

## NATO: Understanding and Sustaining Its Relevance in the 21st Century

by

Colonel Gary R. Graves  
United States Army

Under the Direction of:  
Colonel Douglas V. Mastriano



United States Army War College  
Class of 2016

### DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: A

Approved for Public Release  
Distribution is Unlimited

The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188		
The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-04-2016		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE NATO: Understanding and Sustaining Its Relevance in the 21st Century			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Gary R. Graves United States Army			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Douglas V. Mastriano			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited. Please consider submitting to DTIC for worldwide availability? YES: <input type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (student check one) Project Adviser recommends DTIC submission? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (PA check one)					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 5,339					
14. ABSTRACT The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) remains not only relevant, but an essential component for the protection and advancement of U.S. national interests in Europe, with ancillary effects globally. By maintaining a strong collaborative transatlantic security approach between the United States and its closest and strongest allies, the member nations of NATO, the United States can advance U.S. national interests while supporting the international order of the 21st century. However, the United State must assist NATO in increasing its overall capabilities (Means), to respond to a multitude of threats, by applying interoperable resources across all of the warfighting domains (Ways), to achieve the desired political end states – i.e. deter, and if required, defeat regional sources of instability, while promoting political integration and economic interdependence (Ends). NATO effects not only U.S. policies, but also influences a variety of U.S. national interests. By accepting this, and continuing to invest in the growth and strength of the alliance, the United States will direct its own diplomatic and economic destiny, and guarantee continued access and influence not only in Europe, but also around the world.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Multinational Operations, Alliance Opportunities and Challenges					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 28	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code)

## NATO: Understanding and Sustaining Its Relevance in the 21st Century

(5,339 words)

### Abstract

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) remains not only relevant, but an essential component for the protection and advancement of U.S. national interests in Europe, with ancillary effects globally. By maintaining a strong collaborative transatlantic security approach between the United States and its closest and strongest allies, the member nations of NATO, the United States can advance U.S. national interests while supporting the international order of the 21st century. However, the United State must assist NATO in increasing its overall capabilities (Means), to respond to a multitude of threats, by applying interoperable resources across all of the warfighting domains (Ways), to achieve the desired political end states – i.e. deter, and if required, defeat regional sources of instability, while promoting political integration and economic interdependence (Ends). NATO effects not only U.S. policies, but also influences a variety of U.S. national interests. By accepting this, and continuing to invest in the growth and strength of the alliance, the United States will direct its own diplomatic and economic destiny, and guarantee continued access and influence not only in Europe, but also around the world.

## **NATO: Understanding and Sustaining Its Relevance in the 21st Century**

In the post-World War II (WW II) climate of 1949, the United States, and 11 other like-minded Western nations, committed themselves to the creation of the greatest modern-day alliance the world has ever seen – the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). For realists, the alliance re-balanced the distribution of post-WW II power between an expanding Soviet Union and the West. To liberals, the alliance forever connected the United States to Europe, advancing U.S./European international relations, and promoting the mutually beneficial, interdependent national interests of economic prosperity, political stability, and security cooperation.

In the decades following NATO's formation, the global environment changed drastically from that established after the 1945 Potsdam Agreement, and the creation of the United Nations, also that same year. The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and modern globalization allowed the United States' economy to grow beyond transatlantic-markets of trade and commerce, while at the same time, terrorism and unconventional warfare became the modus-operandi of transnational threats attempting to abolish world order. With these changes in the global environment, some have argued that NATO is no longer relevant, or even needed by the United States for advancement of its national interests. Moreover, the world has become more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous. Therefore, it is highly probable that the United States, because of its longstanding political, military and economic commitment to NATO, could befall the same fate as ancient Athens during the Peloponnesian War – a super-power drawn into war by its alliances, not for its own political or military objectives. Essentially, history predicts the United States will enter into a conflict, not of

its choosing, or in support of its national interests, but because of its obligations to its allies in a continuously changing, and unknowable global environment.

From a U.S. economic and military perspective, this risk does not outweigh the benefits NATO provides the United States. Due to U.S. fiscal constraints and reductions in U.S. Department of Defense force structure, the alliance remains vital and necessary to the U.S. National Security Strategy.<sup>1</sup> As a "...formal institution of leading democracies that provides a forum for discussion and a vehicle for action," NATO is a strategic enabler for the United States.<sup>2</sup> Essentially, the NATO alliance is a means to balance the expenditure of finite U.S. national resources (blood and treasure) against U.S. national interests, while at the same time promoting global, international order.<sup>3</sup>

In view of this changing geopolitical environment, and an increasingly aggressive Russia, the NATO alliance remains not only relevant, but an essential component to the protection and advancement of U.S. national interests in Europe, with ancillary effects globally. This paper acknowledges NATO's outdated mandate, which does not account for the complexities of the global security environment or the modern-day character of war, and will address these concerns through specific recommendations for mitigation of these issues. My proposal advances U.S. national interests, while at the same time supporting the international order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, by maintaining a strong collaborative security approach between the United States and its closest and strongest allies – the member nations of NATO. Furthermore, this paper also stipulates that the United States must continue to assist NATO in increasing its overall capabilities (*Means*), to respond to a multitude of threats, by applying interoperable resources across all of the warfighting domains (*Ways*), to achieve the desired political end states

– deter, and if required, defeat regional sources of instability, while promoting political integration and economic interdependence (*Ends*).

