

Discord in the Alliance: Transatlantic Relations and NATO

Dr. Ankita Dutta and Dr. Stuti Banerjee

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Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road,
New Delhi- 110 001, India
Tel. : +91-11-23317242, Fax: +91-11-23322710
www.icwa.in

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Tel. : 9312430311
Email : tarunberi2000@gmail.com

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Abstract

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) represents the transatlantic partnership's collective defence commitment. The partnership between the United States and Europe has been the cornerstone of international political, economic and security order. With the end of the Cold War, this partnership with the allies entered an uncertain phase. The dynamics with which the transatlantic relations were further identified underwent a redefinition with the beginning of the new millennia. This study analyses the changing transatlantic partnership within the context of NATO in the past decade. From fighting traditional armies, the NATO is now fighting terror groups and non-state actors. The Alliance has expanded its threat perception to make itself relevant to present security concerns. Nonetheless, the increasing focus on Russia has once again raised questions of the revival of Cold War era policies. The Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 shocked the Alliance to its core, and it took some time for the organisation to adapt. In its self-perception, the Alliance remains an essential source of stability

in this unpredictable world.” However, what happens when this source of stability experiences instability from within itself. The paper would look at the last three NATO Summits (Wales 2014, Warsaw 2016 and Brussels 2018) to analyse the changing synergy between the United States and its NATO allies, and the converging and diverging issues in the partnership. The three summits present the most comprehensive snapshot of the changing transatlantic partnership and possible direction that it may take in the future.

Keywords: Transatlantic Relations, NATO, Collective Security, European Union, United States, Russia, PESCO, ISAF, ESDP, EI2

[I] Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) represents the transatlantic partnership's collective defence commitment, from defending against the Soviet threat during the Cold War, to its role in the 1995 Balkans war to the Iraq war, to its invocation of Article V following 9/11 and subsequent operations in Afghanistan. However, in the past few years, the dynamics of the relations between the allies have changed. With the current US administration it has become more prominent. President Donald Trump has taken positions that are antithetical to those of most European nations - withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement to questioning the viability of NATO, disavowing the Iran nuclear deal and recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

This study analyses the changing transatlantic partnership within the context of NATO in the past decade. The relationship started with the need to counter the Soviet Union and protect Europe. In the face of questions of its relevance in the post Cold War era, the Alliance has tried to evolve itself and find new battle lines and threats to counter. The decade of the 1990s was one in which the NATO tried to redefine itself. In the first decade the 21st century, the war in Iraq and its deployment in Afghanistan showed the shift in focus from Eurocentric view to a more global view. From fighting traditional armies, the NATO was now fighting terror groups and non-state actors. The Alliance has expanded its threat perception to make itself relevant to present security concerns. Nonetheless, the

increasing focus on Russia has once again raised questions of the revival of Cold War era policies. The United States' relations with Russia have for long guided NATO's relations with Russia. President Trump has stated that he would like to work towards better relations with Russia, however, differences between the White House and the US Congress including the Republican Party has complicated matters. The unconventional style of President Trump in his conduct of foreign policy has ensured that the Alliance members are wary of the United States' commitment to issues.

The paper tries to analyse the changing dynamics of the military Alliance of the transatlantic partnership which is represented by the NATO. The paper gives a brief background of development of NATO and how it has adapted itself to the new realities of the 21st century. The emphasis of the paper would be at the last three NATO Summits (Wales 2014, Warsaw 2016 and Brussels 2018) to analyse the changing synergy between the United States and its NATO allies, and the converging and diverging issues in the partnership. Given the differences between the United States and the European Union on relations with Russia and the growing rift between Russia and the United States, the paper will also present NATO's relations with Russia.

[II] The Transatlantic Security Partnership

The partnership between the United States and Europe has been the cornerstone of international political, economic and security order. It has been one in which the two sides have time and again have as

many differences as they have converging interests. Nonetheless, the rules based international order they helped to establish benefitted not just these countries but the international community at large. One aspect of this complicated relationship is the partnership on security issues. The United States and the European Union, share similar goals of stability in Europe with good relations with Russia, work together to fight terrorism and strengthen international security. While President Trump had announced that the NATO was an obsolete organisation, it remains the foundation of the transatlantic security relations. The United States and President Trump have since then modified their approach to state that the United States remains committed to the Alliance but members need to shoulder an equal and 'fair' share of the financial commitments/burden. The demand for more financial commitment from other member states is a demand that is not unique to the Trump administration, but has been raised during Barack Obama and G.W. Bush's presidencies as well. However, differences have become more pronounced in the past two years.

Declaring that they are "resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security," founding members of NATO signed the North Atlantic Treaty on April 4, 1949. Seventy years since, challenges before the NATO has changed considerably. Nonetheless, the core of the Transatlantic security Alliance still rests on three pillars: common interests and values; political cohesion; and a sharing of the burden for collective defence. In the post-Cold War period, the Alliance evolved into an outward

looking organisation from its cold-war agenda of a military coalition designed for warfare against Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. During this period, NATO expanded to become an organisation of 29 member states. It undertook varied operation beyond its traditional areas of interest. It also modified itself for expeditionary interventions and acting as the force integrator in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. The following sections give a brief overview of the development of NATO.

[III](a) The Transatlantic Security Alliance: 1949-2000

As soon as the war time cooperation between United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union collapsed, the onset of the events cemented 45 years of hostility between the east and the west. On July 1, 1948, US, Western Europe and Canada began the negotiation for the alliance's charter so as to counter any future Soviet attack. Article 5 of the Treaty, which forms the core of the Alliance, stated that the Allies agreed "an attack on one shall be considered an attack against them all" and that following such an attack, each Ally would take "such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force" in response¹. Significantly, Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty serves an important purpose and were added on the insistence of Canada, which pushed for an economic role of the alliance. Article 2 sought to seeks to limit international conflict in international economic policies and Article 3 seeks the members to cooperate with each other through mutual aid and assistance towards build capacity in order to resist armed attacks. A range of concerns were articulated in

the US Senate when the draft treaty was presented for considerations in 1949. The debate centred on the treaty's operative passage, Article V¹, which proposed “*an attack on one would be considered an attack on all.*” (Emphasis added) Supporters were committed to the concept of collective defence, but few expressed concerns that the agreement may result in excessive commitments from America.² On April 4, 1949, leaders from Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States gathered in Washington and jointly signed “The North Atlantic Treaty”.

With the Soviet detonation of an atomic bomb in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, NATO, in an effort to expand its role, adopted the strategic doctrine of “Massive Retaliation”. The doctrine stated that if the Soviet Union attacked, NATO would respond with nuclear weapons. This was done with the purpose to deter either side from risk-taking, as any attack, however small, could have led to a full-blown nuclear war.³ At the height of the Cold War, the United States had over 300,000 troops in Europe. The NATO

1 Article V- The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe and North America shall be considered as the attack against them all: and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of United Nations will assist the Party or parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with other Parties, such actions as it deems necessary, including use of armed forces, to restore and maintain the security of North Atlantic area.

governments faced many intra-Alliance disputes, from Suez Canal to Vietnam to French withdrawal; from détente to the discussions over medium-range missile deployments. Each decade witnessed debates and it also saw the Alliance reaching consensus on those issues. Despite the differences within the transatlantic community, NATO stood resolute. With the end of the Cold War, the relevance of the NATO, an Alliance formed to defeat the ideologically different rival, came into question.⁴

The transatlantic partnership - which had been relatively stable for over 50 years - entered an uncertain phase with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War resulted in a unipolar distribution of power United States emerged as the sole superpower and no longer shared a common enemy with Europe. Similarly, as European integration intensified, it was no t as heavily dependent on the United States for security as before. The asymmetric dependency between the United States and Europe changed and consequently foreign policy strategies altered. As the United States focused more on the Middle East while Europe turned its focus on Africa, Asia, the Balkans, and the Caucasus, the geostrategic aspect of the relations underwent a change. NATO faced its real test in the post-Cold War period. For NATO to function effectively and constructively in the emerging era, the Alliance needed to acknowledge the new challenges and threats on the horizon. Keeping in view these changes NATO, in 1991, adopted 'Strategic Concept' which asserted that the new threat for the Alliance were the instabilities in the Central and the Eastern Europe countries (CEEC). It declared that the domestic turmoil in

the East could threaten the stability in the Western Europe. The steps taken by the Alliance included the creation of institutional associations with the new governments of CEEC. This led to the establishment of North Atlantic Cooperation Council, designed to link the 16 member states to these new governments.⁵

To address the changing security environment, the Alliance agreed to expand its linkages with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations. By 1993, proponents of NATO's enlargement had come to dominate the public debate. In this regard, the Brussels Summit of 1994 established the Partnership for Peace (PfP)² initiative which was the first step towards the enlargement of the Alliance towards Eastern Europe. Following this, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic formally joined the Alliance on March 12, 1999. The Washington Summit of 1999 ratified both the new Strategic Concept and the Membership Action Plan, which formed the basis for the second round of expansion.

