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DRAWING RED LINES IN GRAY AREAS: DETERRING RUSSIA'S CHALLENGE TO TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY TODAY

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SUMMARY:

Russia is rejecting the post-Cold War status quo, increasing its challenge to the transatlantic partners in recent years. Espoused by Russian President Vladimir Putin's Munich speech in 2007, Moscow maintains that the Euro-Atlantic political and security architecture challenges its regional role and core interests, particularly in the post-Soviet space. With General Valery Gerasimov's articulation of a Russia's full-spectrum conflict strategy — which is one part an appropriation from Russia's own Soviet past, and another part asymmetric opportunity of the current age — Russia is exploiting Euro-Atlantic weaknesses across a number of domains and contexts. Moreover, the Kremlin is weakening transatlantic red lines by blurring the line between conflict and peace, and confusing unity.

In the face of Russia's full-spectrum challenge, identifying key priorities and developing clear red lines among Euro-Atlantic nations and institutions is critical. This must include shoring up NATO's conventional capability and making clear that Article 5 stands resolute. Reconciling the varying priorities among Allies, addressing the capabilities gap in Europe, overcoming reinforcement issues, and looking at the future role of a strategic nuclear deterrent force vis-à-vis Russia are all crucial to this endeavor. The transatlantic partners must turn to gaping vulnerabilities in the realm of cyber and disinformation. Together, they must create a depth of long-term resilience, while addressing concerns of the day. By drawing and retracing clear red lines, Allies will arrive at a stronger foothold from which resolution of an ongoing conflict across domains with Russia may begin to be more achievable. By neither properly understanding the Kremlin's aims nor by confronting its aggressions, Russia will continue to exploit Euro-Atlantic weaknesses and sow discord among the partners. If red lines are unclear, it could lead to devastating miscalculations, which would incur unthinkable costs. Effective deterrence is essential.

Russia is threatening the pillars of European and transatlantic security in order to better assert itself in its near abroad and protect its core interests. With the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, illegal annexation of Crimea, and sustained destabilization of the Donbas by Russian-backed forces, Russia has demonstrated a brazen willingness to actively disrupt the geopolitical status quo. In the last few years, Russia's challenge to the international system and transatlantic security architecture has reached unprecedented levels in the post-Cold War era. The Kremlin's actions in Ukraine, combined with the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and other coercive measures, clearly demonstrate that the Putin regime is prepared to undermine the sovereignty and free will of post-Soviet states to divert them from a path of Euro-Atlantic integration. This is, in fact, the explicit strategic goal of the state. It seems clear that Russia is willing to escalate conflict beyond an acceptable level, even resorting to the use of force, against those contesting its desired hegemony in the region.

Russia's actions have reinvigorated dusty conversations on collective defense, deterrence, and resilience in the transatlantic space. In response, both Europe and the United States have explicitly refocused on the Russia challenge. Both U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis[1] and U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford[2] have identified Russia as a principal threat to the United States. A recent White Paper released by the German Ministry of Defense identified Russia's path as "strategic rivalry" and acknowledged that Russia will "challenge" European security for the foreseeable future.[3] France's most recent Strategic Review of Defense and National Security asserted that Russia is developing an aggressive policy on all fronts across all domains, directly challenging the EU and the transatlantic bond.[4]

As transatlantic actors have shifted their understandings of Russia's position, it is clear that conventional threats are only part the challenge posed by Moscow. Russia has retooled and expanded a doctrine of hybrid tactics that poses a full-spectrum challenge to the Euro-Atlantic community. This reality led General Dunford to remark during his 2017 reconfirmation hearing that the primacy of the Russian threat is linked to their capabilities in "nuclear, cyber, electronic warfare, and the activity that we've seen from the Crimea to the Ukraine."[5]

Both sides of the Atlantic must adapt not only to the power politics competition that has returned to Europe, but to a Russia that is trying to — in their own words — blur "the lines between the states of war and peace."[6] This means that Americans and Europeans must also recalibrate to an approach that is commensurate with the types of threats posed by the Kremlin. Effective deterrence will not only require re-cementing clear red lines so transatlantic nations can begin to tackle the multi-faceted challenge piece by piece, but thinking of deterrence in new ways given the new challenges posed by Russia's tactics, such as aggressive disinformation and offensive cyber campaigns, as well as shifts in nuclear posture.

Erasing Red Lines and Exploiting the Gray

Russia's zero-sum approach to geopolitics never translated into the same buy-in into the international security order as Europe and the United States hoped. Direct violation or "gaming" of agreements like the Conventional Forces in Europe Agreement, the Budapest Memorandum, the Vienna Document, and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty are evidence that the Kremlin's goal is not to maintain international security order, but to exploit it.

A year and a half before Russian tanks rolled across Georgia's borders Russian president Vladimir Putin stated that he was "convinced that we have reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think

1 United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, "To Conduct a Confirmation Hearing on the Expected Nomination of Mr. James N. Mattis to be Secretary of Defense," January 12, 2017.

2 United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, "Hearing to Consider the Nomination of General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC, to be Chariman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," July 9, 2015.

3 The Federal Government of Germany, Federal Ministry of Defense, "White Paper on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr," 2016.

4 Government of France, Ministère des Armées, "Revue Stratégique de Défense et de Sécurité Nationale, (Délégation à l'information et à la communication de la Défense," 2017.