NATO has a direct effect not only on U.S. policy, but also on a variety of U.S. national interests. By continuing to invest in the success and growth of the alliance, the United States will influence its national diplomatic and economic destiny. Moreover, by strengthening NATO, an alliance the United States has relied upon for over 65 years, the United States guarantees continued access and influence in Europe, and the around the world.

### Why NATO...1949 – Present

To understand the impetus leading to the creation of NATO, one must comprehend and appreciate the global environment present during the late 1940s (1949-1950). The devastation of WWII was fresh in the minds of the world. “Approximately 36.5 million Europeans had died in the conflict, 19 million of them civilians. Refugee camps and rationing dominated daily life...In the German city of Hamburg alone, half a million people were homeless.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the forceful expansion of communism over-shadowed Europe. In February 1948, the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia, supported by the Soviet Union, executed a coup leading to the overthrow of the democratically elected government.<sup>5</sup> In June of that same year, the Soviets blockaded the Allied-controlled part of post-WW II divided Berlin, by blocking all ground access to the German capital.<sup>6</sup> To the United States, and its future allies, communism was a clear source of instability and an uncontrollable danger to not only a free and economically prosperous Europe, but also the world.

In the midst of this volatility, the U.S.-funded European Recovery Program, also known as the Marshall Plan, was failing to achieve its full potential in rebuilding war-torn

Europe; European countries "...needed confidence in their security...before they would begin talking and trading with each other. Military cooperation, and the security it would bring, would have to develop in parallel with economic and political progress."<sup>7</sup> It is in this context that the Western Allies conceived the establishment of a transatlantic security agreement. The purpose was three-fold; advance the political integration between the United States and the Western European democracies, prevent the resurgence of European militarism, and deter the aggressive expansion of the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> On April 4, 1949, with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty by Belgium, Britain, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United States, NATO became a reality, and in turn, a viable military counter to the Soviet Union for the next 40 years.<sup>9</sup>

Following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the political landscape of the global environment underwent another drastic transformation. Intensified by the effects of globalization (trade, investment and technology), a radical revolution in the character of war (hybrid warfare), and diverse threats (state, non-state and epidemic), dramatic changes ensued, influencing, and challenging, the Westphalian order. "In a highly globalized and interdependent world, what happens anywhere can affect the possibilities and developments everywhere."<sup>10</sup> Although this transformation in the global environment forced NATO to redefine its role in European security and political stability at various times since 1991, it also stimulated the enlargement of the alliance into the former sphere of Soviet influence (such as Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic States), growing it to the current 28 member countries.<sup>11</sup>

For the West, predominantly the United States, which views the world through a fundamentally liberal viewpoint of free markets, political reform, and human rights, NATO enlargement facilitated security and stability, and increased influence over new political, military, and economic national interests.<sup>12</sup> As stated by Lord Palmerston in 1848 to the House of Commons, “We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. [Only] our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”<sup>13</sup> By accepting Lord Palmerston’s undeniably one-dimensional, yet powerful and lasting philosophy of international policy, the significance of NATO to the United States presents itself by contextualizing the importance of protecting and advancing the national interests of a country.

#### What NATO Affords...Access, Cooperation & Legitimacy

From a U.S. perspective, NATO is not exclusively about mutual defense. While defense is a fundamental pillar, with respect to U.S. national interests, the alliance is arguably more focused on international access, the stability and economic prosperity created from U.S. involvement in Europe, and legitimacy. The NATO alliance has been the foundation of U.S. foreign policy and power projection, while concurrently maintaining the backbone of the European security apparatus.<sup>14</sup> This assertion remains valid largely because of the potentially devastating effects a decline in either European security, or U.S./European international relations, could have on a variety of U.S. national interests.<sup>15</sup>

#### Access to Economic Markets & Military Bases

The United States profits from a free, democratic, and peaceful Europe.<sup>16</sup> Equally, Europe benefits from the security umbrella NATO affords its members, of which the United States contributes more than 70 percent of the total defense expenditures of