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- 2 Members of PfP pledged to work with NATO members on a number of objectives: i. facilitation of transparency in national defense planning and budgeting processes; ii. ensuring democratic control of defenses; iii. maintenance of the capability and readiness to contribute, subject to the constitutional considerations, to operations under the authority of the U.N. and/or the responsibility of the CSCE; iv. the development of cooperative military relations with NATO, for the purpose of joint planning, training, and exercises in order to strengthen their ability to undertake missions in the fields of peacekeeping, search and rescue, humanitarian operations, etc; v. the development, over the longer term, of forces that are better able to operate with those of the members of the North Atlantic Alliance. (Rupp)

Yet, it was not a very peaceful period as one had hoped. The transatlantic split over Bosnia, from 1991-1995, highlighted the deeper division over the future of the Alliance. The conflict illustrated the new realities that the allies did not share a common perspective on the security threats. Hence, they were unable to employ NATO forces effectively to overcome their differences. The differences lasted till 1995, when NATO members dismayed by the Serbs actions against Muslims in the UN “safe zone” of Srebrenica, launched the air strike against Serb forces. However, the real test for the Alliance came in the mid-1998, when violence in Kosovo reached alarming proportions. With the increasing reports of ethnic cleansing, human rights violations etc, NATO launched *Operation Allied Force (OAF)*. The campaign lasted 78 days and 14 member states contributed their air force units.

OAF highlighted limitations of the European military establishment. Despite the air force units from 14 member states, over 50 per cent of the sorties were conducted by the United States. Apart from this there was a great reliance on United States for a range of essential war-fighting technologies. Kosovo showed that Europe was “not able to solve its own problems.”⁶ Europe became increasingly aware of the emerging realities. The two crises in the Balkans demonstrated that the military capability gap between United States and Europe had increased many folds and while there were promises made to bridge these gaps in the coming years, European nations have yet to achieve this goal. The reasons for this ranges from the soft power

approach preferred by the European countries towards military defence expenditure to an over-reliance on the United States security umbrella. Nonetheless, to address its security concerns and to be independent of the United States and NATO, the European Union established the Common Foreign and Security Policy and European Security and Defence Policy. However, the 21st Century brought with it new set of non-traditional security threats that changed the course of international politics, economy and security.

[III](b) Redefining NATO: 2001-2012

The dynamics with which the transatlantic relations were identified underwent a redefinition with the beginning of the new millennia. George W. Bush's election as the President of United States in November 2000 affected the transatlantic relations. Even before 9/11, it was clear that his foreign policy would represent a different kind of America to the world. President Bush's decision to ignore the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, his decision to not ratify the Treaty on the International Criminal Court or renew the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, Landmine Ban Treaty and the Protocol on the Biological Weapons were just a few instances in which he deviated from the previous administration and internationally accepted norms.

The twin attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon propelled the Bush Administration to declare the War on Terror. The Taliban government in Afghanistan refused to extradite Osama bin Laden to face charges of terrorism and the United States

announced its decision to fight a war in Afghanistan against the al Qaeda. The European states spontaneously declared their solidarity with the United States. The attacks were widely understood as threat to 'Western Civilization' and thus, international stability. As a result, United States and Europe united more than ever, with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder offering 'unlimited solidarity' and French newspaper *Le Monde* declaring that 'We are all Americans now'.

The attacks also presented an opportunity for the alliance to show that the organisation had a crucial role to play in emerging global politics. Article V was invoked for the first time on September 12, 2001. It mobilized NATO for war; and the members endorsed and supported the United States-led operations in Afghanistan. The US' decision to limit the NATO's role was detrimental to the alliance. This was so because, even though individual NATO member-states had contributed to the United States-led war and occupation of Afghanistan in 2001 and 2002, NATO, as an organisation, was largely sidelined.⁷

Another major development which redefined the transatlantic partnership was the changes in the American definition of the national security interests and the way in which they perceived and interpreted their foreign policies. After an initial period of support for the war on terrorism in Afghanistan from within Europe, the 2003 Iraq invasion left Europe divided. United States' biggest allies, Germany and France, did not support the invasion and claimed that

it was an example of US unilateralism. US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld described France and Germany as “Old Europe”, and said that the centre of gravity in the NATO was shifting eastwards³. Conservatives in the United States warned that, “*We should stop pretending that Americans and Europeans share a common view of world, or even that they occupy the same world*”.⁸ This created deep fissures within the transatlantic alliance, as Europe felt that such statements highlighted United States’ unilateralism.

In 2002, President Bush released the National Security Strategy (NNS-02) of his administration. It stated that the United States would disrupt and destroy terror networks by, “defending the United States, the American people, and our interests at home and abroad *by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders*. While the United States will constantly strive to enlist the support of the international community, *we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defence by acting pre-emptively against such terrorists*, to prevent them from doing harm against our people and

3 “Now, you’re thinking of Europe as Germany and France. I don’t. I think that’s old Europe. If you look at the entire NATO Europe today, the centre of gravity is shifting to the east. And there are a lot of new members. And if you take just the list of all the members of NATO and all those who have been invited in recently- what is it? 26, something like that? Germany has been a problem, and France has been a problem. But you look at the vast numbers of the other countries in Europe. They are not with France and Germany, they are with United States”. *Transcripts of Press Conference with international media, United States Department of Defence, Wednesday, January 22, 2003.*

our country.”⁹ (Emphasis added) The ideas of containment and deterrence were termed as outdated for the new era, in return it proposed taking action against rogue states before they could coerce or attack United States with the alleged WMDs. It declared future, United States military actions as, “a matter of common sense, and self-defence, America will act against...emerging threats before they are fully formed.” The emphasis laid on the “Pre-emptive Actions” in NSS-02 was not appreciated within the transatlantic alliance. The differences of opinion within the transatlantic alliance were in extreme, also neither NATO nor European Union were designed or prepared, respectively, to participate in the global war on terror that Washington was advocating in 2002.

The resulting difference of opinion following the Iraq invasion led to the questions on the future of the Alliance. The issue was further aggravated by the Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 which led the NATO to introspect and adapt to the changing situation. NATO realised that threats to the Alliance were different than the threats it faced at the time of its formation. It was felt that the Alliance needs to adopt means to address these new and emerging challenges. In November 2010, NATO released a new “Strategic Concept”⁴ to guide the Alliance into the “... next phase in NATO’s evolution, so that it continues to be effective in a changing world, against new threats, with new capabilities and new partners.”¹⁰ The document

4 The document is available at <https://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>

stated that in 21st century, understanding of the collective defence needs to expand beyond defending against the “armed attack” of Article V. To remain relevant, NATO needs to include both state and non-state actors and threats - such as terrorism, proliferation of WMDs, cyber-security - to expand its traditional understanding of collective defence. Adopted in Lisbon, the document called “Active Management, Modern Defence” recommitted itself to the core principles and tasks of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security, so as to create a security environment in the Euro-Atlantic area. It emphasised on deterrence as a way of defence along the full range capabilities with deployable and robust forces, planning and participation, cooperation with Russia, detection and defence against terrorism, arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation. It also stressed upon the open door policy for dialogue and cooperation with partners, giving prominence to strategic partnership with European Union (EU) and partnership for peace members.