5 United States Senate, Committee on Armed Services, "Nomination — Dunford," September 26, 2017.

6 Valery Gerosimov, "The Value of Science is Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations," Military Review, January-February 2016.

about the architecture of global security."[7] During a key speech in Munich, Putin criticized the many elements that defined the international security architecture — particularly in the transatlantic space. NATO enlargement was characterized as an offensive project pitted against Russia, rather than the free choice of independent countries to determine their security. The European Union was framed as a potential supplant of or substitute for UN in legitimizing collective security action. And the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was characterized as serving the interests of a single nation or groups of nations, rather than comprehensively addressing the interest of all members across all competencies. Outside of the UN, which Russia prizes because of its veto power on the Security Council, the speech was laced with a wholesale rejection of the international rules-based system as it stood at the time. Over recent years, however, Moscow's challenges have become more acute, not just in rhetoric, but in practice.

> **" Russia's own perceived relationship to the post-Soviet space was always sacred to Moscow."**

In contrast, tensions with the international system were not as apparent — and Russia's association with them less allergic — for the first decade of the post-Cold War era. Some misinterpreted this lack of tension as meaning Russia was willing to subordinate to existing institutions. Russia was more open to being an active partner, but its persistent framing of an "independent foreign policy" often at odds with international norms hinted at coming challenges. Moreover, Russia's own perceived relationship to the post-Soviet space was always sacred to Moscow. Russian government documents dating back to the 1990s point to the importance of the integration of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) — which included Georgia and Ukraine — with Russia. The first Foreign Policy Concept released under Putin identified this region as a key priority to the very national security of the country. And while Moscow repeatedly denounced NATO enlargement and vehemently criticized the Kosovo intervention, it was not until the mid-2000s — the time of the color revolutions — that it appears Russia felt its

regional hegemony was truly challenged. Russia had long ridden on the back of corrupt post-Soviet governments that tried to balance their interests between Moscow, Brussels, and Washington — never able, or really fully wishing, to escape Moscow's orbit. This provided significant room for Moscow's influence without directly objecting to the framework of international politics. However, as the governments of post-Soviets states changed this equation, the larger regional dynamic also changed.

With the perceived drifting of its neighbors and the European Union being framed as a potential alterative to Moscow, there was a dramatic shift in Russia's approach, the Munich speech rejected the status quo and pointed to a desire to rethink the "architecture of global security." Shortly thereafter, Russia would initiate a significant military modernization and the Russo-Georgian conflict would heat and then harden a frozen conflict in the north of the country, further solidifying Russia's presence on Georgian territory.

Yet, Russia's position remained relatively weak in comparison with its European and American counterparts. While its economy had boomed in the mid-2000s due to rising energy prices, it would later lag due to a lack of diversification and poor governance in the local rent-seeking system. Russia's population was aging and life expectancy was alarming low. In zero-sum terms, Moscow was unable to maintain hegemony or compete with the pull of transatlantic institutions on several fronts; it was losing the fight, as the relative hard and soft power gaps between Moscow and the Euro-Atlantic community grew. Moreover, its back-up plan of coercive diplomacy was failing in this new era of color revolution governments. And Euro-Atlantic integration threatened Putin's view of Russian security interests.

Russia realized the need to develop a new approach if it wanted to continue to project power in the region. In practical terms, Russia's military would begin its most significant modernization effort in decades following the Russo-Georgian conflict. The deficits experienced by the Russian military in the conflict would provide the impetus to pursue real modernization measures,

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7 Munich Conference on Security Policy, "Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," *The Washington Post*, February 12, 2007.

which aim to have 70 percent of Russian military equipment at new or modern standards by 2020.[8] As a consequence, Russia has seen a massive jump in defense spending from 3.28 percent of GDP in 2007 to 5.39 percent in 2016.[9] The 2017 budget numbers indicate a decrease,[10] which may jeopardize the successful and timely fulfillment of the effort, but Moscow's aim remains pronounced.

In some respects, Russia's military modernization has delivered. It is far more capable and fundamentally a different force "in terms of equipment, experience, attitude, confidence" than it was in 2008.[11] In addition to addressing the comparative negative regional trends experienced in the mid-2000s and the capabilities gap exposed by the Russo-Georgian Conflict, such a modernization effort would also assumedly propel Russia back to the stage of great power politics and stand as one "pole" of a multi-polar world. Such a development would help in replacing the broken unipolar order, which Putin's Munich speech lamented. Correspondingly, a report by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency suggested Russia's modernization strategy is preparing its military to "conduct the range of conflicts from local war through regional conflict to a strategic conflict that could result in massive nuclear exchange."[12] On the conventional side, Russia's efforts are presenting a multi-dimensional, fluid challenge. Along with this, as Margarete Klein argues, there is a corresponding uptick in Russia's willingness to employ "military muscle" as a key part of its foreign policy toolkit.[13]

> " *By blending military and non-military means, Russia seeks to gain a simultaneous advantage across strategic, tactical, and operational domains, even before armed conflict begins.*"

Muddying the Waters Between Peace and Conflict

As evidenced by the Russo-Georgian and Ukraine conflicts, as well as Russia's intervention in Syria, military muscle is only one component of Russia's new and more comprehensive challenge. This strategy was most fully articulated by General of the Russian Army, Valery Gerasimov, in a piece that has now become known as the Gerasimov doctrine.[14]

Gerasimov's strategy seeks to exploit and further muddy the gray areas that exist between peace and conflict, and the doctrine does so by articulating fundamental change in how wars are fought. His strategy "weaponizes" tools across multiple domains — including cyber, information, and electronic — and equates them to conventional conflict. A hybrid lens has long been part of Russia's approach to conflict, but the blurring of conflict and sub-conflict activities has never been so fully and formally articulated — and so fully realized. Folding in Russia's modernization activities, military power is to be incorporated, but its covert active military operations during peacetime are prioritized over the open use of forces.[15] However, open military force can or will eventually be used to cement the final strategic aims, as Russia demonstrated in Ukraine.