the alliance's 28 members.<sup>17</sup> This security, provided primarily through its collective defense principle stipulated in Article V of its mandate – a military attack against any of the signatories is an attack against them all, has correlated directly into the political and environmental stability of Europe. A safe and secure Europe benefits the economies of both the United States and the European Union (EU). More specifically, “The transatlantic economy...accounts for half of the global GDP [Gross Domestic Product] and nearly a third of global trade.”<sup>18</sup> For the United States, which represents 28.10% of the global economy, this translates to roughly \$17.4 trillion dollars of U.S. national resources.<sup>19</sup> Through this staggering financial portfolio, the economic power of the United States, enriched by its sustained access to secure and stable European markets, continues to be a key foundational principle of U.S. national security strategy, and a vital source of continuing influence overseas.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the geopolitical access NATO provides is a significant strategic advantage with respect to U.S. influence and global reach. For instance, as the United States increases its interests in Africa, and continues its commitment to the Middle East, “Europe’s proximity to the Middle East [and Africa] lends it geo-strategic value for American power projection.”<sup>21</sup> As stated in the 2015 National Military Strategy, “The presence of U.S. military forces in key locations around the world underpins the international order and provides opportunities to engage with other countries while positioning forces to respond to crises.”<sup>22</sup> For example, U.S. aircraft stationed at military installations in the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy supported military action (Operation Odyssey Dawn) in Libya in 2011. Additionally, with respect to U.S. operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Ramstein Airbase in Germany remains a vital

logistical supply hub for both personnel and equipment entering those theaters of operation for more than a decade.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, a military presence facilitates the United States' ability to assure its allies, cultivate new partners, and maintain a stabilizing presence globally. This enables the United States to protect Europe's populace and borders through security collaboration.

### Security Cooperation & Investment

From a U.S. security standpoint, NATO addresses the risk that, in "...an interconnected world, there are no global problems that can be solved without the United States, and few that can be solved by the United States alone."<sup>24</sup> By accepting this conviction, and understanding the complexities and dangers of today's global security environment, NATO provides the United States and its allies the best solution to this dilemma; a credible, multilateral political, economic and military mechanism to deter, and if required, defeat current and emerging threats.

This understanding highlights that NATO is, first and foremost, a political organization. NATO not only demonstrates transatlantic cooperation and solidarity between the United States and Europe, but also represents a mechanism for burden sharing as it correlates to the expenditure of national resources (blood and treasure).<sup>25</sup> From Iraq to Afghanistan, Libya to Eastern Europe, the past decade of persistent conflict demonstrates that no nation-state alone, including the United States, can independently defeat the range of diverse threats threatening the international order.<sup>26</sup> Just as it did during the Cold War, NATO "...can serve as the hub for American and European leaders to develop the ties with other institutions and non-European countries to provide for the common defense."<sup>27</sup> Current examples include efforts to address the Ebola pandemic, Russia's aggression against eastern Ukraine, "...the rise of IS [Islamic

State] in Syria/Iraq, halting Iran’s nuclear program, the postwar stabilization of Afghanistan and Central Asia, and the U.S. “pivot” to Asia.”<sup>28</sup> The complexity and enormous cost of these efforts has necessitated the United States to reorient its geostrategic priorities and expenditures in order to address increasingly dangerous regional instabilities. The success of these efforts is not dependent on the United States alone, it is also reliant on the other members of the alliance to refocus their foreign policy and security costs, to achieve an equitable sharing of the transatlantic security burden (financial, diplomatic and military).

### International Legitimacy

From a validity/authority rational, NATO offers the United States international legitimacy to act, within the framework of international law and norms, inside the global security system to protect and advance its national interests, and those of its allies and partners.<sup>29</sup> As stated by former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2009-2014),

The combined and voluntary will of 28 of the world’s strongest, sovereign democracies is an extremely powerful source of political legitimacy. Something that unilateral action or coalitions of the willing simply cannot enjoy. This carries over into our missions and operations. It attracts partners whose political support and military contributions add to our broader international legitimacy.<sup>30</sup>

To the United States, this emphasizes the importance of public judgment, both domestically and internationally, to advance a liberal viewpoint of the world. This also encompasses a belief in a rules-based international order empowering citizens, accountable nations, and effective regional/international organizations to promote security, prosperity, freedom, and peace.<sup>31</sup> “With Europe’s strong record on democracy, human rights and the rule of law, NATO contributed to advancing global public goods

that fell outside its narrow security interests.”<sup>32</sup> In essence, the alliance conveys international legitimacy and authority of action (political, military or economic) that would not, or could not, achieve sanction by the politically polarized United Nations (UN). This is possible because of the relationship between the UN Charter and the North Atlantic Treaty; in its creation, the NATO mandate reaffirmed the alliances’ belief and support of the principles established by the United Nations.

### The Enduring Relevance of NATO

Like the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the 21<sup>st</sup> century global security environment is complex, unpredictable, fiscally constrained, and comprised of multiple interconnected weak and failing states, including powerful armed groups, some of which maintain the ability to violently alter the geopolitical/strategic landscape within their own nations, and in other various regions.<sup>33</sup> Because of these influences, “...the United States can ill-afford to act unilaterally in such an age of advancing globalization and hybrid threats.”<sup>34</sup> The United States and its policy makers can no longer focus predominantly on power politics, and a position of dominance in the international system.<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, focus must be on evolving the fidelity of the international system itself, a structure of moral global citizens that endorse and advance U.S. core values, and the UN Charter.<sup>36</sup>

Former Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta reinforced this position with the following underpinning message to the Institute of Peace in 2012,

In order to advance security and prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must maintain an even enhance our military strength. But I also believe that the United States must place even greater strategic emphasis on building the security capabilities of others. We must be bold enough to adopt a more collaborative approach to security both within the United States government and among allies, partners, and multilateral organizations.<sup>37</sup>

This not only validates the necessity of the NATO alliance, but also mandates a U.S. obligation to assist in the enhancement of ally/partner capabilities and capacities that are increasingly effective and interoperable. By doing so, the United States promotes the ability to shape the global security environment, while enhancing the collective ability of NATO to respond, and defeat any source of regional instability.