By the time NATO met again in Chicago in 2012, it had to grapple with a range of events. From the hard defence issues of NATO’s forces in Afghanistan and a missile shield for Europe to the consequences of the civil war in Libya on European security, to the probable impact of the people’s protests in the Middle East and North Africa. The issues showcased to the Alliance the wide array of issues that contributed to security. The summit declaration stated that, member states will “...ensure the Alliance has the capabilities it needs to deal with the full range of threats; and strengthen our

wide range of partnerships.” Keeping in mind the concerns and contributions of both EU and non-EU members the Alliance in order to use the strategic partnership to its full potential agreed to ensure that, “...Smart Defence and the EUs pooling and Sharing initiatives are complementary and mutually reinforcing.” As part of its Smart Defence initiative it was agreed that all member states will share the costs of weapons and equipment. The NATO leaders approved twenty projects for this initiative. These projects covered areas like maintenance of armoured vehicles; creation of a joint management of munitions for buying and storage; cooperation in the use of surveillance aircraft etc. Smart Defence was intended to make Europe more responsible for its own security, as the United States military withdrew from the continent. It was decided that the United States would assist as required and Europe would be responsible for all the cost-burdens for various operations that it would initiate for its own interests.¹¹

[III] Changing Transatlantic Security Partnership: The Alliance Post 2014

After the invasion of Iraq and the continued presence of NATO forces in Afghanistan many hoped that the transatlantic allies would put aside their differences and reunite in rebuilding the two war torn countries. This has not succeeded so far. There continues to be simmering differences between the partners on the best way to move forward. Part of this has been the credibility of the actions carried out by the Alliance in Iraq in the absence of any WMD and the

deficiency of peace in Afghanistan long after President Bush declared the ‘Mission Accomplished’ and the killing of Osama bin Laden, the head of the al Qaeda. President Obama had campaigned on the platform to bring back American troops. However, circumstances and the situation in Afghanistan meant that he had to halt the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan. In Iraq, he was able to both end the war and start a new war, when he announced the end of the combat mission in Iraq in 2010 and by 2014 recommitted them in the fight against the Islamic State of the Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

[III](a) NATO: 2014 to Present

The 2014 NATO Wales summit took place during the Ukrainian crisis and rising differences with Russia. This period also saw the increasing threats from transnational actors and growing instability in the European neighbourhood. NATO leaders during this summit evaluated NATO’s strategic approach, i.e. its defence and deterrence policy, towards Russia. As stated in the NATO Declaration of 2014, the key commitment of the summit were “...*to reverse the trend of declining defence budgets, to make the most effective use of funds and to further a more balanced sharing of costs and responsibilities. The aim was to move towards the two per cent guideline within a decade with a view to meet their NATO Capability Targets and filling NATO’s capability shortfalls*”¹².

Many of these issues were again taken up during the Warsaw Summit in 2016. The summit also included additional challenges to Euro-

Atlantic security including rising terror attacks in the European continent and, migrant and refugee flows. It was agreed upon in the summit that the alliance would intensify its deterrence posture by enhancing its military presence in the east. This included, stationing multinational battle-groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland; capacity building efforts in Iraq; support the global coalition against ISIS; continue Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan beyond 2016. In the maritime domain, decision was taken to expand NATO's presence in the Mediterranean Sea, especially in cooperation with EUNAVFOR MED (Operation Sophia⁵).¹³

The summit also led to the EU-NATO joint declaration which outlined areas for enhanced cooperation, including “...*countering hybrid threats, stepping up operational cooperation at sea and on migration, coordinating cyber-security and defence, developing the interoperable defence capabilities of EU Member States and Alliance members, strengthening the defence industry, increasing coordination on exercises and building up the defence and security capacity of partners in the east and south*”.¹⁴ Despite the two sides agreeing to work together, the stresses in US-European relations were creating fissures in the

5 EUNAVFOR MED operation Sophia is but one element of a broader EU comprehensive response to the migration issue. The mission core mandate is to undertake systematic efforts to identify, capture and dispose of vessels and enabling assets used or suspected of being used by migrant smugglers or traffickers, in order to contribute to wider EU efforts to disrupt the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean and prevent the further loss of life at sea. (<http://www.operationsophia.eu/>)

architecture of this shared security and raising doubts about the stability of long-established structures of transatlantic cooperation.

The election of President Trump, a vocal critic of the functioning of the Alliance, has not helped matters. The EU has also started to shift focus on building its own security architecture having declared that it cannot continue to rely on others for its own security. Although as president, Mr. Trump has affirmed his commitment to the Alliance, he has time and again questioned NATO's relevance. On the campaign trail he described NATO as "obsolete" and at G7 Summit at Charlevoix, Canada, he is said to have called it "as bad as NAFTA", a trade agreement he regards detrimental to the United States economic needs. President Trump has constantly argued that his allies have failed to bear their fair share of the costs of defending Europe. His view of their efforts has been brought down to a single issue: the share of GDP spent on defence, and whether it meets NATO's guideline of two per cent spending as agreed by the member states in the Wales Summit or not.

During the unveiling of Article V and Berlin Wall Memorial at the new NATO headquarters at Brussels in 2017, President Trump remarked that the NATO needs to expand its scope of involvement from just Russia to include the growing threats from terrorism and migration. . He further stated that, "NATO members must finally contribute their fair share and meet their financial obligations, for 23 of the 28 member nations are still not paying what they should be paying and what they're supposed to be paying for their defence."¹⁵

His views, expressed in the presence of other leaders of NATO states was widely seen as critical of their commitments to the Alliance. President Trump faced criticism for his lack of understanding of the long term security that NATO provides the United States or of the fact that the two per cent defence spending benchmark was to boost their military capabilities and not of NATO. It is also been repeatedly pointed that the spending is a poor way to judge burden sharing.

The Brussels Summit of July 2018 came at a time of tension in transatlantic relations and of continuing challenges posed to the Alliance. Since the last NATO meeting, in May 2017, President Trump withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation (June 2017) and pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or the Iran nuclear deal (May 2018). Many NATO members are signatories to both agreements and have expressed their disappointment in President Trump's decisions to exit. There is also a rift between the United States and NATO member states on economic issues. The European member's of the Alliance along with Canada are trying to fight a protracted trade tariffs war with the Trump administration. President Trump also caused consternation by refusing to endorse a joint communiqué at the G-7 summit in Canada in June 2018, the annual meeting of the world's seven most industrialised nations. The communiqué, "...that free, fair and mutually beneficial trade and investment, while creating reciprocal benefits, are key engines

for growth and job creation... We note the importance of bilateral, regional and plurilateral agreements being open, transparent, inclusive and WTO-consistent, and commit to working to ensure they complement the multilateral trade agreements. We commit to modernize the WTO to make it fairer as soon as possible. We strive to reduce tariff barriers, non-tariff barriers and subsidies.”¹⁶

Against this background, leaders in the Brussels Summit focused their attention on strengthening the NATO’s defence and deterrence, modernising its capabilities and reinforcing the transatlantic relationship. The summit highlighted six themes included - “(i) Strengthening deterrence and defence; (ii) Projecting stability and fighting terrorism; (iii) Stronger NATO-EU partnership; (iv) Modernising NATO; (v) Fairer burden-sharing; and (vi) Shared values and transatlantic unity”¹⁷.

Of the six, burden-sharing among allies has emerged as one of the most crucial items on the agenda. The United States has regularly criticised European members for reducing their defence budgets, but the current administration has taken an aggressive stand, suggesting it would re-examine United States’ treaty obligations if the status quo persists. This approach was evident in remarks by US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis during his visit to Brussels in 2017, “If your nations do not want to see America moderate its commitment to this Alliance, each of your capitals needs to show support for our common defence”.¹⁸ President Trump has been more vocal in his criticism of what he considers underpaying allies, tweeting in June

2018 that “the US pays close to the entire cost of NATO-protecting many of these same countries that rip us off on Trade (they pay only a fraction of the cost-and laugh!).”¹⁹ The tensions increased after President Trump sent letters to alliance members to spend more on defence. In 2018, only eight out of 29 members were estimated to reach the two per cent of GDP defence spending target.

However, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has defended the allies spending and said, “More Allies are spending 2% of GDP on defence and the majority of Allies now have plans to do so by 2024. Across Europe and Canada, we expect a real increase this year (2018) of 3.8%. This means that, since 2014, European Allies and Canada will have spent additional 87 billion dollars on defence. When it comes to capabilities, Allies have committed to investing 20% of their defence spending on major equipment. This year (2018), fifteen Allies are expected to meet the guideline”.²⁰

Diverging positions between the EU and the United States on Russia has also raised concerns. Fears of Russian aggression, after Georgia and Ukraine incursions, have led to reinforcement of defences on NATO’s eastern flank. The alliance has conducted more military exercises and to support the new rapid reaction force, it has opened new command centres in eight member states: Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. It has also strengthened its defences in the Black Sea region by creating a new multinational force in Romania. However, concerns were raised after President Trump’s decision to meet Russian President

Vladimir Putin in Helsinki shortly after the NATO summit. The statements to the press after the meeting, has raised domestic unease about the direction of President Trump's Russia policy. s. It has also caused the European allies to relook their Russia policies. As neighbours, European nations have no option but to look at Russia with caution. In such a scenario, President Trump's criticism of the German government's decision to build an energy pipeline from Russia under the Baltic Sea is a question mark.