By blending military and non-military means, as well as war and peacetime, Russia seeks to gain a simultaneous advantage across strategic, tactical, and operational domains, even before armed conflict begins. Quoting the ideas of Soviet military theoretician Georgy Isserson, Gerasimov echoed that "Wars are no longer declared, and having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template."[16]

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8 Roger McDermott, "Russian Defense Industry Creaks Under Rearmament Program," *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 11(133), July 2014.

9 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, "Military Expenditure (% of GDP," retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=RU.

10 Mark Galeotti, "The Truth About Russia's Defence Budget," European Council on Foreign Relations, March 24, 2017.

11 Keir Giles, "Assessing Russia's Reorganized and Rearmed Military," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 3, 2017.

12 U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, "Russia Military Power: Building a Military to Support Great Power Aspirations," 2017.

13 Margarete Klein, "Russia's Military: On the Rise?" Transatlantic Academy, March 1, 2016.

14 Valery Gerasimov, "The Value of Science Is in the Foresight: New Challenges Demand Rethinking the Forms and Methods of Carrying out Combat Operations," Voyenno-Promyshlennyy Kurier, February 26, 2013.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

Russia has been seeking to perfect this template, and activities in Georgia, Ukraine, and Syria demonstrate the evolution of these ideas in many ways.

As Russia sees greater opportunity than before to exploit so-called gray areas, more vulnerabilities in transatlantic nations have emerged. These include weaknesses in critical infrastructure systems, societal divisions resulting from globalization, fear of largescale immigration, and the realization that social media can be manipulated for political purposes. Russia has simultaneously attacked these vulnerabilities in the Europe and the United States, while taking preventive measures to insulate its own population from these trends. This has resulted in a new security challenge by Russia to Europe and the transatlantic space. In concluding his article outlining Russia's needed approach to foreign policy, Gerasimov suggested, "We must not copy foreign experience and chase after leading countries, but we must outstrip them and occupy leading positions ourselves."[17]

Retracing Old Red Lines, Drawing New Ones

Russia's approach has forced transatlantic actors to take a close look at their power perceptions, capabilities, and security paradigms. It is clear that they must contend with a worldview espoused from a Kremlin that is willing to confront red lines that European and American actors had long written-off as cemented. And these newly contested gray areas will be exploited, particularly as they relate to Moscow's core interests (e.g. the post-Soviet space). Moreover, Russia will pursue and claim escalation dominance. Therefore, when red lines are revisited, the capabilities and political will of Allies and partner nations must be clear. The red lines themselves must be critically re-evaluated and clearly defined. Further, in the face of Moscow's efforts to incite division, it is crucial for transatlantic actors to speak with a unified voice.

Transatlantic actors must also identify core priorities and develop or reinforce existing capabilities when responding to Russia's graying of peace, wartime, and conflict across domains. If everything is an equal priority for the transatlantic community, no commitment can be defended with the determination required — all things are not equal. Such an approach will only further stretch deterrence capabilities, which will diminish their impact. Russian doctrine believes that the most capable adversary "will always have vulnerabilities, and the means of opposing him exist."[18] Given this, Russia will continue to seek out the path of least resistance with the highest reward and take risks, as it did in Georgia and Ukraine. Ensuring the core, top-tier transatlantic priorities do not become a risk worth taking for Moscow is critical.

Among the foremost important tasks for transatlantic security is to retrace the lines of traditional European and transatlantic security — namely collective defense within the NATO Alliance. Since 2014, this has been the primary focus of transatlantic security discussions.

Both the Wales and Warsaw NATO Summits shifted the direction of U.S. engagement in Europe, as well as European attitudes regarding security in the post-Cold War era. The Wales Summit not only condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine, but clarified that Russia's actions "fundamentally challenged our [NATO's] vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace."[19] It doubled down on the Alliance's core competencies. Allies agreed to push toward the 2 percent of GDP spending mark — reversing decade-long trends of decreased defense spending for certain member states. Moreover, the Summit operationalized the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) as part of NATO's Response Force (NRF). The Warsaw Summit that followed moved from a phase of reassurance to deterrence. It certified the VJTF, which successfully exercised on a two to three day notice. Moreover, "framework nations" were identified to deploy the force through 2022 on rotation.[20] NATO also established the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. Led by key NATO countries, these non-permanent battlegroups would present a NATO frontline multinational deterrent force in Central and Eastern Europe. Each

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17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, "Wales Summit Declaration," September 5, 2014.

20 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué," July 9, 2016.

battlegroup totals roughly 1,000 troops to underscore the Article 5 collective defense commitment of the Alliance — that an attack on one is an attack on all.[21]

NATO's efforts since 2014 have refocused the Alliance, and catalyzed action within key member states, but many hurdles remain. Zooming in on NATO's transition to greater deterrence, a few notable elements stand out. First, because of the light military footprint in the East, NATO policy inherently suggests the inability to reach deterrence by denial.[22] And given the lack of clarity on Alliance cohesion and political will, it is uncertain that the current "deterrence by punishment" (or "tripwire" tactic) will suffice. As Richard Betts argued in a 2013 *Foreign Affairs* article, "the deterrent warning must be loud and clear, so the target cannot misread it." The Allies can only hope that Moscow is reading today's signals clearly.

To further emphasize the transatlantic partners' message, three key areas of improvement need to be addressed to advance deterrence: the response time of follow-on forces in case of an Article 5 crisis, addressing the challenges to Allied unity posed by varying priorities among European nations, and tackling the defense capabilities deficit in Europe.