### Redefining NATO...Ends, Ways & Means

NATO is a vital component of U.S. strategies and foreign policies with respect to the protection and advancement of U.S. national interests in not only Europe, but also the international community. While NATO's mandate may be dated, its foundational philosophy (to safeguard freedom, common heritage, and civilization) and principles (democracy, individual liberty, and rule of law), allows the alliance to endure, despite the current complexities of the global security environment.<sup>38</sup> Although the NATO alliance maintained the peace in Europe throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for it to remain pertinent and effective, it needs to adapt to the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> For this to occur, the United States must continue to lead, through financial investment, and political commitment and mentorship, to influence the following evolution and ratification of NATO's mandate and strategy (*Ends, Ways, and Means*) to shape the global security environment.

#### Ends

Comparable to the original three foundational purposes stipulated in the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, this paper likewise recommends three, over-arching resolutions for NATO. If implemented, these will concentrate and focus the efforts of the alliance, specifically with respect to a vision for collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management; the alliance's three core tasks. More importantly, these suggested

resolutions demonstrate an enduring commitment to a multilateral approach rather than unilateral, with respect to core national interests, by each member of NATO.<sup>40</sup>

Principle #1: NATO should continue to encourage political dialogue and diplomacy between its members, and foster a comparable interface and collaboration with the rest of the international community. This is indispensable, because similar to the global environment surrounding post-WWII Europe, reshaping

...the global order [today] will be more difficult than it was in the 1940s. [There are] ...more countries today and norms of equality and democratic participation mean that most will demand a seat at the table. The U.S. remains the preeminent power but the gap between the U.S. and the rest is narrowing. We [the United States] ...benefit enormously from the rise of the rest, but we [the United States] are no longer the undisputed leader of the "free world."<sup>41</sup>

Even in today's global security environment, NATO represents, figuratively, a finite geopolitical table. In literal or factual terms, the alliance continues to be a viable mechanism for political discourse among a multitude of diverse nations which have drastically different political identities and cultures, and who view the world through very different geopolitical lenses.

Fortunately, the ability of NATO to assimilate and synergize the varied cultural beliefs of its members, focusing on common values and interests, is one of its greatest strengths. This contextualizes NATO's soft power with respect to international relations; the ability to shape the will of other nations and actors, typically through the appeal of its access to political, military and economic institutions, and/or cultural values, to support and advance core national interests and objectives.<sup>42</sup> Although the character of the global security environment continues to evolve, international relationships, and the agreements that transpire between nations, remain a diplomatic endeavor.

Principle #2: NATO must enhance the alliance's ability to deter, and if required, defeat regional sources of instability, not just the military prowess of a common enemy. Unlike the Cold War, NATO no longer faces a single communist threat embodied by the Soviet Union. On the contrary, the alliance confronts modern dangers such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cyberwarfare, piracy, narco-trafficking, hybrid warfare, radical nationalism, and more recently, mass immigration. These problem-sets exemplify an assortment of regional sources of instability that severely influence global security, economic prosperity, and international order, and may necessitate a situationally dependent strategic response.

Conceptually and practically, in the context of a NATO strategic response, today's global security environment exemplifies the necessity for an effective response capability, namely, NATO's hard power. This entails the ability to compel or coerce the will of a state or non-state actor, typically through the threat, or actual use, of forceful action.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, NATO's hard power illustrates the prerequisite to expand its mandate; specifically, understanding the character of war, its impact within the different warfighting domains, and defining what constitutes an act of aggression. For example, in the framework of Article V, "...any action initiated by an external state or non-state actor that threatens the political and economic security or territorial integrity of a NATO member will engender a collective response."<sup>44</sup> This means that NATO should maintain not just an effective military deterrent, but also a broader response capability that also accounts for the potential threats that may operate in the virtual realms (cyber).

Principle #3: NATO needs to foster domestic governmental stability amongst its members. NATO's profile has transformed, especially with the incorporation of former

Warsaw Pact countries into the alliance following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Although the West perceived this NATO enlargement as a mechanism to provide greater stability to all of Europe, this expansion propelled multiple transitional, and somewhat weak/fragile, newly democratic states into a very mature and demanding political/military arena; a somewhat precarious position for some states struggling to provide for the basic needs of its populace.