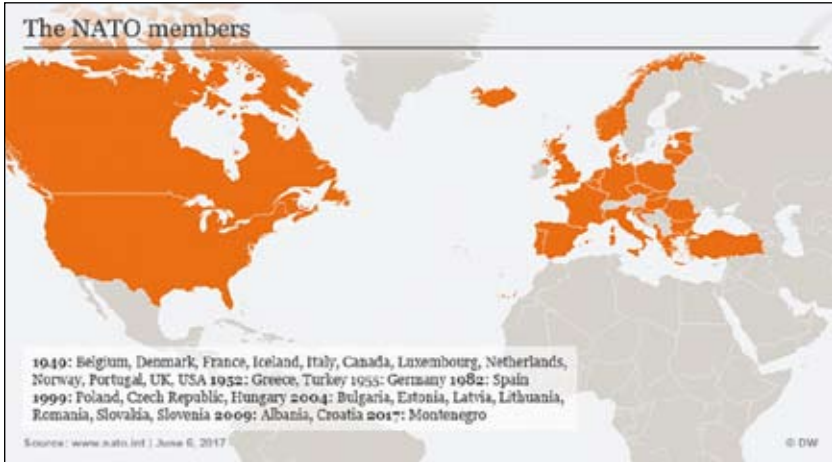
As NATO looks at seven decades of existence, the Alliance and its members are trying to understand if they are facing a Cold War of the current century and how to juxtapose that with the other emerging and evolving challenges in the hybrid warfare environment.

[III](b) Areas of Convergences over Past and Future Challenges: A Look at Policy Statements of NATO Summits 2014-2018

The declarations of the three Summit under study, have laid stress on the need to protect and defend the territories and populations of the Alliance members as set out in Article V of the Washington Treaty. They use similar language to call NATO a defensive Alliance that regard an attack on one ally as an attack against all member States. It states, “*No one should doubt NATO's resolve if the security of any of its members were to be threatened.*”

Over the past decade an important aspect of NATO has been its desire to reassess the idea of collective defence, and to make the

Image 1: Map of NATO Member States



Source: DW, <https://www.dw.com/en/nato-in-a-nutshell-what-you-need-to-know/a-41323926>

Alliance's military elements relevant and strengthen deterrence and defence postures for the new challenges it faces. The declarations in the past three summits have spoken about an arc of insecurity and instability that surrounds the Alliance members with a growing stress on Russia and the Middle East region. As has been stated before, this coincides with the Russia's actions in Ukraine and Crimea and the rise of ISIS and affiliates in the Middle East region. With the changing circumstance, the declarations have called on the NATO to adapt its strategy with respect to the security environment and to ensure that NATO's "*overall deterrence and defence posture is capable of addressing potential adversaries' doctrine and capabilities, and that it remains credible, flexible, resilient, and adaptable.*" This would allow it to respond to challenges from both States and non-State actors that threaten peace and security.

As part of this collective defence, the Alliance has felt the need to deploy nuclear weapons systems. Its organisation has time and gains stated that as long as there were nuclear weapons, it will also remain a nuclear alliance. Some may find it contrary to the goal of nuclear non-proliferation that is also promoted by NATO. The Alliance members have stressed their support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), all other non-proliferation efforts and arms control. The 2018 declaration also mentioned other WMDs stating, “the alliance members support “effectively combating the proliferation of WMD through the universalisation and full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the NPT, and through the Proliferation Security Initiative, the UNSC resolutions 1540 and 2325, and initiatives on nuclear disarmament verification.” However, it has clarified that it would not give up its nuclear weapons first. Some would go to the extent to say that the security of nuclear deterrence is desired and sort-after by the new members of the Alliances as well as those who aspire to join it in the future.

In its efforts to further secure its allies, the Alliance has developed and deployed a missile defence system in Romania called Aegis Ashore. It was transferred from a seaborne launch pad onto land at the Deveselu air base and inaugurated in 2016. In expanding on the concept of the NATO’s Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD), the Alliance’s “*capability is to provide full coverage and protection for all NATO European populations, territory, and forces against the increasing*

threats posed by the proliferation of ballistic missiles ... and in accordance with the latest common threat assessments agreed by the Alliance.” It has repeatedly stated that the BMD will not undermine Russia’s strategic deterrence. “Should international efforts reduce the threats posed by ballistic missile proliferation, NATO missile defence can and will adapt accordingly.” Nonetheless, Russian officials argue that the defence system violates 1987 treaty and has it to be a direct threat to regional and global security.²¹ Russia has stated that the short time required to make a decision to launch a counter strike against missiles fired from the base raise the risks of mishaps.

As an Alliance that was set up to primarily address the challenges posed by the erstwhile USSR, NATO is engaged with Russia through the NATO-Russia Council (NRC). However, in the recent past, partnership has plateaued. The Alliance is critical of Russia’s military engagement in Crimea and Ukraine and has spoken about the ‘destabilising actions and policies by Russia’ which are undermining Euro-Atlantic security in the region and the rules based order. “*The Alliance does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia.* But we cannot and will not compromise on the principles on which our Alliance and security in Europe and North America rest. *NATO will continue to be transparent, predictable and resolute...*” The Alliance has also claimed that, “*Russia is also challenging Euro-Atlantic security and stability through hybrid actions, including attempted interference in the election processes, and the sovereignty of our nations, as was the case in Montenegro, widespread disinformation campaigns,*

and malicious cyber activities.” Among other areas of interest to the Alliance is the issue of maritime security. The Alliance has realised that it needs to “adapt and to a complex, more crowded, rapidly evolving, and increasingly unpredictable maritime security environment. This necessitates a strengthening of the Alliance’s maritime capabilities...therefore continue to intensify and expand our implementation of the Alliance Maritime Strategy.”

If the declarations are any indications then the Alliance is progressing well. However, the political uncertainty in both Europe and the United States coupled with the fact that President Trump is focussed on domestic agendas and may or may not be at odds with his administration will have an impact on the long term health of the Alliance. President Trump’s ‘Make America Great Again and America First’ and his differences with Canada, China, Mexico and other nations on trade issues is largely focused on reviving domestic industries. This has also included differences between the United States and European Union, on how the Union could not get involved in bilateral trade agreements with the United States. President Trump praise for Brexit while criticising Prime Minister May has led to rebuke both from the European Union and United Kingdom. As mentioned before, President Trump does not have a favourable view of the NATO. However, his administration has been reassuring the Alliance members on the United States commitments to the NATO for the future. Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that “the United States places the highest importance on security

relationships with European allies, including NATO. Alliances are meaningless if their members are unwilling or unable to honor their commitments.”²² Former Defence Secretary Jim Mattis also stated “...NATO is central to American national security interests, a theme echoed across Europe and Canada.”²³ While there have always been issues on which the transatlantic partners have differed. Circumstances now have led to questions of the health of the partnership in the future.

[III](c) Areas of Divergence in the Partnership

As stated in the Wales Declaration of 2014 the “*Alliance remains an essential source of stability in this unpredictable world.*”²⁴ However, what happens when this source of stability experiences instability from within itself. Collective defence as the mainstay of the Alliance has stressed on the need to build interoperability and enhance readiness to meet challenges in the future. And while the Alliance has been able to put forward a united front on issues such as energy security, the challenge has been to answer the question - how or what policies the Alliance should adopt to resolve the crisis in Syria, build its future relations with Russia and contain the flow of illegal migrants from the effects of the civil war in Syria, the crisis in Yemen and the collapsing ISIL. Many Americans now view Islamist terrorism as an existential threat. The Trump administration also prioritizes the threat from China, and Russia. The National Security Strategy 2017 released by the Trump Administration identifies “Three main sets of challengers—the revisionist powers of China and Russia,

the rogue states of Iran and North Korea, and transnational threat organizations, particularly jihadist terrorist groups—are actively competing against the United States and our allies and partners.”²⁵ This was further elaborated in the US National Defence Strategy 2018, which stated “*China is a strategic competitor* using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbours while militarizing features in the South China Sea.” (emphasis added)²⁶ It further states, “Russia seeks veto authority over nations on its periphery in terms of their governmental, economic, and diplomatic decisions, to shatter the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and change European and Middle East security and economic structures to its favour.”²⁷

For Europe, China is not considered a threat and it is divided over Eastern Europe’s concerns with Russia and Southern Europe more focused on migration and terrorism. As the United States continues to step back from its post-war role as ‘global policeman’, Europe has recognised that it cannot rely wholly on the transatlantic alliance, and specifically the United States, to protect and promote its interests. It can be assumed, therefore, that more of the burden as security guarantor will shift to Europe’.²⁸ As the threats and their significance for national and foreign policy differ for the transatlantic partners they have divergent views on solutions to the problems.