Despite the development of the NRF and VJTF over the past several years, questions persist about the readiness of follow-on forces to reinforce the battlegroups stationed on NATO's Eastern Flank. A 5,000-troop brigade VJTF force would be deployable within two to three days, while two supplemental VTJF brigades could be deployed thereafter, likely within five to seven days. This initial VJTF force has been exercised, but the timeframe of deploying larger NRF follow-on forces measuring up to 40,000 is less certain. Official NATO estimates around the time of the Warsaw Summit placed their readiness at 30 to 45 days — far too long to respond to serious contingencies in Europe's east.[23]

Deploying troops, military weapons, and equipment across European borders is a major challenge for NATO's rapid reinforcement. Approvals required in each nation state, as well as infrastructure gaps, can make each movement last weeks.[24] U.S. Army Europe Commander Lt. General Ben Hodges was asked to go out of his way to clear customs while going from one exercise to another during the Saber Guardian maneuver near the Black Sea.[25] While he was eventually able to avoid this detour, this succinctly highlights the problem. Another example of inefficiency is a report suggesting that it takes a five-day notice to move U.S. troops from Germany to Poland.[26]

Strengthening NATO's interior line is imperative to meet Russia's challenge, which is unencumbered by similar bureaucratic hurdles. Russia can deploy, "35,000 troops, within 48 hours to the border of the Alliance, and another 90,000 troops within 30 days."[27] Given that NATO's deterrence on the Eastern Flank does not rest on denying Russia, but punishing them, meeting this challenge will be essential. Recognizing this, the EU recently published a joint communication by the Commission and High Representative that would look to tackle this challenge inside the EU.[28] A freer flow (within reason and regulation) of EU and NATO troops across common European borders in peacetime would demonstrate clear Allied resolve to deploy quickly in a crisis. It would also do a great deal to reinforce the notion that any Russian transgression of NATO borders is an unmistakable red line that will be met swiftly and resolutely.

Consolidating Transatlantic Priorities

The unity of European NATO Allies in providing deterrence against Russia has been one of the main factors influencing the nature and the extent of NATO's response, and is another aspect of the credibility of NATO's deterrence. While significant

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21 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," May 2017.

22 "Deterrence by denial means persuading the enemy not to attack by convincing him that his attack will be defeated — that is, that he will not be able to achieve his operational objectives." David Yost, "Debating Security Strategies," NATO Review, Winter, 2003.

23 John W. Nicholson, "NATO's Land Forces: Strength and Speed Matter," *PRISM*, 6 (2), July 18, 2016.

24 Urmas Paet, "Europe Needs a Military Schengen," European Defence Agency, *European Defence Matters*, Issue 12, 2017.

25 Jen Judson, "Outgoing U.S. Army Europe Commander Pushes for 'Military Schengen Zone'," Defense News, July 28, 2017.

26 David M. Herszenhorn, "Call for 'Military Schengen' to Get Troops Moving," Politico, August, 4, 2017.

27 Nicholson

28 European Commission, "The European Union is Stepping Up Efforts to Improve Military Mobility." November 19, 2017.

progress has been made on this front since the 2014 NATO Wales Summit, the deterioration of the security situation in the Alliance's east and the recurrence of the terrorist threat in Western Europe have laid bare some fundamental differences in the strategic priorities of the Allies.

In parallel, the planned upgrade of cooperation in the framework of the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), led by France and Germany, has also revived concerns about potential institutional competition. That is, the (re)development of national forces of EU member states, in the CSDP framework, may not necessarily help meet NATO's capability targets. Similarly, the fact that the missions the EU is setting itself out to accomplish — mostly crisis prevention and management in its Southern neighborhood — have led some countries, mostly in the Southern part of the Alliance, to focus their political attention on building up capabilities that will help toward the fulfillment of these missions which have a more immediate security impact. The 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit and especially the meeting of heads of state and government in Brussels in May 2017 have served as key symbols of how NATO can adapt its priorities to bridge this gap. NATO formally becoming a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and expanding its counter-terrorism role are two elements that highlight how the Alliance can do more in the South, while also fostering deepened institutional cooperation with a more ambitious EU. Ensuring the cohesion of NATO and its Allies therefore appears as a key task in the process of the Alliance demonstrating the value of its deterrence, and first and foremost the unalterable value of Article 5. To this extent, efficient EU–NATO cooperation will allow each organization to focus on the tasks it has set out for itself, and ensure that efforts are complementary and not duplicative.

Another aspect of the dual nature of the challenges faced by NATO is the presence of Russia in the anti-ISIS operations in Syria, where it has become increasingly clear that the forces present different objectives under the guise of a blanket "fight against terrorism." Russia's support of the Assad regime and its assistance provided to the Syrian Armed Forces in fighting some of the opposition groups supported by the Western powers have not only exacerbated tensions over the Syrian skies, but also created a win-win situation for Moscow. Not only do a certain number of European countries insist on the importance of cooperation — to the extent necessary — with Russia over fighting terrorism in Iraq and Syria, but participation in the U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition has also created the conditions where some European armies may be overstretched, limiting their ability to react quickly if a contingency presented itself in the Baltic States. Finally, Russia has clearly attempted to leverage its participation in the fight against terrorism to reopen other formats of cooperation, especially the NATO–Russia Council, which may have, in effect, given the impression that Russia's *fait accompli* policy in Crimea may eventually be met with a return to normalcy and a reintegration of Russia in all conversations about international security.

Russia has therefore aptly exploited the diverging strategic priorities of transatlantic actors. At this point, while the frontline deterrence seems to be largely consensual, even if perhaps insufficient in numbers, it is the discussions about the deployment of follow-on forces and the necessary reforms of NATO's command structures that are causing more complications and internal disagreement at the Allied level. These discussions are largely related to the shortfalls in European capabilities — a topic of lament from the U.S. side, but also because the planned upscaling of the European armies is a long-term process which may not necessarily be compatible with the requirements of visible and credible deterrence. Moreover, it also requires very deep coordination between the European countries themselves in order to ensure minimal duplication of forces and a certain level of ambition in terms of integration of forces around certain regional powers (under, for example, the NATO Framework Nations concept). The margin of maneuver that will allow for the combination of credible, full-spectrum deterrence on its eastern border, and fulfillment of the EU's newfound ambition in playing an active

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role in protecting its territory and citizens, will come from the armed forces of European NATO Allies and their eventual ability to increase their numbers and procure key capabilities.

