

Repairing NATO's motors

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When NATO heads of state and government convene in Newport, Wales, in September 2014, it will be their first meeting in the UK since the London summit of July 1990. A quarter of a century ago, NATO was reborn. The London Declaration on a Transformed Alliance was NATO's keynote statement of renewed purpose, issued in 1990 as the Cold War was drawing to a close. In it we find the beginnings of the tasks which would come to define the alliance in the post-Cold War period, along with an appreciation of a fundamentally altered strategic landscape. Europe had 'entered a new, promising era', one in which it was thought the continent's tragic cycle of war and peace might well be over.¹ The 2014 summit communiqué is unlikely to reflect such optimism, but what it surely needs to do is to recapture the spirit of enterprise that NATO has on occasion been able to articulate in demanding times.

The Wales summit comes at a time when that task is even more necessary. In the more than two decades since the end of the Cold War, the alliance has maintained its standing through operations, enlargement, partnerships and a reaffirmation of the transatlantic relationship, but each of these core missions now appears to be in question. NATO is increasingly being seen as post-operational as its presence in Afghanistan and Kosovo draws down; there will not be a repeat of NATO expansion akin to the movements in 1999 and 2004; relations with Russia are at an impasse; and the alliance seems increasingly rudderless as the United States looks to Europeans to shoulder a greater share of the burdens of membership.

Curiously, NATO's core purpose—to provide for the security of its members—also seems less and less easy to grasp. This is an issue the alliance has struggled with since the demise of Soviet power. NATO in the 1990s identified instability on the European periphery as its main security preoccupation (hence the containment of the Balkans and the pacification of eastern Europe through partnership and enlargement). In the 2000s, its focus of attention switched to Afghanistan (and, to a lesser degree, Libya), with a concomitant declaration of its ability to undertake

* This article is the outcome of consultations undertaken by the authors within the framework of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Seminar Series award on 'NATO after Afghanistan' (Project Grant ES/J022063/1). That funding is gratefully acknowledged, as is the expenditure of time and effort by the many participants in these seminars over the period November 2012–May 2014.

¹ 'London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance', London, 5–6 July 1990, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c900706a.htm>, accessed 11 June 2014.

a 'full range of missions ... on and beyond Alliance territory, on its periphery, and at strategic distance'.² NATO's reluctance to act in Syria and its retreat from combat in Afghanistan place a question mark over how robust and sustained such missions are likely to be in future. Further, many of the most pressing security issues of the allies are not referred to NATO at all. The alliance has either been marginalized by ad hoc coalitions (as in the French-led intervention in Mali) or simply deemed inappropriate as a forum for addressing matters of concern (such as nuclear developments in Iran). And while the alliance has begun to address a broad security agenda, many salient issues (climate change, transnational crime, terrorism) do not sit easily within NATO's purview or operational structures. The exception to all of this is, of course, collective defence, a mission arguably revived by the reassertion of Russian influence in Ukraine. But that traditional function raises as many questions as it answers. How would a re-emphasis on territorial defence sit with the recalibration of American and European armed forces over the last two decades towards expeditionary missions? And would such a course, if taken, only exacerbate worsening relations between NATO and Russia—ramping up mistrust and becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy of regional militarization and antagonism?

We may ask, then: how well placed is NATO as it moves towards the summit in Wales? In what follows we argue that NATO is hamstrung by wear and tear on the twin motors that have sustained it in the post-Cold War period. The first of these motors is its principles of purpose—the activities (or purposes) which the alliance has consciously pursued, the outcome of which constitutes NATO's impact on the security landscape. The second comprises its principles of function—the underlying set of assumptions and conditions without which NATO's activities would simply not be possible.

It is because doubts exist as to how well these motors are moving NATO forward that commentators continue to speak of an alliance in deep trouble.³ The obvious rejoinder to such pessimism is to point to NATO's powers of resilience. Mere survival may be construed as a success for the alliance,⁴ but to continue to survive (and to thrive) in a difficult environment requires NATO to engage in an ongoing process of adaptation. That has been the story of the alliance for decades, and here we wish to comment on its latest chapter. Our argument proceeds by suggesting that some of the problems seen to characterize NATO, while often overstated, can be addressed by an exercise in clarity and consolidation. This will require emphasizing what is urgent and what is necessary for NATO, and might be done by reference to three categories of effort: reassurance, readiness and renewal. Making progress in these three areas is unlikely to fix the alliance for good, but they speak to principles of both purpose and function, and so can help chart a course which avoids the much less desirable alternative—a NATO in continuing, even terminal, decline.⁵

² 'Comprehensive political guidance endorsed by NATO heads of state and government', 29 Nov. 2006, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_56425.htm?selectedLocale=en, accessed 11 June 2014.