[III](c.1) NATO-Russia

The relations between NATO and Russia have reached the lowest point since the end of the Cold War. This has resulted in

the suspension of dialogue and cooperation structures. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, NATO and Russia concluded that “they no longer regarded each other as adversaries”.²⁹ Following which they started an incremental process of rapprochement that led to the Russia joining Pfp in 1994, creation of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security in 1997 and the establishment NATO-Russia Council in 2002. The NRC was created with an aim to build trust and to increase crisis and security consultations between Russia and NATO.³⁰ Under these institutions (NRC and Pfp) NATO and Russia cooperated in the Balkan crisis. Russia contributed the maximum non-NATO troop to the alliance’s peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Russian peacekeepers brought an additional dimension as they shared linguistic and socio-cultural affiliation with the region and its inhabitants. These missions helped Russian and NATO militaries to build a greater understanding and interoperability, which was essential in crisis moments.³¹

Post the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, Russia condemned the act and supported the United States in its campaign in Afghanistan. In 2000, the United States and Russia drafted the resolution that expanded the sanctions⁶ against the Taliban. The two nations shared similar concerns on terrorism. Russia was on one hand, worried about terrorist training camps

6 Sanctions against the Taliban were first applied by the UN Security Council (UNSC) in 1999, under UNSC Resolution 1267.

in Afghanistan and the linkages between these camps, and Islamic militant groups operating in Europe and Eurasia and on the other, about the trafficking of narcotics from Afghanistan to Russian cities. In 2003, mandated by the UN, the NATO took the lead of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) which is considered as a successful example of cooperation between Russia and NATO.

From 2008, a Russia allowed land transit of non-military freight from NATO, in support of the ISAF in accordance with UNSCR 1386 (2001)³². On 25 June 2012, the Russian Government adopted the Decree No. 637 - "Amending the Government of the Russian Federation Resolution No. 219 of 28 March 2008," setting in place a simpler procedure for extending the transit scheme to combine rail, road and air transport through Russian territory for ISAF.³³ Under these arrangements, the transportation of non-military ISAF supplies was implemented by Russian transport companies. This became a cornerstone in NATO-Russia cooperation as it provided a much needed alternative to the unstable and unsafe route via Pakistan.

Ukrainian crisis

After Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, the cooperation between the two was suspended, but political and military channels of communication remained open. NATO remains concerned by Russia's continuing pattern of military activities in the region. Russia has time and again claimed that expansion of NATO's capabilities

in the shared neighbourhood, threatens its own interests which are based on the preservation of its traditional sphere of influence. This has led to increase in risk of military and political miscalculation, thereby heightening the tensions between the two.³⁴

NATO is trying to prepare itself from the challenges that are posed by Russia by setting up a small spearhead force which would react within days to any incursion on a limited scale. The communiqué introduced several new initiatives to assure its members along its eastern frontier. The Readiness Action Plan (RAP) comprises of two parts: first, assurance measures for the Alliance's eastern member states, and an adaptation leg that will create the more concrete Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The VJTF will be a brigade-sized body within the NATO Response Force (NRF) that will be able to respond in a matter of days anywhere in the world. Its focus would be on deploying to member states along NATO's periphery. Second, the emphasis was to be placed on NATO's Standing Naval Forces and on continuing air policing over Baltic States. The alliance also decided to strengthen its multinational corps headquarters in Poland. The RAP was the key deliverable of the Wales Summit. It called for a continuous rotational air, sea, and land presence and "meaningful" military activity in the eastern part of the Alliance.

In the backdrop of Russian action in Ukraine and Syria, NATO in its Warsaw Summit of 2016 decided to invite Russia for a dialogue which was aimed at "a Russia willing to engage." NATO's approach was based on "periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue...on the

basis of reciprocity.” The alliance had five goals for the dialogue namely - the Russia-Ukraine conflict; avoiding misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation; and increased transparency and predictability. Although, a NATO-Russia Council meeting was convened on 13 July 2016, it did not yield any result. Since then, Russia has intensified its assertive stand by allegedly interfering in the domestic affairs of Western states through cyber-attacks and intelligence operations. It also interfered in eastern Ukraine by providing military, organisational, and financial support to militants. It has also increased its military preparedness on its border with NATO by conducting military drills. It also deployed its nuclear-capable Iskander missile system and warships to the Baltic Sea and Black Sea regions. These deployments enhanced Moscow’s anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capabilities.

With the resurgence of the Russian military, the NATO combat forces have been deployed on rotational basis at the request of Baltic States and Poland on their soil. NATO forces from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, United Kingdom, Slovakia, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania took part in the biannual, defensive, military exercise Dragon-17 in Poland in 2017. These exercises were in response to the Russian-led Zapad-17 military drill which was focused on countering hybrid warfare tactics, as well as cyber-attacks. While NATO has stepped up its efforts against cyber-attacks and hybrid threats, its communiqué for Brussels Summit criticised Russia, and reaffirmed its previous position, i.e. rejecting Russia’s 2014 annexation of Ukraine’s Crimea

Peninsula. “We continue to respond to the deteriorated security environment by enhancing our deterrence and defence posture, including by a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance,” it said. Adding, “We have also suspended all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia, while remaining open to political dialogue. NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia.”

Present day

In lieu of what Russia regards NATO’s aggressive and expansionist character, it expanded its military capabilities in its Western Military district bordering Norway, Poland and the Baltic States. It further intensified its military modernisation process and increased military exercises in the region. It has also strengthened its ground forces by deploying modern anti-aircraft systems. Russia has augmented its military display through flying fighter aircrafts close to the NATO member states’ airspace. In addition to this, Kremlin’s nuclear threats have been the cause of great concern for the alliance. The recent stand-off in the Sea of Azov in which Russia seized three Ukrainian vessels represented the heightened tensions between Ukraine and Russia on one hand, and NATO and Russia on the other, as the Ukraine’s President Petro Poroshenko requested NATO to deploy warships in the region.

The challenge for NATO is to present a unified position vis-à-vis Russia. This is so because, while all states have criticised Moscow’s

actions they are not equally and directly threatened by Russia. There are divisions within the European countries over the approach that the NATO and the EU needs to take towards Russia. For example, Poland feels directly threatened whereas for Hungary is not a major security concern. Similarly, many eastern European members of the alliance reject initiation of dialogue with Russia, while major countries of Europe such as Germany is in the favour of dialogue through the NRC.³⁵

The lack of unity over what constitutes as challenge from Russia to the European security architecture as well as to NATO has hampered the development of a common response on to how to best engage with the Kremlin. This is visible in the differences of opinion between the United States and the EU on how best to handle Russia. On one hand, European countries share a land border with Russia and are dependent on Russian energy resources need to have good relations. On the other hand, the United States needs to maintain cordial relationship with Russia for its own foreign policy interests, such as stabilising Syria and Yemen.

[III](c.2) Issue of Defence Funding

Balance of power will also play an important role in the future of the transatlantic relations. As the EU consolidates itself economically and politically, takes affirmative steps to build a collective posture and starts to play a leading role in international socio-political and economic issues, they may in the future, as a bloc, project a similar

weight as the United States. However, the fundamental question would be of resources, a question that is currently being faced by NATO. President Trump has repeatedly called on members States to meet their defence spending requirements. While his approach to NATO is dominated by defence spending, he is not the first president to stress NATO members to increase their defence budgets.

Former presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama had expressed similar views of NATO members not spending more of their domestic budgets on defence. In 2006, at the summit in Latvia, President George W. Bush said, “every NATO nation must make the defensive investments necessary to give NATO the capabilities it needs so that our alliance is ready for any challenge that may emerge in the decades to come.”³⁶ In his speech at the NATO summit in Bucharest, Romania, he again stated, “Building a strong NATO Alliance also requires a strong European defence capacity. So at this summit, I will encourage our European partners to increase their defence investments to support both NATO and EU operations. America believes if Europeans invest in their own defence, they will also be stronger and more capable when we deploy together.”³⁷

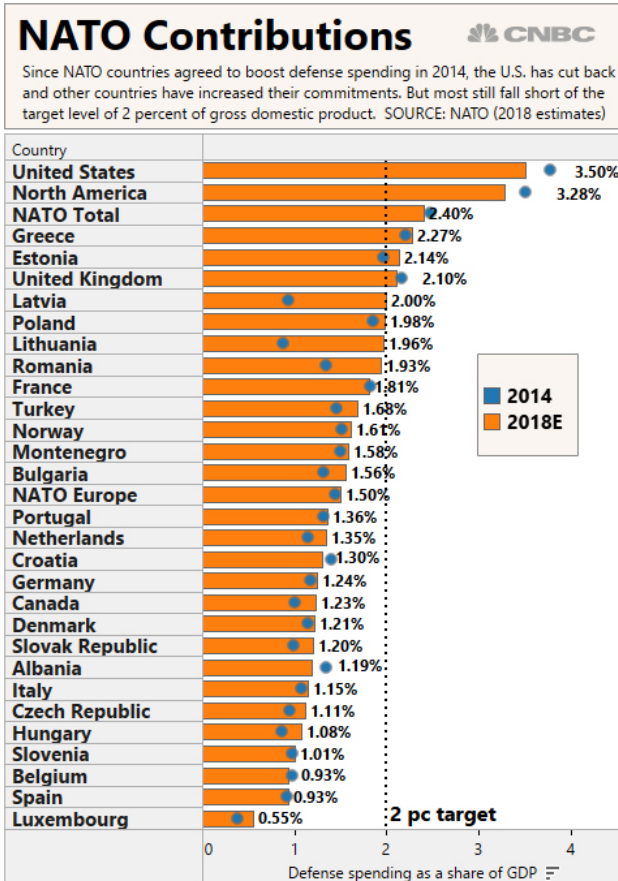
President Obama, in remarks to the press at the NATO Wales summit in 2014 said, “Our Alliance will reverse the decline in defence spending and rise to meet the challenges that we face in the 21st century.”³⁸ The 2014 summit³⁹ put forward the commitment by heads of state to seek to spend 2% of GDP on defence by 2024.