European Capabilities: The Next Building Block of Deterrence

European NATO Allies will be able to fill the critical capability gap while at the same time increasing their unity via EU processes that promise for deeper integration of forces. Europeans have an urgent need to start designing and procuring all future major equipment together, faced with the fragmentation and inefficiency of their defense spending. At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that, for many of these future projects, the option of purchasing American technology is off the table in order to support the European defense industrial and technological base.

Under French and German leadership, the EU will develop and provide extra financing for the development of major artillery, land combat, and maritime patrolling systems. The French and Germans will also participate in developing an unmanned aerial vehicle platform (alongside Spain and Italy) and a new combat aircraft. Aside from this, the French and German ministers of defense have already confirmed that they will act quickly to increase their aging tactical airlift capabilities by mutualizing the fleet of ten Lockheed Martin "C-130 Hercules" aircraft on a French Air Force base by the time of the delivery of the final aircraft in 2021. The leadership of many of these projects by Paris and Berlin represents the starting point for an integrated European defense industrial and technological base. Other countries will be encouraged to join if they do not want to lose their national defense industry, but also in order to reach a critical mass of customers that would make any project economically viable.

> " *For all the promises put forward by PESCO, they do not represent an immediate solution to reinforcing the non-North American contribution to the deterrence of Russia.* "

The goal of these EU projects, under the umbrella of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), is first and foremost to "reinforce Europe's strategic autonomy to act alone when necessary and with partners whenever possible."[29] It does so by prioritizing what the draft declaration of PESCO labels "strategic defense capabilities projects." These are the strategic enablers without which armies lose their ability to deploy and that can in large part today be supplied from U.S. forces, a dependence European leaders have become more concerned about given the variability of European engagement of the last four U.S. administrations. It is vital that these projects receive support from a broad European coalition in order to first avoid dominance by the larger European states whose industrial interests would prevail, but also to create the building blocks for a sustainable (but currently lacking) European strategic culture further down the road. Building this common culture will go hand-in-hand with the natural continuation of creating a set of European strategic enabler capabilities, in order to develop more integrated European forces with the capability to deploy independent of the U.S. in carrying out the so-called "Petersberg tasks."[30] Based on the Franco–German joint operation of tactical airlift capabilities or other existing EU projects such as the European Air Transport Command, these new capabilities should then be operated as a single force (also fully inter-operational with other NATO forces), which is owned by all the states that participated in procurement; that is especially true for the newly created capabilities that participate directly in the fight against terrorism (combat aircraft, tactical and strategic airlift, unmanned aerial vehicles). Placing all these under a single structure for command, logistics, and maintenance will also make their management more efficient and give European NATO Allies the ability to calibrate their engagement in deterrence efforts in a clearer and more sustainable

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29 European Union External Action Service, "Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) Factsheet," November, 16, 2017.

30 "These tasks were set out in the Petersberg Declaration adopted at the Ministerial Council of the Western European Union (WEU) in June 1992. On that occasion, the WEU member countries declared their readiness to make available to the WEU, but also to NATO and the EU, military units from the whole spectrum of their conventional armed forces." EUR-lex, "Petersberg Tasks."

fashion. Nonetheless, all the newly-created forces will remain under the sovereign use of nations, meaning there can be no veto of EU member states toward the use of forces in the NATO framework. Eventually, this will also mean that the single set of forces, with which NATO and EU operational requirements have to be jointly met, will be reinforced, while also ensuring that external actors cannot drive a wedge between the two institutions or between nations themselves.

For all the promises put forward by PESCO, these projects are destined to begin to be completed only by the 2022–23 horizon, and do not therefore represent an immediate solution to reinforcing the non-North American contribution to the deterrence of Russia. They should, however, serve as a clear guideline for any discussions between leaders and for the purposes of the U.S. defense planners who structure their forces' engagements on the continent. It is why the question of where PESCO and other European initiatives such as the Coordinated Annual Review on Defense — which aims at reviewing available forces to structure future equipment plans — fit in relation with the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP). Since the NDPP does of course not aim to develop European strategic autonomy and since the latter does not include, at this point, territorial defense, but only protecting the EU territory of threats that do not meet the Article 5 threshold and the conduct of expeditionary operations, (willing) European NATO Allies will need to ensure that the NDPP can reflect this collective renewed level of ambition. It will also need to ensure that the capability targets assigned to each state in the NDPP and within the EU process are significantly overlapping, because it is at the national level first and foremost that NATO and EU capability targets must be coordinated.

These are the sorts of debates that should structure transatlantic security cooperation in the years to come and could help to alleviate the perennially difficult conversations around the 2 percent of GDP spending metric. Stephen Walt explains that "If

> " *The promise of more efficient spending on the European side should be reciprocated on the U.S. side with clear plans for U.S. involvement in Europe for the foreseeable future."*

NATO were to meet U.S. demands and get all of its members up to the canonical target of 2 percent of GDP, it wouldn't do all that much to improve the overall balance of power unless they started spending the money more effectively,"[31] which, as explained, the EU intends to provide a framework for. PESCO projects will go a long way in ensuring that the other agreed-upon NATO targets, according to which Allies should spend 20 percent of their defense budget on major equipment, will be reached in due time; the same goes for the required levels of sustainability and deployability that were set at the 2014 Wales Summit. The promise of more efficient spending on the European side should be reciprocated on the U.S. side with clear plans for U.S. involvement in Europe for the foreseeable future, with the aim of reconfiguring the tenets of transatlantic burden-sharing. In the current security context, it must be added, this is especially true in regards to some deterrence tools that are not covered by EU plans, such as missile defense, in order to avoid the temptation of Europe doing what Walt qualifies as "just enough to keep Uncle Sam happy."[32] An updated transatlantic arrangement should base itself on balance, which will allow for the proper calibration of the engagement in the deterrence effort against Russia, as well as for additional flexibility of the European forces in carrying out other missions. This is why it is crucial for the two countries that carry these European efforts, France and Germany, to determine sooner than later the desired new model for their armies.

