue and to more operational harmonisation of planning and crisis management by moving to joint and integrated exercises. This said, transatlantic observers may regret that not more was said about the crucial EU-NATO relationship and how it needs to accelerate following the new European reality after 24 February. For instance, in civil emergency planning, resilience, cyber defence, support to Georgia and Moldova, stability in the Western Balkans and space and disruptive technologies. Much of this will be left to a third EU-NATO Joint Declaration which has been substantially negotiated but which will appear only after the NATO summit and the publication of NATO's own new strategic concept in Madrid at the end of June. Nonetheless transatlantic observers will undoubtedly welcome the much larger place that the Compass gives to the EU's cooperation with partners, notably the United States and liberal democracies across the globe. There is a special emphasis on Africa and the Indo-Pacific and the ambition to establish cooperation with more regional organisations. The new emphasis on partners demonstrates an awareness among EU planners that EU operations need more military, economic and diplomatic support from regional and global players if they are to be successful in the long run. The lessons of the Sahel and Libya seem to have been drawn here.

Of course, the Compass, albeit a better written and more convincing document than its predecessors, will only be as good as the degree of implementation that it receives. The geo-political context surrounding its publication also raises a number of questions that EU and transatlantic leaders will need to address in the weeks ahead.

1. How will the impending membership of Finland and Sweden in NATO impact on EU-NATO relations? This will increase the overlap between the two organisations with 23 EU member states out of 32 allies. Will this make the EU more influential in NATO or NATO more influential in EU security debates? Half of NATO's citizens will nonetheless not live in an EU member state. So does this mean that NATO will need to duplicate many of the homeland defence tasks set out in the

Compass (such as cyber defence, resilience, pandemic response, civil preparedness and energy security) to protect these non-EU populations or can all non-EU allies access the considerable capabilities that the EU can generate in these areas, freeing up NATO to focus on its deterrence and military war fighting tasks?

2. The Compass stresses the importance of Articles 42.7 and 222 of the Lisbon Treaty in promoting EU solidarity and mutual assistance in crisis situations. Yet what should be the practical scope of their application and in which contingencies would the EU solidarity clauses operate as compared to NATO's Article 5 collective defence clause? Should NATO and the EU undertake joint planning for when an EU solidarity response could also trigger the activation of Article 5?

3. Given NATO's pressing need for additional European forces on its eastern flanks for deterrence and defence. how far can the EU rely upon the NATO force structure (and command structure) to generate the forces that it needs for its own CSDP missions, for instance in Africa? For instance. should the EU source its future Rapid Deployment Force from components of the NATO Response Force and Very High Readiness Force or opt for an entirely separate force - which NATO would most likely prefer? Yet how realistic is an entirely separate EU force and could it at a minimum take advantage of NATO's exercising and certification processes as well as of NATO's assistance with deployment and intelligence? Is there scope for joint planning here?

4. How can there be better coordination and mutual involvement in the innovation and capabilities development projects of both organisations? For instance, between the EU's European Defence Fund and NATO's innovation incubator and DIANA programme for emerging and disruptive technologies? How can non-EU allies contribute more to capability groups in the EU's PESCO list of multinational projects? Can there be joint exercises in responding to space contingencies and mutual involvement where appropriate in each other's partnerships with the private sector, especially in start-ups and experimentation and testing? Could the EU and NATO issue together an annual Defence Capabilities Report in which they describe how they are working separately and together to fill the shortfalls in their common force structures and critical capability requirements, such as enablers?

5. How can the EU be better involved in a full-scale NATO Article 5 situation responding to an attack by Russia or another actor? How, for instance, could the EU help NATO to manage the second order effects of a Russian attack, such as the mass bombardment of civilian areas and critical infrastructure, environmental destruction, toxic substance release and refugees and displaced persons? Could the EU and NATO establish a joint military-civilian Article 5 joint planning mechanism?

6. How can NATO provide better and more consistent support to the EU's training and capacity building activities in the Sahel and elsewhere? For instance, with the G5 Sahel, now that Mali has withdrawn, or equipment procurement and repair via the NATO Support and Procurement Agency? Now that the EU is directly using its Peace Facility to purchase weapons for Ukraine, how

can the EU use the international competitive bidding, procurement and life cycle maintenance facilities of NATO to achieve optimal value for money?

7. Finally, at a time when EU and NATO countries are increasing their budgets for defence modernisation, how can the two organisations work together to ensure that individual nations receive the best guidance on how to spend the additional money wisely, avoiding duplication and achieving the right balance between improving current equipment and readiness levels and investing in capabilities for the future, like space, cyber, drones and new technologies and materials?

A joint review of the Compass and NATO's new Strategic Concept in a year's time can determine to what extent both the EU and NATO are pulling together behind a common sense of mission and purpose rather than use their mission statements mainly to position themselves in the evolving security debate.

Annex Two

The US-EU defence dialogue

One of the breakthroughs in the US-EU relationship inaugurated by the Biden administration has been the launch of a bilateral US-EU dialogue on defence issues. The US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, agreed to this dialogue when he visited Brussels in March 2021. At that time this new transatlantic forum was overshadowed by other new ventures such as the US-EU Trade and Technology Council or the US-EU China dialogue. Given the Trump administration's hesitations over its Article 5 commitment to NATO's collective defence, the Biden administration's reaffirmation of Article 5 as a "sacred US duty" was the one key security signal that the Europeans were looking for from Washington. As the focus of transatlantic attention swung back behind NATO in face of an increasingly threatening Russia, and the US began consulting its allies more intensely after the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, the need for a separate US-EU track on defence seemed less urgent or useful. The EU representation in Washington gained a defence attaché to maintain liaison with the Pentagon but it took a year before the first high level meeting of the new defence dialogue was held.