³ Clemens Wergin, 'The security leadership void', *International New York Times*, 28 Jan. 2014.

⁴ Andrew Dorman, 'NATO's 2012 Chicago summit: a chance to ignore the issues once again?', *International Affairs* 88: 2, March 2012, p. 302.

⁵ Richard E. Rupp, *NATO after 9/11: an alliance in continuing decline* (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

NATO's principles of purpose

Over the past 20 years, NATO's activism has provided the most compelling case for its continuing relevance in an uncertain world.⁶ Yet task expansion has brought with it a proliferation of problems and dilemmas. Five areas of activity (or principles of purpose) will be considered here to illustrate the point.

The first is operations. Over the past two decades, NATO's operational profile has, in effect, ensured its survival, by providing a compelling rationale for action, a catalyst for military transformation and a framework for relations with partners.⁷ The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan has been NATO's most demanding operation by far. At its height in the first half of 2012, ISAF was made up of 130,000 armed personnel drawn from 50 nations, including all 28 NATO allies.⁸ The American military presence in Afghanistan—90,000 committed to ISAF at its peak—never reached the levels seen in Iraq. US losses were also much worse in the Iraqi case. However, Afghanistan (unlike Iraq) has been a specifically NATO mission. Its costs have thus been borne across many participating states,⁹ and so its retreat poses questions that concern the whole alliance. At a practical level, NATO is committed during 2014 to withdrawing fully from combat operations. A follow-on mission (Operation Resolute Support) is then meant to 'train, advise and assist the Afghan security forces'.¹⁰ This transitional mission is expected to conclude at the end of 2016, at which point the security of Afghanistan will become entirely dependent on Afghan forces—forces which many see as incapable of keeping the Afghan insurgency at bay.¹¹

Not only is NATO drawing down from Afghanistan, but, as the 2011 Libyan intervention made clear, it is against deploying 'boots on the ground' even when it pursues military options out of area. Taking this along with the absence of political will to engage in Syria, it is clear that the alliance has, in effect, stepped back from major deployment. As one redoubtable NATO official has observed: 'After 2014, NATO may find itself for the first time in twenty years without a major operation to run ... [in such circumstances] what is an alliance that has built its modern persona with big-budget operations like the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and ISAF to do?'¹² If that question is not effectively answered, NATO's wider military transformation, as well as its relevance to Washington, could be placed in jeopardy.

⁶ NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'NATO—delivering security in the 21st century', speech at Chatham House, 4 July 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-34BoD809-CoC7EBA3/natolive/opinions_88886.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁷ Carl Cavanagh Hodge, 'Full circle: two decades of NATO intervention', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 11: 4, 2013, pp. 350–67.

⁸ *ISAF Placemat, May 2012*, http://www.nato.int/isaf/placemats_archive/2012-05-15-ISAF-Placemat.pdf, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁹ Of NATO's 28 members, 22 have sustained fatalities in the Afghan conflict. These have been heavy for the US and the UK, and also for Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Denmark. See <http://icasualties.org/oef/>, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁰ NATO press release following a meeting of NATO and ISAF partner defence ministers, 27 Feb. 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_107519.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹¹ Michael R. Gordon, 'Criticism over Afghan pullout expands', *International New York Times*, 6 June 2014, citing former Pentagon officials.

¹² Jamie Shea, 'Keeping NATO relevant', Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 19 April 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/04/19/keeping-nato-relevant/acl9#>, accessed 11 June 2014.

NATO's second area of activity is enlargement, one of the signature policies of the post-Cold War period. With the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, the alliance chose not to remain an exclusive body with a limited membership and tight focus on the security of Europe's western half, and so enlargement became a means to extend NATO's democratic security community to the former communist east.¹³ Yet enlargement came with a price, most obviously in alienating Moscow—hence George Kennan's warning in 1997 that such a policy could be 'the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era'.¹⁴ Kennan's comments would come back to haunt NATO. At the 2008 Bucharest summit, the alliance went so far as to declare unambiguously that both Ukraine and Georgia would 'become members of NATO'¹⁵—a statement of intent cited by Russian President Vladimir Putin as one reason for the annexation of Crimea in March 2014.¹⁶ Russian destabilization of Georgia (culminating in the 2008 war) was prompted, similarly, by a desire in Moscow to make that country an unattractive candidate for inclusion in the alliance.