With the German defense budget and capability of forces at worrisome levels, and the French armed forces nearing overstretch because of simultaneous engagement domestically and abroad, the existing models have become unsustainable. Current and future strategic realities will need to underpin the new models, which the renewed efforts of the EU are trying to shape. They must reflect the challenge posed by Russia. And it is clear that the single

31 Stephen M. Walt, "It's Time for Europe's Militaries to Grow Up," Foreign Policy, February 23, 2017.

32 Ibid.

set of forces of EU and NATO nations have to meet the challenges in its Eastern and Southern neighborhoods. Achieving full-spectrum deterrence will require the commitment of large sums of money, which especially the *Bundeswehr* seems to be wary of committing, if not spending. This is particularly true in the mid-term, given the required amount of troops necessary to operate such equipment that would be procured, the difficulty to ensure a steady flow of new recruits in an otherwise healthy economy, or the scale of transformation of the armed forces that such spending would signify.[33] This is the crux of the problem for many other European allies, where significant increases in defense spending have raised the same questions as in the German case (this is true especially for prosperous Central European and Scandinavian countries). The EU-led initiatives such as PESCO and CARD are destined to ensure that spending is done in a coordinated fashion and to add another layer of incentives for countries to commit more money to defense by boosting the productivity of their national defense industries. Eventually, the goal will be to have European forces that are highly usable, as well as for the major European military powers, France and Germany, to lead by example and provide the bulk of the future of the continent's capabilities. This is the only path that will ensure that EU-led projects can reach the goals they have set out for themselves.

The necessity to coordinate increased defense spending at the national, European, and NATO levels means that the capability deficit on the European side will be hard to fill in the very near future. It therefore puts a larger onus on how Europe can contribute to deterrence not only with its existing nuclear forces, but also on the soft side of deterrence, in order to sufficiently respond to the challenge that Russia is posing.

Improving the Basics: Nuclear Deterrence and Messaging

NATO made clear in the 2016 Warsaw Summit Communiqué that the "Supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance."[34] The three Allies who maintain nuclear forces — France, the United Kingdom, and the United States — play distinct roles in the overall nuclear deterrent capabilities of the Alliance. Nuclear deterrence, because of its extremely sensitive nature, is a less-discussed component of deterrence toward Russia, but remains crucial in denying Russia any territorial gains and potentially imposing unacceptable military costs to any aggression. It serves to provide NATO with a varied set of responses were Russia to instigate a local conflict, especially in the context where, as Jeff Rathke and Simond de Galbert put it, "the effect of a stronger NATO conventional defense posture is limited if Russia believes, for example, that it may have a winning strategy at hand."[35] There are, in this context, various possibilities to reinforce NATO's nuclear deterrence, the most obvious at the current level of capacities being a deeper integration, at the level of the U.S. armed forces, of conventional and nuclear planning.

While always a difficult topic to discuss more widely, and bound by strict adherence to the NATO-Russia Founding Act and the INF Treaty, there is an identified need for NATO's nuclear deterrence posture to adapt to the new strategic reality on the Eastern flank. A recent NATO Defense College report noted "the need for a new nuclear narrative that can help educate NATO's senior political leaders on the role and value of these weapons for deterrence purposes" and the necessary adaptation "of NATO's current dual-capable aircraft mission" to the reality of threats on the ground.[36] The discussion around the adaptation of NATO's nuclear strategy and wider discussions around an integrated NATO strategy ensure that they do not lower the nuclear threshold at the Allied level, and that NATO keeps full control over responses to events on the ground given concerning Russian integration of nuclear forces in military exercises at the Allied border. Therefore, giving the Alliance the continued capability to climb up, or not, and to maintain control over the "escalation ladder" is a

33 Elisabeth Braw, "How Much Can Germany's Military Expand?" *The Wall Street Journal*, October 25, 2017.

34 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Warsaw Summit Communiqué.

35 Jeffrey Rathke, "NATO's Nuclear Policy as Part of a Revitalized Deterrence Strategy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2016.

36 Alessandra Giada Dibenedetto, Jeffrey Larsen, "Keep Calm and Deter: NATO Nuclear Deterrence After the Warsaw Summit," Rome, Italy: NATO Defense College, Conference Report, 2017.

strategic upper-hand that can be easily strengthened in NATO's deterrence posture without fundamentally changing the tenets of the Alliance's nuclear posture.