Since the end of the Cold War, and especially in the last two decades, the proliferation of weak and failing states, whether part of an alliance or not, has been the principal source of regional instability and conflict.<sup>45</sup> These states, fluctuating in degree,

...are unable to control all their territory, maintain a monopoly over the instruments of force or perform core functions beginning with providing security for significant sections of their populations. Moreover, they also suffer from high degrees of corruption. When these conditions become severe, a state's legitimacy seriously erodes and it can even vanish.<sup>46</sup>

Because NATO draws strength and legitimacy from its partnerships, the alliances' foundational members (the original twelve) should work closely with new and emerging allies to ensure the sustainability of membership criteria. By doing this, NATO not only shapes the global security environment by facilitating internal stability of its member states, but also provides an assembly of legitimate governing bodies, dedicated to the global advancement of security, freedom, prosperity, and order for the international community to emulate.

### Ways

NATO's core tasks of collective defense, cooperative security, and crisis management, are the *Ways* by which the alliance applies the wide-ranging, yet finite, capabilities and resources (*Means*) to achieve the desired political objectives (*Ends*). However, in these times of fiscal austerity, NATO members need to work more

efficiently together to “...develop, acquire, operate and maintain [unrivalled] military capabilities to undertake the Alliance’s essential core tasks agreed in NATO’s Strategic Concept.”<sup>47</sup> NATO interoperability is a vehicle for the alliance to enhance this effectiveness and efficiency, through shared understanding of each member’s capabilities and capacity, and mutual trust within the organization, to “....swiftly react to crises in a multilateral manner with unity of purpose and effort.”<sup>48</sup>

Although NATO interoperability does not demand “...identical military systems (hardware and software) or corresponding operational approaches between leading and supporting nations,” it does require a collective understanding of the entire multinational PMESII (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information and Infrastructure) landscape, of both adversary and ally/partner equally.<sup>49</sup> This is essential to equip leaders, both political and military, at all levels, with the necessary comprehension and forethought to execute appropriate decisions, mitigate risk, and account for 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> order effects which may prove detrimental to a specific strategic policy or military operation, and more significantly, the internal cohesion and solidarity of the alliance itself.<sup>50</sup>

The United States has operated as part of NATO for over 65 years, however, NATO interoperability remains far from perfect or ideal.<sup>51</sup> Numerous challenges, typically manifested by a myopic and parochial approach toward multinational understanding, focusing solely on friendly/enemy capabilities, the political/military objective, and the physical characteristics of the operational environment, continue to hinder the overall effectiveness of NATO.<sup>52</sup> This inadequate approach does not account for the complexities of the present-day global security environment or NATO interoperability. It reflects outdated, linear practices and a conventional Cold War mindset mistakenly

applied to the current global security environment, categorized as complex, asymmetric, and hybrid.<sup>53</sup>

To achieve NATO interoperability, members of the alliance must go further than the old adage “see yourself, see the enemy, and see the terrain.”<sup>54</sup> Rather, member nations need to appreciate additional strategic and operational aspects not traditionally considered in order to operate successfully as a multinational force.<sup>55</sup> For example, alliance members must understand the standard forms of operational employment, mission command and signal/communication capabilities, and overall logistical/sustainment capacity.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, NATO, as a whole, must recognize that many of the allies and partners operate, during contingency operations, under specific national caveats restricting their support.<sup>57</sup> Alliance members may also preserve historically engrained frictions, shaped by common, and sometimes contested national histories, which may impede operational participation and cooperation.<sup>58</sup> This multinational understanding is vital for NATO members, as it relates directly to planning considerations, collaboration, and the ability of the alliance to interoperate during the execution of its missions.<sup>59</sup>

As important as this detailed multinational understanding between nations, is the ability to communicate this knowledge. Although this poses a challenge due to the nature of the alliance itself, i.e. various operating systems/procedures and language barriers, it is an integral requirement for success. By sharing essential collective knowledge, the North Atlantic Council empowers its members by increasing situational understanding, facilitating the resolution of possible misconceptions of ally or partner

capabilities.<sup>60</sup> This enables informed decision-making to support the desired political end state, but more notably, builds greater trust in the alliance.<sup>61</sup>

While achieving a shared collective multinational understanding within the NATO alliance is demanding, building trust between its members is even more challenging.<sup>62</sup> As stated by GEN(R) Martin E. Dempsey, former Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Building trust with subordinates and partners may be the most important action a commander will perform."<sup>63</sup> In the context of NATO operations, building trust correlates to social discourse, personal relationships, and common understanding, all of which require time to mature in a diverse alliance such as NATO.