It stated, The member States, “...agree (d) to reverse the trend of declining defence budgets, to make the most effective use of our funds and to further a more balanced sharing of costs and responsibilities. Our overall security and defence depend both on how much we spend and how we spend it.”⁴⁰ In his press statement at the Warsaw Summit (2016) President Obama stated, “NATO has stopped the collective decline in defence spending. Over the past two years, most NATO members have halted cuts and begun investing more in defence.”⁴¹ In the Warsaw Communiqué 2016 it was stated, “Efforts to achieve a more balanced sharing of the costs and responsibilities continue. Defence Ministers will continue to review progress annually.”⁴²

President Trump has made equitable defence spending the focus of the United States-NATO relationship. In his speech at the NATO headquarters in 2017 he stated,

“...I have been very, very direct with Secretary Stoltenberg and members of the Alliance in saying that NATO members must finally contribute their fair share and meet their financial obligations, for 23 of the 28 member nations are still not paying what they should be paying and what they’re supposed to be paying for their defence...If all NATO members had spent just 2% of their GDP on defence last year, we would have had another \$119 billion for our collective defence and for the financing of additional NATO reserves. We should recognize that with these chronic underpayments and growing threats, even 2% of GDP is insufficient to close the gaps in modernizing, readiness, and the size of forces.”⁴³

Image 2: NATO Members Defence Contributions



Source: CNBC

In his remarks to the press in 2018, President Trump stated, “the amount of money being spent by countries was going down and down very substantially. And now, it’s going up very substantially. And commitments were made. Only 5 of 29 countries were making their commitment. And that’s now changed. The commitment

was at 2%. Ultimately, that'll be going up quite a bit higher than that."⁴⁴ In the Brussels declaration it was stated, "*Fair burden sharing underpins the Alliance's cohesion, solidarity, credibility, and ability to fulfil our Article 3 and Article 5 commitments.*"⁴⁵

The gap in defence spending has also led to the widening of military capabilities gap. The military capability gap between United States and its European Allies has existed throughout NATO's history. It has been counter-productive to NATO's ability to function effectively and to the transatlantic relations. Since NATO is a defence alliance, every contribution by its member states is unique, depending upon size; resources; location; armed forces and political will. The 1990's was a period of defence cuts for both United States and Europe, but since the events of 9/11 and subsequently the War on Terror and Iraq invasion, American military spending has outstripped those of its competitors and allies alike, increasing United States armed forces and capabilities at a very consistent rate. On the other hand, Europe is nowhere near in developing these capabilities. Europeans unquestionably consider the issue of international terrorism and proliferation of WMD to be dangerous threats. Unlike the United States, they believe that these challenges can be resolved through a combination of intelligence gathering and policing, enhancing political participation and economic engagement. European leaders are not in the favour of military actions and responses and the use of armed forces as the "final, and not the first option".⁴⁶

Therefore, the 2% target has been criticised for being limited in scope to understanding the contribution of the member States to NATO.

There are calls for more objective, accurate measure of burden and risk sharing. It is claimed that while some nations provide the equivalent of two per cent of the GDP for defence, they are unable to project their military strength across time and distance. They are unable to deploy troops or contribute machine for operations. For example, Greece contributes 2% towards defence spending but due to its modest military capabilities is unable to make meaningful contribution to NATO missions. On the other hand Canada, which contributes close to 1.5% regularly, contributes to NATO mission. Currently Canadian troops and hardware is being used to train Iraqi security forces. It has also stationed troops in Latvia under the NATO umbrella.

In addition, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has broadened the definition of burden-sharing to include not only “cash,” but “capabilities and commitments.”⁴⁷ Capabilities included the NATO agreement to spend 20% of defence on new equipment and new readiness initiative. In this, 19 NATO countries are at or near the target. This is a view that is favoured by Canada which has time and again stated that contribution to the alliance needs to be measure beyond just financial contribution. Others have also pointed to the fact, while the United States contributes the largest share of NATO security funding at 22%, its GDP is roughly equal to those of the 28 other countries combined. As one former NATO ambassador pointed out, if NATO funding were based only on economic size, the United States share would be about 50%. Second, beyond the security benefits of avoiding war, the United States derives enormous

value from European stability, trading about \$699 billion per year with Europe and directly investing \$2.89 trillion. Conflict would disrupt those financial relationships, and the United States arguably has a greater amount to lose than any one European country.⁴⁸ Thus, for the United States, NATO provides more than the share that the United States contributes to the Alliance.

[IV] Towards EU's Independent Defence Policy: A Role for NATO?

The EU's focus on economic integration was guaranteed by their reliance for their security on NATO and the safety umbrella provided by the United States. This arrangement continued to function through the break-up of the Soviet empire and the expansion of both NATO and, the EU itself. However, with the changing transatlantic partnership, debate in the Union has emerged regarding the need to focus on strengthening its own common foreign and security policy. The differences in opinions and preferences as to what they consider as the priority issue and the importance given to their respective national interests by the member states has emerged to be the major roadblock in the EU's defence integration. Although, EU has a standing common security and defence policy, the policy has been viewed with suspicion by the United States. This was visible in the statement by the then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright who welcomed Europe's efforts towards common defence policy, but simultaneously warned against what are called as 'the 3 Ds': the *decoupling* of decision-making between EU and the alliance; the

duplication of security efforts between the EU and NATO; and EU *discrimination* by the EU against the alliance members which were not the part of the Union.⁴⁹ However, the strategic environment of the EU has changed fundamentally over past years. Russia's annexation of Crimea, increasing pressure on Europe to expand and increase its defence capabilities and doubts over the Trump administration including the United States' willingness to remain involved in European security, has led EU to rethink and revitalize its strategic autonomy.

The EU in 2016 came out with the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy. The new strategy called for "strategic autonomy" which was desirable for the European Union as it build its foreign policy, security and defence capabilities rather than relying solely on the United States' security umbrella. The document stated, "...defence co-operation must become the norm. The EU will systematically encourage defence co-operation and strive to create a solid European defence industry, which is critical for Europe's autonomy of decision and action". It identified five priorities for EU foreign policy – "*the security of the Union; state and societal resilience to the East and South of the EU; the development of an integrated approach to conflicts; cooperative regional orders; and global governance for the 21st century.*"⁵⁰

Also, in the past two years alone, EU has accelerated the process of establishment of the European Defence Fund (EDF) for cooperation which would permit companies and states to operate more cost-

effectively. It also plans to incentivise the acquisition of key defence capabilities through co-financing initiatives, where at least three EU states join forces to develop and procure defence products and technologies. Another important initiative is the activation of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). It was introduced under Article 42(6) of the Treaty of Lisbon which permits member states “whose military capabilities fulfil higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions” to cooperate more closely than the EU-27 context permits. Under the terms of Article 46, PESCO is open to all member states. As of date, 25 EU Members have committed to PESCO, leading to a wide range of specific cooperation projects and investment pledges. Third initiative was the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) which would work under the auspices of European Defence Agency (EDA) to institutionalise exchange between member states. This would help in identifying and closing gaps in member states’ military and civilian resources.⁵¹ These three initiatives together form the three-legged structure for the European Defence cooperation.