Geopolitics thus presents a limit to enlargement in NATO's east. US leadership of and support for enlargement have largely evaporated, and the project is now seen less as a vehicle for advancing security and stability across Europe and more as a case of unfinished business. Bosnia, Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to work on their respective Membership Action Plans (MAPs), and the future accession of these states would render membership for Kosovo a logical (if politically unlikely) prospect. Two outliers also present themselves in the north. Finland and Sweden harbour few problems of integration for NATO, but both are constrained by a still largely sceptical public opinion and an absence of elite consensus.¹⁷

Doubts over the future of enlargement mean that the more flexible concept of partnership—the third activity considered here—has grown in significance. The development of NATO partnerships is implicitly linked to American grand strategy, with Washington seeking to extend its influence through a 'hub-and-spoke' system—the US acting as the 'hub' and NATO as the force multiplier.¹⁸ NATO's ISAF mission acted as a catalyst for the transformation of partnerships, especially for those partners such as Georgia, Australia, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand that made major contributions to the mission. Consequently, as NATO moves out of Afghanistan, the future of these partnerships is

¹³ The rationale for this policy is most clearly articulated in NATO's own study on enlargement, published in 1995. See http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24733.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁴ Cited in Patrick Porter, 'Hooked on security', *The World Today*, Nov. 2010, p. 13.

¹⁵ 'Bucharest summit declaration', 3 April 2008, para. 23, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁶ 'Address by President of the Russian Federation', 18 March 2014, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889>, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁷ Alistair Scrutton and Sakari Suoninen, 'As Russia grows, Swedes, Finns eye defence options, Russia', *NATO Source*, 1 April 2014, <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/as-russia-grows-swedes-finns-eye-defence-options-nato>, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁸ Guillaume de Rougé, 'The future of the alliance: towards a transatlantic "hub"', in Luís Nuno Rodrigues and Volodymyr Dubovyk, eds, *Perceptions of NATO and the new strategic concept* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2011), pp. 25–30.

unclear.¹⁹ A reduction in the tempo of NATO operational activities also leaves exposed some of NATO's more cumbersome formats—the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) and the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD). These had been consolidated in the 2011 Berlin Partnership Package, but that 'more flexible, more efficient and more responsive' set of arrangements²⁰ still left unresolved certain critical political and strategic issues. Should the alliance accord greater political weight to those nations that have a track record of contributing to missions—possibly via limited participation in deliberations of the North Atlantic Council? Should it seek to develop substantive partnerships with China and India? And what is the future of NATO's longstanding (but troubled) 'special' partnership with Russia?²¹

Such questions also impinge on the basic transatlantic character of the alliance (what we regard as NATO's fourth principle of purpose). NATO, simply put, 'does' transatlanticism; it is the institutional format within which the transatlantic bargain of shared security between Canada and the United States on the one hand, and the European allies on the other, has historically been pursued.²² Yet that bargain seems increasingly troubled. This is a consequence, in part, of a generational, even intellectual, shift in the United States as officials and policy-shapers come to regard Europe as less central to global political and economic order. It reflects also a view (shared in Europe) that NATO is only one vehicle (and not always the most important) for transatlantic cooperation.²³ The bilateral US–EU strategic partnership is now much enhanced, with cooperation on a range of issues from counter-piracy to Iran, while July 2013 saw the commencement of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). These are by no means substitutes for NATO, but they do underscore its loss of standing. If, as some claim, international order is in the midst of a reinvention premised on a new era of networks and revised institutions that better reflect the global diffusion of power, then a reimagined NATO might still have a role to play.²⁴ But in the meantime, much less will be heard of a 'global NATO' promoting a transatlantic vision of international order. That image of the alliance has been punctured by the retreat in Afghanistan and the waning force projection capabilities of NATO's European powers.²⁵

The fifth activity to be considered is perhaps the most important: how NATO promotes security. As Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has recently put

¹⁹ See Benjamin Schreer, 'Beyond Afghanistan: NATO's partnerships in the Asia Pacific', NATO Defence College Research Paper no. 75 (Rome, April 2012), p. 1.

²⁰ NATO press release following a meeting of NATO foreign ministers, 15 April 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_72360.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

²¹ Karl-Heinz Kamp and Heidi Reisinger, 'NATO partnerships after 2014—go west!', NATO Defence College Research Paper no. 92 (Rome, March 2013).

²² Stanley R. Sloan, *Permanent alliance? NATO and the transatlantic bargain from Truman to Obama* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

²³ Ellen Hallams and Benjamin Schreer, 'Towards a "post-American" alliance? NATO burden-sharing after Libya', *International Affairs* 88: 2, March 2012, pp. 324–5.