This said, the dialogue is a recognition of the value that the specific EU Common Security and Defence Policy has for transatlantic security over and above the common commitment to NATO. It acknowledges that the EU undertakes missions beyond the NATO area which the US benefits from but where it does not need to take the lead or provide the bulk of the capabilities- as is usually the case with NATO. The Sahel is the obvious example where the EU has launched training and capacity building missions in Mali and Burkina Faso and is also supporting the UN peace keeping forces. It has also been assisting and financing the nascent G5 Sahel regional counter-terrorism force. Up to the end of 2019 these efforts were helped by a small US presence in Niger from which reconnaissance and strike drones and special forces operated. These assets were withdrawn by the Trump administration to the consternation of France which through its Barkhane and Takuba operations was bearing the brunt of the counter terrorism and local support operations in the Sahel, albeit with some success in drawing in other European countries. So clearly from an EU viewpoint, the bilateral dialogue can be useful to explore how the US can give Brussels and the engaged EU capitals more support in Africa- a key area of engagement for the EU's Strategic Compass. Recently the Biden administration has decided to return US forces to Somalia. Yet the way in which Russian mercenaries in the Wagner Group have displaced France in Mali and the Central African Republic and Russia is spreading its influence in the region will be a key topic for the dialogue as the west seeks to build bulwarks against further Russian or Chinese inroads.

Other topics will be anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and the Gulf of Guinea where the EU and the US have worked together in maritime task forces and Libya where both Brussels and Washington have been working together to support the UN's efforts to take the country towards national elections and the withdrawal of foreign forces. No doubt the eastern Mediterranean will also come up where the EU has deployed maritime forces to implement the arms embargo against Libya and to train the Libyan coast guard. Even if the US-EU defence dialogue does not necessarily secure more US participation in the EU's overseas missions, it can promote support in intelligence, logistics or in diplomatic initiatives.

One area where the dialogue can help the EU is to garner more US understanding for the goal of EU Strategic Autonomy. The EU side can try to convince their US counterparts that this is also a US security interest in that a more capable Europe can help to share the US's global burden. On the other hand, the US side can explain to EU interlocutors why the word "autonomy" plays badly with US audiences suspicious that it is an attempt to bypass or weaken NATO and the vital transatlantic link.

Yet there are incentives for the US in the bilateral dialogue too. For instance, Washington can use it to push Brussels to open EU capabilities programmes, such as PESCO or the European Defence Fund, to US and other allies' participation. This has been done for the military mobility project under the leadership of the Netherlands. Yet given that PESCO embraces nearly 50 individual multinational projects there is ample scope for other projects of interest to the US, and where it has something to bring to the table, to be opened. The US now has an administrative agreement with the European Defence Agency which allows this cooperation to move ahead. At the same time, the US can use this channel to smooth ruffled feathers over issues like arms sales where the US and EU countries compete fiercely with each other. The case of AUKUS comes to mind here. The US can use the channel too to gauge the EU's willingness and ability to engage militarily in the Indo-Pacific where the NATO alliance has security partnerships with four countries but no military role. The Indo-Pacific is mentioned as a key partnership area in the Strategic Compass and no doubt the US will be keen to explore what this means in practice. More of the same or something new?

Finally, the militarisation of space is a core topic for the dialogue. The EU has the same dependency as the US on its observation and communication satellites and similar concerns as to their increasing vulnerability to disruption and attack from jamming, spoofing, anti-satellite weapons, orbital interception, space debris and cyber-attacks on uplinks and downlinks. Some EU countries are establishing space commands like the US and running military space exercises. The new EU seven-year financial framework budgets €15 billion for space. This is small compared to the US $55 billion annually but the EU has serious capabilities such as its Galileo and Copernicus constellations and the EU Commission in its new Space Package is proposing a satellite tracking and early warning system and a secure encrypted space internet and communication system. The European Space Agency, which includes the UK, does valuable work on issues such as removing space debris. So, enhancing EU-US cooperation in space (where the Europeans can learn a lot from the US regarding manned space flights and planetary exploration) would be a useful added value for the dialogue. The space consultations could extend to space arms control and how to promote international norms of responsible behaviour in space.

Naturally, the US interest in the dialogue will be proportional to the EU's willingness and capacity to increase its security role beyond its borders and beyond the NATO orbit. The issue here is whether the EU will feel inclined to take on new CSDP missions at a time when most of its member states are sending all their spare military capacity to reinforce NATO's eastern flank or using up their budgets on sending weapons to the Ukrainian army. Weapons which they then need to replace. Will the US -EU defence dialogue have enough substance to sustain it in the months ahead? Will it foster more cooperation in operations and capabilities development across the Atlantic and generate new activity; or will its primary purpose be to exchange information and defuse transatlantic frictions and misperceptions? With NATO now meeting more regularly and EU member states talking bilaterally every day to the Biden administration, as well as numerous other US-EU consultation fora, the US-EU defence dialogue is operating in a crowded market. It will have to find its place and prove its worth.