The control of the escalation ladder and the enlargement of NATO's nuclear sharing formats are important in terms of perception. They prove that Russia's efforts to delegitimize NATO's nuclear-sharing agreements are fruitless and that Russia's exercises that simulate escalation to nuclear strikes against NATO territory are understood if not as bluff, then as a sign of weakness of the conventional forces and the political leadership. Rathke and de Galbert remind that even if NATO also conducts nuclear exercises, "those are not linked to NATO's conventional exercises and do not practice the transition from conventional to nuclear conflict." NATO's nuclear deterrence strategy should also in parallel enhance the value of the two European independent nuclear forces — the British and especially the French — who do not participate in NATO sharing arrangements or NATO's nuclear planning group. In the last speech of a French President on nuclear forces, President François Hollande insisted that the French nuclear deterrent makes "an essential contribution to European security," and, in expressing solidarity, that "French vital interests cannot be restricted to a national scale" and that any "aggression threatening Europe's survival"[37] would have consequences from a French point of view. Therefore, despite not often being part of Allied discussions about nuclear planning, France's commitment to protecting the territory of the Alliance with its nuclear deterrent remains unwavering and participates in the Alliance's upscaled nuclear signaling.[38] Part of this posture will of course be dependent on whether France is able to carry out the upgrade and modernization of its nuclear forces, which could cost in excess of 5.5 to 6 billion euros per year starting in 2025.[39] This is a significant increase compared to the current level of 3.9 billion euros.[40]

Maintaining unity and cohesion on nuclear deterrence will be a long-term goal for the Alliance, one that will signal NATO's resolve to warding off any territorial challenges, and providing an umbrella under which conventional deterrence can be adjusted. Deterrence by military means is essential, but the Alliance faces more than just the need to provide troops and capabilities in a context where, as the Spiegel puts it, "hardly anyone really thinks that Russia might attack a NATO member state" and "many in the alliance are convinced that only a credible military deterrence will prevent Putin from exerting political pressure on the Alliance's easternmost countries like Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia."[41] It is also clear that talking full-spectrum deterrence today involves taking actives measures to defend Allies from threats beyond the threshold of Article 5, including disinformation and cybersecurity, two main themes of the "resilience" agenda that is so important to NATO Allies at the moment. Ensuring European and Allied response on these fronts is vital to guarantee that any Article 5 situation is dealt with in a swift, credible, and united fashion by the North Atlantic Council.

Non-Military Conflict and Deterrence

As evidenced by Russia's history, the recent emphases in doctrine, and experienced in events over the past decade, Russia's challenge and the transatlantic response extends beyond the conventional and nuclear realm. In the future, cyber and disinformation will continue as key domains. In his article outlining an approach to the new gray era of conflict, General Gerasimov argued that "The information space opens wide asymmetrical possibilities for reducing the fighting potential of the enemy," highlighting the need to "perfect activities in the information space."[42] Many experts would argue that this has long been a key tactic of Russian policy, extending back to the Soviet era.[43] However, in the post-Cold War

37 François Hollande, "Discours sur la dissuasion nucléaire — Déplacement auprès des forces aériennes stratégiques." Istres (13), February 19, 2015.

38 Zachary Cohen, "U.S. Bombers Arrive in Europe as Russia Preps for War Games," CNN Politics, August 24, 2017.

39 Commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées, "Rapport d'information de MM. Xavier Pintat, co-président, Jeanny Lorgeoux, co-président, André Trillard, Pascal Allizard et Claude Haut," Paris, France: Sénat, 2017.

40 Ibid.

41 Matthias Gebaur, Konstantin von Hammerstein, Peter Müller, and Christoph Schult, "NATO Grapples with Serious Organizational Shortcomings," Spiegel Online, October 20, 2017.

42 Gerasimov

43 David Salvo, "The Active Measures Orchestra: An Examination of Russian Influence Operations Abroad," The German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 10, 2017.

era it has not been overtly expressed or exercised until recent years and technological proliferation has fundamentally changed the game.

Continuing with his doctrine, Gerasimov paints an image that sees perceived opposition from other states (assumed externally influenced), the formation of competing coalitions and alliances, and the use of economic sanctions as stages of conflict development and resolution.[44] Therefore, disinformation is an asymmetric response to directly counter these real or perceived efforts, as well as a push to ensure a resolution more favorable to Russia.

While transatlantic actors likely disagree with the paradigm that constitutes the basis of Russian behavior, as well as with Russian assumptions that feed into it, acknowledging the approach is paramount to understanding what to do next. Moreover, a successful counter-strategy may require equally aggressive measures that subscribe to the 'conflict-resolution' paradigm that Russia is ascribing to international politics today.

For the transatlantic partners, Russian disinformation has been a plaguing theme across national contexts. From the U.S. to the French elections, from developments in the Baltics to the Balkans, Russia has employed, as one expert put it, a "firehouse of falsehood"[45] to weaken consensus and confuse democratic societies. The end goal is to cause societies to spiral, to exacerbate tensions, to inhibit reforms, and to distract and hinder efforts that could challenge what Russia sees as its core interests.

In response, both Europe and the United States would do well to create greater resilience at home. This could be done through funding long-term civics programs and education that increase media literacy and improve political discourse in a chaotic and over-inundated information age. Additionally, efforts that expose attempts of external actors to influence

> *" Information sharing among Allies and with key partners would help get ahead of false narratives and quickly dispelling efforts to undermine societies. "*

and deliberately manipulate populations through disinformation must be advanced. Already, the EU is driving an active campaign to expose disinformation with its "EU Mythbusters."[46] NATO has also tried to directly counter many of the common myths purported by Russia regarding the Alliance.[47] Nevertheless, the speed of the challenge requires constant innovation, and institutions and actors must continue to adapt.

Beyond exposing falsehood and educating populations, information sharing among Allies and with key partners would help in getting ahead of false narratives and quickly dispelling efforts to undermine societies. This was true in the case of the false rape accusations aimed against German forces in Lithuania in early 2017.[48] NATO officials were able to work closely with the armed forces on the ground, the local police, and government institutions to dispel the claims.[49] In this regard, transatlantic nations would be well-served to gain best practices in the post-Cold War era from countries and regions that have been dealing with these challenges on a consistent basis for a number of years, including Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

In addition to reinforcing societies against attacks, exposing disinformation, and better coordinating across military, intelligence services, and law-enforcement, transatlantic nations also have to increase the volume of positive narratives that are more compelling than the falsehoods that are being disseminated by pro-Russian forces (both a question of quantity and quality). In many ways, Russia's inability to compete with Europe and the United States in the past hinged on a bad reality and an even worse narrative. To make up for its deficiencies, Russia has tried to build an anti-system counter-narrative, which is only salient when there is distrust in democratic processes and

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44 Gerasimov

45 Samantha Bennett, "Beyond the Headlines: RAND's Christopher Paul Discusses the Russian 'Firehose of Falsehood'," RAND Corporation, December 13, 2016.