²⁴ See G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: the origins, crisis, and transformation of the American world order* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 356–7.

²⁵ Octavian Manea, 'NATO's post-ISAF challenges and the danger of a hollow alliance', interview with Andrew Michta, *Small Wars Journal*, 24 Jan. 2014, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/nato%E2%80%99s-post-isaf-challenges-and-the-danger-of-a-hollow-alliance>, accessed 11 June 2014.

it, NATO's value lies in its ability to adapt 'to meet the demands of a fast-moving security environment'.²⁶ The 2010 Strategic Concept, similarly, highlighted the growing significance to NATO of climate change, energy security, counter-terrorism, global economic and financial governance, and the rise of emerging powers.²⁷ Michael Rühle views this 'shift from a geographical to a functional approach to security' as 'the most profound change in NATO's history'.²⁸ But critics have been less kind. Patrick Porter has accused NATO of a security addiction born of a 'messianic restlessness' and an 'exhausting, self-defeating pursuit of relevance'.²⁹ Even some NATO officials have conceded that 'the Alliance has not yet fully come to terms internally with what NATO will do' on many of the security issues it faces.³⁰ Further, the alliance is challenged not just on questions of *security*, but also on basic issues of *strategy*. The Ukraine crisis has given rise to a good deal of commentary on whether NATO should refocus on the basic task of territorial defence;³¹ but as that crisis has unfolded, NATO's most pressing commitment has still lain some 2,000 miles east in Afghanistan. That juxtaposition sums up the main dilemma that the alliance has faced since 9/11: should NATO position itself for global activities or focus instead on Europe and its periphery?

NATO's principles of function

By principles of function we mean the core political, diplomatic and military processes necessary to keep NATO working in viable and effective ways. Four such principles will be examined here: American leadership, intra-allied cohesion and trust, burden-sharing and credibility.

American leadership is the *sine qua non* of NATO. In the 1990s, for example, the international response in Bosnia and Kosovo became effective only once the Clinton administration decided to use force, with NATO as its main institutional vehicle. Enlargement, the campaign in Afghanistan and the policy of partnership also owe much to an agenda set in Washington.³² Given such dependence on US leadership, problems arise for NATO when that leadership wavers. The Obama administration has not always been regarded favourably in this connection. In July 2009, leading figures from central and eastern Europe (including the former Czech and Polish presidents Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa) publicly complained that 'all is not well ... in the transatlantic relationship'. Arguing that 'NATO today

²⁶ *The Secretary General's Annual Report 2013*, p. 2, http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20140123_SG_AnnualReport_2013_en.pdf, accessed 11 June 2014.

²⁷ *Active engagement, modern defence: strategic concept for the defence and security of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, Lisbon, 19–20 Nov. 2010, http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/Strat_Concept_web_en.pdf, accessed 11 June 2014.

²⁸ Michael Rühle, 'Reflections on 9/11: a view from NATO', in Ellen Hallams, Luca Ratti and Benjamin Zyla, eds, *NATO beyond 9/11: the transformation of the Atlantic alliance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 57.

²⁹ Porter, 'Hooked on security', p. 13.

³⁰ James Appathurai, 'The future of NATO partnerships', in Trine Flockhart, ed., *Cooperative security: NATO's partnership policy in a changing world* (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for Security Studies, 2014), p. 39.

³¹ 'First principles: the future of NATO', *The Economist*, 29 March 2014, pp. 67–8.

³² Mark Webber, 'NATO: the United States, transformation and the war in Afghanistan', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 11: 1, 2009, pp. 46–63.

seems weaker than when we joined', and deploring an alleged dilution of the North Atlantic Treaty's Article 5 security guarantee, they appealed to the United States to strengthen its commitment to the alliance.³³ These concerns became more widespread in Europe with the administration's announcement in January 2012 that the American military posture would 'of necessity rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region' and that, concurrently, the United States would seek an 'evolution' of its presence in Europe.³⁴ Admittedly met with a certain insouciance in the core NATO states of France and Germany, this rebalancing has played much less well in Turkey and east-central Europe, where it has been seen as the United States prioritizing a strategy directed at China rather than shoring up Europe's own dangerous neighbourhood.³⁵