When operating in conjunction with NATO allies and other joint, interagency, intragovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) partners, diversity is the modus-operandi; a common language, doctrinal terminology, planning process, collective operating system, and other military equipment are not.<sup>64</sup> These dissimilarities can lead to biases, creating fissures in alliance solidarity, and hindering NATO collaboration, integration, and unity of effort.<sup>65</sup> It is crucial that all NATO members place these parochial preconceived biases aside.<sup>66</sup> Although difficult to accomplish, successful implementation will allow better incorporation of the distinctive capabilities and capacities of each NATO ally and JIIM partner; interoperability is not about achieving congruency, rather, it is about compatibility, and understanding how to integrate each contributing nation.<sup>67</sup> This cultivation of trust allows NATO to operate more effectively and efficiently, achieving synergistic effects, correlating directly to strategic, operational, and tactical success. Once established, trust becomes the foremost advantage binding contrasting

units/organizations together, empowering the many to act as one, and forge a unity of effort and purpose toward the accomplishment of the desired political end state.<sup>68</sup>

### Means

Symbiotic to NATO's desired political end state, the alliance requires adequate resources – financial investment, political support, and military/non-military capabilities – from its members to operate effectively in the global security environment.<sup>69</sup> This equates to the assertion that NATO must continually reorganize itself to have the necessary conventional/unconventional and select 'niche' capabilities available, to proactively prepare for, and respond to the wide-range and varied contingencies currently confronting the alliance.<sup>70</sup> For example, the dangers range from the complex, multidimensional hybrid warfare employed by Russia in Ukraine, to the cost-efficient, yet potentially devastating threat of cyber-warfare by any capable actor who has the ability to interface within the cyber domain.<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately, of the 28 NATO nations, more than 70 percent of European land forces do not have the means to deploy equipment or personnel significant distances, or to sustain them without ally help, primarily shouldered by, with and through the United States.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, although NATO has developed a cyber-aggression response capability, there are "...insufficient technological capabilities within the organization to respond to cyberwarfare."<sup>73</sup> In essence, the alliance's ability to respond to security challenges can only be as successful as its capabilities; NATO can maintain a strong defense, but only with adequate fiscal investment.<sup>74</sup>

This investment equates to a 2 percent of GDP benchmark for defense spending, of which only Estonia, Greece, Poland, the United Kingdom, and the United States achieved in 2015.<sup>75</sup> As stated by U.S. Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, "The

Transatlantic relationship and Transatlantic security is, as ever, a two-sided affair...As allies, we must all accept our fair share of security responsibility to each; and as allies we all must choose to invest in, develop, and field new capabilities now and in the future.”<sup>76</sup> This emphasizes that in order for NATO to effectively address the challenges and threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it must continue to modernize its response capabilities, while developing new and improved technologies. To accomplish this, alliance members must invest, committing to increasing their national defense spending to at least the 2 percent GDP benchmark unanimously agreed upon by alliance members at previous NATO summits, such as the Wales Summit in 2014.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, the alliance should look to external, yet complimentary organizations, such as the European Union, private industry, and other supporting alliances and partnerships, which have the expertise and resources available to augment the NATO Strategic Concept.<sup>78</sup> These investments are a critical requirement to the enduring relevance of the alliance, and will provide NATO the political strength and military capability to defend its members, and share the cost-burden through a multilateral, transatlantic approach to cooperative security.

#### The Bottom Line

It is apparent that the United States and Europe each benefit from an unequalled, mutually supporting and dependent alliance, actualized by NATO.<sup>79</sup> In today’s global security environment, the alliance faces a multitude of diverse challenges and dangerous threats, such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, piracy, mass migration, and hybrid warfare.<sup>80</sup> Yet, the greatest danger confronting the alliance today is the growing sentiment of ‘American Indifference’ toward NATO, especially among the United States’ political elite; a result from the growing transatlantic gap between members “...willing and able to pay the price and bear the burdens of alliance commitments, and those who

enjoy the benefits of NATO membership...but don't want to share the risks and the costs."<sup>81</sup>

As stated by Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates to the North Atlantic Council on June 10, 2011,

The blunt reality is that there will be dwindling appetite and patience in the U.S. Congress — and in the American body politic writ large — to expend increasingly precious funds on behalf of nations that are apparently unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable partners in their own defense.<sup>82</sup>

This speech predicts a bleak and irrelevant future for NATO, however, the nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global security environment continues to demonstrate the United States' need to "...operate as a closely integrated joint team with interagency and multinational partners across the range of military operations."<sup>83</sup> A fundamental component of this conviction, especially during these times of fiscal austerity, military downsizing, and increasing globalization, is NATO; a strong and proven network of military allies capable of operating together multilaterally toward common political end states and interests.<sup>84</sup> For this reason alone, the United States should continue to invest politically, militarily and financially in the alliance.<sup>85</sup>

Furthermore, although the U.S. military remains the world's foremost resourced and accomplished fighting force capable of sustained unilateral action virtually anywhere in the world, NATO provides the United States with the undeniable benefits of geopolitical/strategic access, burden/cost sharing, and legitimacy.<sup>86</sup> Because of this, for more than seven decades, NATO operations have been the United States' preferred manner of applying military power toward its goals of protection and advancement of core U.S. national interests, and projecting power and U.S. influence globally.<sup>87</sup>