Another key development in the common European defence policy is the European Intervention Initiative (EI2). President Emmanuel Macron introduced the initiative in a speech at the Sorbonne in September 2017 bringing together willing and able nations in order swiftly to tackle emerging crises in Europe’s neighbourhood. As of June 25, 2018, nine EU countries - France, Belgium, Denmark,

Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom – had signed the letter of intent creating the EI2. The initiative intends to create a new force which is to be extremely efficient, with a streamlined decision-making process that will permit a quick reaction time. The aim of the EI2, as highlighted in the Letter of Intent, “...is a shared strategic culture that would enhance the ability of its members to act together on missions as part of NATO, the EU, UN or other ad-hoc coalitions”.⁵² The initiative intends to make use of existing assets and other joint forces available to members. It will focus on enhanced interaction in four main fields: i.) Strategic foresight and intelligence sharing; ii.) Scenario development and planning; iii.) Support to operations; and iv.) Lesson learned and doctrine.⁵³

[IV](a) EU-NATO Relations

Regardless of the push for the independent defence policy, NATO remains an integral pillar of the European security and defence strategy. As the majority of EU member states are part of the Alliance, it is imperative that the NATO collaborate with the European strategic institutions to bolster European security. This was also acknowledged in the EU Global Strategy 2016 which stated that: “A solid transatlantic partnership through NATO...helps us strengthen resilience, address conflicts, and contribute to effective global governance. NATO, for its members, has been the bedrock of Euro-Atlantic security for almost 70 years...The EU will deepen its partnership with NATO through coordinated defence capability

Image 3: NATO's Member States in Europe



Source: <https://defense-and-freedom.blogspot.com/2017/03/dossier-europe-and-military-affairs.html>

development, parallel and synchronised exercises, and mutually reinforcing actions to build the capacities of our partners, counter hybrid and cyber threats, and promote maritime security.”⁵⁴

Building on the steps taken in the decade following the Cold War period, the relations between NATO and Europe were institutionalized in 2001. The 2002 NATO-EU Declaration on a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) outlines the political principles which forms the foundation of the relationship and reaffirms the EU's assured access to NATO's planning capabilities

for the its own military operations. Further impetus was given during the 2016 Warsaw Summit when the joint declaration on EU-NATO strategic partnership, outlined seven concrete areas where cooperation between the two organisations should be enhanced⁵⁵:

i.) Countering hybrid threats

The countering of hybrid threats forms a central component of EU-NATO relations. This is visible in the amount of proposals (20 out of 74 proposals for cooperation) that are focused on countering hybrid threats. EU has established a Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats which cooperates with NATO to enhance the better understanding and coordinate on the options to counter the threats. The EU Hybrid Fusion Cell and the NATO Hybrid Analytical Branch are also in discussions on how to use the capabilities of the new European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats by exchanging publicly available information. In all, three Parallel and Coordinated Analyses have been finalized (two of these during the 2017-18 reporting period) regarding the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood and a fourth on hybrid threats is in the making. In the framework of crisis response and bolstering resilience to hybrid threats, NATO shared with EU its guidance on Improving Resilience of National and Cross-Border Energy Networks and its guidance for Incidents Involving Mass Casualties.

ii.) Operational cooperation including at sea and on migration

EU and NATO are engaged in exploring new avenues of cooperation in order to enhance complementarities in the maritime sphere. An example of this is the increased synchronization between EU- led Operations Sophia and NATO- led Sea Guardian. This has been done via logistical support and information sharing. In order to further the cooperation between the two missions, the areas of mutual interests are being identified on the ways Sea Guardian can help Operation Sophia in implementing UNSCR 2292 on the arms embargo on Libya (2016). In July 2017, NATO Allies agreed to support EUNAVFOR Sophia in the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 2236 (2016) and 2357 (2017) related to the arms embargo on Libya.

iii.) Cyber security and defence

The increasing number of cyber-attacks around the world has raised the need for finding solutions to the issues. EU cyber defence staff has been upgraded to the level of participant in NATO's Cyber Coalition exercise and NATO also has approved the involvement of European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) as a visitor. Interaction and information exchange between NATO and the EU on cyber aspects took place during the CMX17 and TIDE SPRINT exercises (2017). The idea is to implement

best practices and interoperability between EU and NATO. Both the organisations are coordinating their efforts to provide a uniform training to their respective personnel and creating platforms for cyber education, exercises and training.

iv.) Defence capabilities

EU and NATO are trying to ensure that they have uniform structures and planning instruments in place to enhance their cooperation in defence related matter. EU has been increasing its coordination with NATO through its own defence initiatives like the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the European Defence Fund (EDF), the EU Capability Development Plan, and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD). Similarly, NATO is cooperating through its NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) and the Partnership for Peace Planning and Review Process. NATO and EU are working together to ensure coherence of output and timelines. Following the parallel approval of the Military Aviation Strategy in the context of the Single European Sky (SES), work is now being carried forward as foreseen in the respective implementation plans, developed in coordination with Eurocontrol. The EU Action Plan builds upon the Roadmap on military mobility developed by the European Defence Agency's Ad hoc Working Group to which NATO is associated. To ensure coherence, EU has also been associated to some relevant NATO activities. In May 2018, NATO and

EU held an informal workshop on a set of counter-terrorism relevant defence capabilities like technical exploitation with a focus on countering Improvised Explosive Devices, harbour protection and countering small unmanned aerial systems subject matter.

v.) Defence industry and research

EU and NATO continue with the dialogue on industry matters, which includes regular updates on related NATO and EU activities. Special focus lies, for example on Small and Medium Enterprises' access to defence supply chain and innovation, or industry engagement in specific areas. More specifically, during the third dialogue on industrial aspects in April 2018, both organisations explored practices regarding industry engagement in the area of cyber. EU presented the Cybersecurity Package, adopted in September 2017, outlining cyber defence in the context of the European Defence Fund and informed on various cyber multinational projects and events. Reciprocally, NATO briefed on the NATO cyber action plan and related activities, such as the Malware Information Sharing Platform (MISP) and the NATO 2018 Cyber Symposium.

vi.) Exercises

During a first parallel and coordinated exercise, called EU PACE17/CMX17, in October 2017, EU and NATO trained and tested their mechanisms and practical cooperation to

respond to crises, in particular in a hybrid context. Intensive staff interaction took place across all four areas of the Hybrid Playbooks: Early Warning/ Situational Awareness; Strategic Communications; Cyber defence; Crisis Prevention and Response. NATO has invited EU to the following exercises in 2018: Trident Juncture 18; Trident Jaguar 18; Cyber Coalition 18 and Coalition Warrior Interoperability Exercise 18. The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats hosted a hybrid exercise in April 2018 attended by NATO and EU as well as other Allies and Member States.

vii.) Supporting Eastern and Southern partners capacity-building efforts

The common objective for both EU and NATO is the capacity building in the countries of the western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Southern neighbourhood. Key areas of interaction have been identified such as strategic communications, cyber, ammunition storage and safety in three pilot countries, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova and Tunisia as first step. In this context, the EU is planning to allocate funds as a contribution to NATO's Building Integrity Programme⁷,

7 The second progress report of December 2017 highlighted a financing decision by the EU to allocate € million for 2017 as a contribution to the NATO Building Integrity Programme, which aims at reducing the risk of corruption and promoting good governance in the defence and security sector.

which aims at reducing the risk of corruption and promoting good governance in the defence and security sectors.

While transatlantic relations have had its ups and downs, one cannot overlook the fact that the structural foundations of robust security collaboration between US and Europe have been affected. As a consequence of this, Europe is pushing for strategic autonomy in its relations with the US. Despite the US Congress being overwhelmingly in favour of NATO, many in Europe see Trump presidency as an indication of a changing United States – with its renewed emphasis on renationalization of its foreign and security policies.

While there is convergence in ideas on addressing the emerging security challenges, there is also a view within EU that common European defence has to be given a priority. This view has gained momentum with the emerging distance between the United States administration's foreign policy objectives and the EU's goals. The importance of having independent defence capabilities was also evident in the statement by German Chancellor Angela Merkel when she called on EU members to enhance their security and defence cooperation as there is no "guarantee of perpetuity" in relations with the United States⁵⁶. While there are differences between the United States and the European member nations, there is now a growing realisation that the EU needs to be self reliant in the security domain. After years of defence cuts, Europe has taken the decision to reinvest in their own defence structures and initiatives.

Lucie Béraud-Sudreau and Bastian Giegerich⁵⁷ suggest that there are three factors that explain this turn of events. Firstly, the economic health of Europe has improved as most countries have experienced stronger GDP growth. Secondly, as the world order has become unpredictable, Europe's perceptions of the threats facing the Union have changed. Thirdly, as the consequence of the defence cuts, many European nations face severe shortfalls in readiness and capability of their defence forces.