46 "EU vs Dinsinfo," https://euvsdisinfo.eu/.

47 "Russia's Top Five Myths about NATO," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, May 15, 2017.

48 "NATO: Russia Targeted German Army with Fake News Campaign," *Deutsche Welle*, February 16, 2017.

49 Teri Schultz, "Why the 'Fake Rape' Story Against German NATO Forces Fell Flat in Lithuania," *Deutsche Welle*, February 23, 2017

institutions. Leaders on both sides of the Atlantic must fully articulate the positive elements of existing institutions and efforts to counter Russian claims. Ideally, they should build a proactive information strategy by framing positive stories, rather than primarily reacting to Russian disinformation efforts that have already caught on. This is bound to be particularly challenging, but necessary to ensure success. It will require a much more advanced and coordinated effort from the transatlantic partners to inspire greater confidence in the purpose of our own institutions and interests.

Cyberwarfare is another domain where transatlantic resilience is tested, and where cooperation between the EU and NATO is key in establishing any sense of deterrence. The signature of the EU–NATO joint declaration at the Warsaw Summit encapsulated the "resilience" theme and called for improving coordination on cybersecurity and defense;[50] the first progress report of the implementation of this cooperation highlights the fact that "cooperation on training and education has been developed with a view to reinforce complementarity" and that "closer interaction of respective emergency response teams and cooperation on cyber exercises is also progressing." In this new domain, it appears that exchanging information, procedures, and knowledge is critical to building NATO's ability to assess threats and devise eventual responses. NATO's decision in Warsaw to make cyber the fourth domain of NATO defense policy and planning will allow NATO to coordinate "how member states can develop, synergize, and complement their mutual national cyber defenses," or "at a minimum, develop standards and better indicators that allow a standardized measurement of a nation's annual progress."[51]

The relative newness of the field and the real technological gaps that exist between NATO Allies put a special onus on NATO to be able to decisively recognize and attribute hostile cyber activity. Further down the road, the Alliance must define the rules of engagement of the appropriate use of force in case it was to suffer a cyber-attack, a situation in which the use of Article 5 is not excluded. NATO will have to go

beyond the realm of simple defensive cybersecurity in order to increase its deterrence spectrum. Allies may need to give the Strategic Allied Commander of European Forces (SACEUR) increased responsibility to structure NATO offensive cyber forces as an extra option provided to the Allied forces. In an interesting parallel, Lété and Degé talk about "map[ping] the feasibility of coordinating counter strikes" and that "NATO could center this debate on projecting offensive cyber warfare capabilities as a means of deterrence, similar to the perceived value of nuclear weapons to deter attacks against NATO."[52]

This interesting parallel between nuclear and cyber and their value on the deterrence spectrum is a perfect illustration of how NATO and the EU can respond to hybrid threats spectrum, but still face challenges to bridge some of the last remaining gaps. Some will require building up the resilience of populations and institutions, others will require increased coordination between the institutions that provide security and a lot of them will require an important influx of money into European defense budgets.

Conclusion

Russia's challenge to the transatlantic partners aims at confusing traditional responses and blurring the line between conflict and peace. Without defining priorities and lowering the threshold of conflict in key domains, deterrence will remain elusive. And efforts to create deterrence could be misdirected. While ambiguity can aid deterrence, it also allows Russia to exploit weaknesses. As Gerasimov argues, even the most "well-developed" enemy "will always have vulnerabilities."[53] Closing the gap between properly understanding the context, seeing the existing vulnerabilities, and developing adequate capabilities across several domains will not only make transatlantic targets harder, but create a firmer foothold for forwarding deterrence. Moreover, the focus should not only be on developing new approaches and capabilities to effectively deter, but also to go on the offensive if needed in unconventional and asymmetric ways. This may change the new status quo of uncertainty that Russia has established. Without question, transatlantic institutions should

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50 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, President of the European Council, the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Joint Declaration," July 8, 2016.

51 Bruno Lété, "NATO Cybersecurity: A Roadmap to Resilience," The German Marshall Fund of the United States, July 3, 2017.

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52 Ibid.

53 Gerasimov

not get stuck in old ways of thinking or old paradigms. This is not to revisit a Cold War mindset. Yet, some practices from the previous era may be adapted and applied to the multi-faceted challenge that Russia is posing to the transatlantic relationship.

As nations, as well as institutions such as NATO and the EU, look to address the full-spectrum challenge posed by Russia, identifying key priorities and developing clear red lines will be crucial. It goes without saying that conventional capabilities remain a cornerstone and Article 5 the bedrock for NATO members. By reconciling the varying priorities among Allies, addressing the capabilities gap in Europe, and looking at the future role of a strategic nuclear deterrent force vis-à-vis Russia, the transatlantic deterrent will only grow more credible. Moreover, Europe and North America must turn to address gaping vulnerabilities in the realm of cyber and disinformation. Aggressive exploitation of these vulnerabilities represent Russia's concrete attempt to conduct "long-distance, contactless actions against an enemy" and achieve "combat and operational goals ... throughout the entire depth of his territory."[54] Transatlantic partners must create a significant depth in resilience and deterrence and project collective power against such efforts. Drawing and retracing red lines will help Allies arrive at a clearer point where the resolution of an ongoing conflict across domains with Russia may begin to be more achievable. Even if it fails in this regard, it could at least inject more predictability into an unstable status quo.

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54 Gerasimov