According to the 2015 U.S. National Security Strategy, the United States is committed to leading "...the world through a shifting security landscape toward a more durable peace and new prosperity," however, in today's global security environment, the United States requires the assistance of its strategic transatlantic allies.<sup>88</sup> The crucial multilateral capacities contained in NATO enable it to face not only the current challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but also those yet to surface. As the United States "...increasingly takes a more indirect [multilateral] security role in the years ahead, NATO will continue to serve as a source of interoperable military forces that are unavailable anywhere else."<sup>89</sup> By accepting this enduring importance and relevance of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United States will control its political, military, and economic destiny within the global security environment today, and into the future.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> COL Gary R. Graves, "Seek, Develop, and Share...Multinational Understanding," *Fires Bulletin*, May-June 2015, 1.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Goldgeier, *The Future of NATO* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations – International Institutions and Global Governance Program, February 2010), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Graves, "Seek, Develop, and Share...Multinational Understanding," 6.

<sup>4</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "A Short History of NATO," linked from *North Atlantic Treaty Organization Home Page* at "History Homepage," <http://www.nato.int/history/nato-history.html> (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> The History Channel, "Formation of NATO and Warsaw Pact," linked from *The History Channel Home Page* at "Article," <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/formation-of-nato-and-warsaw-pact> (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "A Short History of NATO."

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> The History Channel, "Formation of NATO and Warsaw Pact."

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Fingar, "Reducing Uncertainty: Intelligence and National Security, Using Intelligence to Anticipate Opportunities and Shape the Future," public speech, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, October 21, 2009, [http://iis-db.stanford.edu/evnts/5859/lecture\\_text.pdf](http://iis-db.stanford.edu/evnts/5859/lecture_text.pdf) (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Kroening, "Facing Reality: Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War," *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 57, no. 1 (February 5, 2015): 51.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew T. Wolff, "The Future of NATO Enlargement after the Ukraine Crisis," *International Affairs* 91, no. 5 (September 2015): 1111.

<sup>13</sup> Lord John Temple Palmerston, public speech, House of Commons, March 1, 1848, quoted in ed., Anthony Jay, *The Oxford Dictionary of Political Quotations* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1996), 284.

<sup>14</sup> Goldgeier, *The Future of NATO*, viii.

<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Mankoff and Andrew Kuchins, *Russia, Ukraine, and U.S. Policy Options: A Briefing Memo* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, Russia and Eurasia Program, January 2015), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 25.

<sup>17</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence* (Brussels, Belgium: NATO Press & Media, June 22, 2015), 6, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2015\\_06/20150622\\_PR\\_CP\\_2015\\_093-v2.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2015_06/20150622_PR_CP_2015_093-v2.pdf) (accessed January 6, 2016).

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Keohane, *Does NATO Matter for U.S. Defence Policy?* (Madrid, Spain: FRIDE, A European Think Tank for Global Action, May 2012), 2.

<sup>19</sup> "United States GDP: 1960-2015," linked from *Trading Economics Home Page* at "United States GDP," <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/united-states/gdp> (accessed November 18, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Obama, *National Security Strategy*, Introduction.

<sup>21</sup> Keohane, *Does NATO Matter for U.S. Defence Policy?* 2.

<sup>22</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015* (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 2015), 9.

<sup>23</sup> Keohane, *Does NATO Matter for U.S. Defence Policy?* 2.

<sup>24</sup> Obama, *National Security Strategy*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Mankoff and Kuchins, *Russia, Ukraine, and U.S. Policy Options: A Briefing Memo*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, March 4, 2014), vii.

<sup>27</sup> Goldgeier, *The Future of NATO*, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Mankoff and Kuchins, *Russia, Ukraine, and U.S. Policy Options: A Briefing Memo*, 5.

<sup>29</sup> COL Gary R. Graves, *Multinational Operations: Understanding Multinationalism to Shape the Operational Environment* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, February 2016), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, "Why NATO Matters to America," public speech, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, March 19, 2014, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2014/3/19%20rasmussen%20nato/20140319\\_nato\\_rasmussen\\_prepared\\_remarks.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2014/3/19%20rasmussen%20nato/20140319_nato_rasmussen_prepared_remarks.pdf) (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> Obama, *National Security Strategy*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Kroening, "Facing Reality: Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War," 52.

<sup>33</sup> Rishard Shultz, et al., "The Sources of Instability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Weak States, Armed Groups, and Irregular Conflict," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 73.

<sup>34</sup> Graves, *Multinational Operations: Understanding Multinationalism to Shape the Operational Environment*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Glenn P. Hastedt, "Alternative Futures," in *American Foreign Policy*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 370-371.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Former Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, Dean Acheson Lecture: "Building Partnerships in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," public speech, U.S. Institute of Peace, June 28, 2012, <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Dean+Acheson+Lecture%3A+%22Building+Partnership+in+the+21st+Century%22.-a0299062044> (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The North Atlantic Treaty," linked from *North Atlantic Treaty Organization Home Page* at "Official Texts (Chronological)," [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17120.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm) (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> Goldgeier, *The Future of NATO*, vii.