Another issue that needs to be taken in account while understanding the European quest for independent defence policy and its relations with NATO is the Brexit process. Although, at first glance, Brexit does not seem to impact the working of the NATO, whose mission, members, and structure differ significantly from those of the EU – but when examined closely, Britain's exist would far reaching impact for NATO and the future of European security. Although, Prime Minister Theresa May had affirmed that the UK will remain “unconditionally committed to maintaining Europe's security,”⁵⁸ it remains to be seen how it is going to achieve it. One argument that can be made is that NATO would become especially important after Brexit, as the process will reduce London's ability to substantially influence EU security policy and NATO will enable Britain to retain some of that influence. The major impact of Brexit is going to be on the European Union's quest for independent defence policy making. If and when Britain leaves the EU, it would be excluded from EU co-funding in frameworks such as European Defence Fund (EDF),

which would be a serious drawback for UK-based firms. Although, UK has expressed interest on number of occasions towards remaining in a position where it is able to contribute to, and shape Common Security and Defence Policy post-Brexit, however, the fundamental dynamics between the EU and UK will be altered and the UK will not be able to guide debates relating to possible future directions.

It is true that NATO and the EU differ in their mission, nature and function. While NATO's role is more militaristic in nature with crisis management capabilities, the EU, on the other hand, is an organisation with an expansive range of policy-making and institutionalised structures which have resulted in EU to wield influence at the global level. However, the idea of a stronger and more independent Union has found favour with the majority of its members within the ambit of a strong relations with the US and NATO. This is because most EU members have realised that it is going to take time for an independent European defence to emerge. Therefore, the reliance of EU security needs would depend on its relations with NATO which can also be used by EU for developing its policy framework.

[V] Assessment

The establishment of NATO was a result of acknowledgement of a common threat to the US and its European and Canadian allies. While they have differed in their views, they were able to develop a common strategy to address some of the toughest challenges of

the 20th century. However, in the 21st century, building consensus among the diverging priorities and partners has emerged to be the main obstacle for the NATO's coherent policy-making.⁵⁹ There is little doubt that the gap across the Atlantic exists and this difference within the Transatlantic Security Alliance needs to be narrowed.

In the three summits under study, the United States and its European allies agreed to enhance their military capabilities and decision-making process, expand cooperation in Iraq and increase collaboration across Europe's southern and eastern border. They invited new members (Montenegro and Macedonia) to join. They also reaffirmed their stance against Russia and committed to collective self-defence, through its missions in Afghanistan, Kosovo, the Mediterranean, and the Horn of Africa. Apart from the missions, NATO is also training security forces in Africa, Iraq and Afghanistan.

While there is convergence on issues, with the election of President Trump in 2016, the dynamics of the transatlantic relations is in a flux. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said, during a visit to Washington in May 2018, that he was concerned regarding increasing differences between the United States and Europe on the most crucial issues ranging from climate change policies to America's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement. His remarks highlighted the emerging rift between Brussels and Washington under President Trump. Apart from the differences in capabilities in the security sphere there are growing differences between the

partners in areas such as economic and political views. The current trend of protectionism and nationalism as espoused by President Trump is not in tandem with the views of the European Union, which promotes multilateralism and collaboration. President Trump's criticism of people in his own administration, the US Congress and opponents as well as his ability to counteract from his statements has led European capitals to question United States capabilities under his leadership. While the United States and Europe cannot resolve the world's problems by themselves, their stewardship is critical in bringing together parties to address regional or global problems. Failing to rise to the challenge could either leave a vacuum or allow others – with different views interests and priorities – to fill the void. The consequences of the US and Europe becoming unable or unwilling to work together would be significant.⁶⁰

These concerns are not without foundation, as President Trump during his presidential campaign and even after has continued to address NATO as an obsolete organisation. During the Brussels summit, President Trump not only called American allies “delinquent” but targeted Germany in particular accusing it to be controlled by Russia as a result of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. President Trump has repeatedly stated that the European members of NATO do not contribute enough to the defence spending of the alliance, with only eight out of 29 members meeting the target.⁶¹

However, not everyone in United States agrees with President Trump's approach towards NATO. As pointed before, members of

his administration have differed from his point of view. Madeleine Albright, Nicholas Burns and Wesley Clark, along with more than 30 of the most illustrious members of the United States security and foreign policy community in a letter published by the Washington Post in 2016 noted that “*our security is indivisible with our democratic allies in Europe*” and takes issue with some of President Trump’s campaign statements about the Alliance in respect of the doubt they cast on the United States commitment to NATO. The letter also emphasised that “*A solemn obligation of the American President is to lead NATO, to remain resolute in defence of our allies and to convince potential adversaries that we will stand up for NATO without fear or reservation. Every President, without exception, has accepted the wisdom of this strategy.*”⁶²

Although, President Trump has reaffirmed the United States’ commitment to the Alliance, there remain serious doubts as to how far it would extend. This is so because the Brussels Summit was immediately followed by the Trump-Putin meeting in Helsinki on 16 July 2018. President Trump’s willingness to refute his own intelligence community’s assessments on election interference by Russia has prompted some European policymakers to question whether the era of transatlantic unity on Russia has come to an end. Europe has struggled to counter Russian efforts to influence their political systems and press their defences, and have for long done it in partnership with Washington. But after the Helsinki meet, in which President Trump made no mention of Russia’s intervention in Ukraine, it has led the European leaders to conclude that they

cannot depend any longer on the United States for its security and must “take its destiny into its own hands.”⁶³

President Trump’s criticism has brought pushback from European leaders as well. “America does not have and will not have a better ally than Europe,” European Council President Donald Tusk said on 10 July 2018, adding that the United States should “appreciate your allies - after all, you don’t have that many.” He added “I would like to address President Trump directly, who for a long time now has been criticizing Europe almost daily for, in his view, insufficient contributions to the common defence capabilities”. President Tusk also admonished Europe saying, “dear Europe, spend more on your defence, because everybody expects an ally that is well-prepared and equipped”.⁶⁴

This has led European countries to revitalise the idea of common European defence. Based largely in Africa, Balkans and the Middle East, EU is currently running 11 civilian operations and six military missions which are not directly under the EU banner but of the national forces. For example, operations against the Somali pirates are conducted by the British royal Navy and the infantry troops in Mali are being trained by French soldiers.⁶⁵ For most part, the defence policy making in the EU resides in the hands of European governments, not the EU executive. With the changing global security perceptions with the rise of hybrid threats, transnational terrorism and President Trump’s constant berating of NATO - has led the member states and the Union to rethink their security

priorities. A step forward in this direction has been the establishment of the European Defence Fund (EDF), activation of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and initiation of the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD). The question then arises on the relevance of NATO for the European partners? Critics have argued that these policies have made the member states divide limited resources between the EU and NATO, thereby making them competitors. For example, The EU's defence initiative, PESCO prioritises development of EU's defence requirements over NATO's allowing member states to jointly develop new weapons.⁶⁶

Europe still has miles to go to achieve strategic autonomy. There are basic issues of finding the political will, the technical capabilities, the financial resources and, most fundamentally, the mutual trust necessary to transform the EU into a militarily independent bloc capable of countering Russia, and acting independently of the United States. Moreover, the idea of a stronger and more independent Union has found favour with the majority of its members within the ambit of strong relations with the United States and NATO. This is primarily because on one hand, EU leaders are pushing for independent defence policy; on the other hand, there is a realisation that it is going to be a long process for a credible European defence to emerge.

The power gap across the Atlantic is neither new nor unprecedented. The crux of the matter is not power but purpose. History has shown that if the United States and Europe share common goals,

the differences between them can be managed.⁶⁷ The breach in transatlantic relations is not beyond repair. As the EU increasingly develop capabilities independent of the United States and continues to differ over their major policy areas like Middle East Peace Process, Iran etc. - it stands to reason that NATO would come under increasing strain and pressure. As Admiral James Stavridis, former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe said “For all its imperfections and challenges, NATO is the best pool of partners... 28 other nations with shared values, high-technology militaries, willingness to participate in global operations like Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, and deeply intertwined economies,” adding “All of that will continue to matter deeply.”⁶⁸

As NATO faces this unpredictable security situation, it needs to introspect deeply and find solutions to the threats to the alliance. Although the European members have tried to reverse the defence spending trend by investing almost \$100 billion for the years 2016-2020 addressing the critical issue of burden-sharing. It is expected to enhance the position of NATO as the primary security provider for North America and Europe. The need of the day is to address the shortcomings in its core capabilities while focusing on improving its readiness to address future challenges. NATO is beginning to focus on investments in new age research and development while maintaining core interoperability requirements. To stay relevant in the upcoming decades, NATO would have to continuously adapt, react and modernise while reflecting the common interests of the allies.

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