<sup>40</sup> Philip H. Gordon, "Why NATO Matters to U.S. Security," *DIPNOTE: U.S. Department of State Official Blog*, blog entry posted May 14, 2012, <https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2012/05/14/why-nato-matters-us-security> (accessed December 1, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Fingar, "Reducing Uncertainty: Intelligence and National Security, Using Intelligence to Anticipate Opportunities and Shape the Future," 7.

<sup>42</sup> Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and David Welch, *Understanding Global Conflict and Cooperation: An Introduction to Theory and History*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Longman, 2011), 40.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, *The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World*, Training and Army Doctrine Command Pamphlet 525-3-1 (Fort Eustis, VA: U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, October 31, 2014), iii-iv, 9, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Goldgeier, *The Future of NATO*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Shultz, "The Sources of Instability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Weak States, Armed Groups, and Irregular Conflict," 2-3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>47</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Smart Defence," linked from *North Atlantic Treaty Organization Home Page* at "Topics," [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_84268.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_84268.htm) (accessed October 30, 2015).

<sup>48</sup> COL Stephen J. Maranian, *NATO Interoperability: Sustaining Trust and Capacity within the Alliance*, Research Paper (Rome, Italy: Research Division – NATO Defense College, June 2015), 2.

<sup>49</sup> Graves, *Multinational Operations: Understanding Multinationalism to Shape the Operational Environment*, 2; Graves, "Seek, Develop and Share...Multinational Understanding," 4.

<sup>50</sup> GEN Martin E. Dempsey, *Mission Command*, White Paper (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 3, 2012), 3-5, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/concepts/white\\_papers.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/concepts/white_papers.htm) (accessed October 19, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> Graves, "Seek, Develop and Share...Multinational Understanding," 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> COL Gary R. Graves, *Mission Command: Instilling Cultural Change through the U.S. Army Combat Training Centers* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, October 2015), 4.

<sup>54</sup> Adela Frame and James W. Lussier, eds., *66 Stories of Battle Command* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School for Command Preparation, Command and General Staff College Press, 2001), 19.

<sup>55</sup> Graves, "Seek, Develop and Share...Multinational Understanding," 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Mission Command*, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, May 2012, Includes Change 2, March 12, 2014), 3.

<sup>62</sup> Graves, *Mission Command: Instilling Cultural Change through the U.S. Army Combat Training Centers*, 5.

<sup>63</sup> Dempsey, *Mission Command*, 3-6.

<sup>64</sup> Graves, "Seek, Develop and Share...Multinational Understanding," 8; Graves, *Multinational Operations: Understanding Multinationalism to Shape the Operational Environment*, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Howard J. Ross, *Reinventing Diversity: Transforming Organizational Community to Strengthen People, Purpose, and Performance* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 177; Maranian, *NATO Interoperability: Sustaining Trust and Capacity within the Alliance*, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Graves, "Seek, Develop and Share...Multinational Understanding," 6.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Mission Command*, 3; Graves, *Mission Command: Instilling Cultural Change through the U.S. Army Combat Training Centers*, 6.

<sup>69</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), "Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon," November 19, 2010, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_68580.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68580.htm) (accessed March 21, 2016).

<sup>70</sup> Goldgeier, *The Future of NATO*, 14.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon, "Why NATO Matters to U.S. Security."

<sup>75</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence*.

<sup>76</sup> Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, Remarks at Atlantik Brücke: "U.S., Germany, & NATO Are Moving Forward Together," public speech, Berlin, Germany, June 22, 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/606684> (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Gordon, "Why NATO Matters to U.S. Security."

<sup>78</sup> Goldgeier, *The Future of NATO*, 15.

<sup>79</sup> Obama, *National Security Strategy*, 25.

<sup>80</sup> Sascha-Dominik Bachmann, "Hybrid Wars: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century's New Threats to Global Peace and Security," *South African Journal of Military Studies* 43, no. 1 (2015): 78, <http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/22002/1/1110-2624-1-PB.pdf> (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>81</sup> Former Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Remarks to the North Atlantic Council: "The Security and Defense Agenda," public speech, Brussels, Belgium, June 10, 2011, <http://archive.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=4839> (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 25, 2013), i.

<sup>84</sup> Obama, *National Security Strategy*, 1 & 9.

<sup>85</sup> Jeffrey H. Michaels, "NATO after Libya – Alliance Adrift," *The RUSI Journal* 156, no. 6 (December 22, 2011): 61.

<sup>86</sup> Graves, *Multinational Operations: Understanding Multinationalism to Shape the Operational Environment*, 5.

<sup>87</sup> David P. Auerswald and Stephen M. Saideman, *NATO at War: Understanding the Challenges of Caveats in Afghanistan* (Montreal, Canada: Department of Political Science, McGill University, September 2009), 1, <http://shape.nato.int/resources/1/documents/nato%20at%20war.pdf> (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>88</sup> Obama, *National Security Strategy*, 1.

<sup>89</sup> Michaels, "NATO after Libya – Alliance Adrift," 61.