The so-called 'pivot' to Asia seemed to signal a limit to US commitment in Europe. A similar message has been relayed with regard to NATO operations beyond the continent. While the United States has been prepared to take up the lion's share of effort in ISAF, it has, on occasion, made public its concern at the variable nature of European contributions to the mission.³⁶ The demand that Europeans do more was not a precondition for American involvement in Afghanistan (the United States clearly had its own reasons for being there), but in other discretionary missions the US has made it clear that it cannot be relied upon always to bear the brunt of operations. The template in this respect was set by the 2011 Libya campaign. The caricature of America as 'leading from behind' was not entirely fair;³⁷ in a key sense, the Obama administration actually led from the front—but it did so in a manner that placed a greater responsibility on its NATO allies to contribute to the mission. The United States intentionally front-loaded its major strike contributions (launching over 100 Tomahawk cruise missiles in the initial attack against Gaddafi regime targets), before handing command and planning leads to NATO, and responsibility for follow-up air strikes to an inner NATO group led by Britain and France. Washington made very clear what it was and was not prepared to do, reportedly even withholding operational assets such as A10 'tankbuster' aircraft that might have made important contributions to the campaign.³⁸

American leadership is closely related to the second principle of function—cohesion and trust. These are attributes long regarded as essential to keeping the

³³ David Hayes, 'East-central Europe to Barack Obama: an open letter', 24 July 2009, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/east-central-europe-to-barack-obama-an-open-letter>, accessed 11 June 2014.

³⁴ *Sustaining US global leadership: priorities for 21st century defense* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2012), pp. 2–3.

³⁵ Assen Agov (rapporteur), 'The growing strategic relevance of Asia: implications for NATO', NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Political Committee, 15 April 2013, p. 2; Judy Dempsey, 'NATO after Rasmussen and the US pivot to Asia', *Carnegie Europe*, 9 Jan. 2014, <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=54124>, accessed 11 June 2014.

³⁶ Robert Gates, 'The security and defense agenda (future of NATO)', 10 June 2011, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1581>, accessed 11 June 2014.

³⁷ Ryan Lizza, 'The consequentialist: how the Arab Spring remade Obama's foreign policy', *New Yorker*, 2 May 2011, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/05/02/110502fa_fact_lizza?currentPage=all, accessed 11 June 2014.

³⁸ Hallams and Schreer, 'Towards a "post-American" alliance?', p. 321.

alliance in good working order.³⁹ They are the outcome of repeated interactions among member states, which over time promote a sense of shared interest and solidarity. But over the past decade, observers have noted an increasing 'trend towards strategic dissonance' within NATO.⁴⁰ As noted above, some of NATO's newer members (especially Poland and the Baltic states) have increasingly questioned whether too much emphasis is being given to missions beyond Europe at the expense of maintaining the viability of collective defence. Angst on this score was felt particularly keenly in the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian war of August 2008. That same month, the Polish Prime Minister, Donald Tusk, publicly criticized NATO's consultative processes, complaining that the alliance could take 'days, weeks to start [its] machinery' if Poland were threatened.⁴¹ The allies eventually agreed to prepare contingency plans for the defence of Poland and the Baltic states in late 2009.⁴² Since then, the tempo of military exercises in the region has also been stepped up; but the underlying fault-lines have re-emerged again over Ukraine—with Tusk (joined by Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski) once more complaining at the slow pace of the NATO and American response.⁴³

Fraying trust has also been evident in Turkey. It has not been lost on the leadership in Ankara that solidarity stretches only so far—many European allies having openly opposed Turkey's longstanding aim to join the EU.⁴⁴ Further, the Syrian conflict has exacerbated the sense that NATO is an unreliable underwriter of Turkey's security interests. Allied support for Turkey has extended to the deployment in January 2013 of six air defence batteries (two Dutch, two German and two American) under NATO command; many Turks, however, regarded this assistance as both late and limited. The Turkish decision in September that year to purchase a Chinese missile defence system incompatible with NATO standards has only added to the strain.⁴⁵

Turkey's situation in NATO is often regarded as unique owing to its size, location and political volatility (until Albania joined the alliance in 2009, it was also the only NATO country with a majority Islamic population). Yet it shares one common feature with the vast majority of other allies—namely, an unwillingness to meet American expectations of equitable burden-sharing. Debates on this, the third principle of function, go back as far as the alliance itself, but differences

³⁹ See Patricia A. Weitsman, *Dangerous alliances: proponents of peace, weapons of war* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 5–7; Brian C. Rathbun, *Trust in international cooperation: international security institutions, domestic politics and American multilateralism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 163–208.

⁴⁰ Julian Lindley-French and Yves Boyer, *Stratcon 2010: an alliance for a global century* (Washington DC: Atlantic Council, 2010), p. 5.

⁴¹ 'US and Poland agree to missile defense deal', *USA Today*, 14 Aug. 2008, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-08-14-poland-missile-defense_N.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁴² David Yost, 'NATO's evolving purposes and the next Strategic Concept', *International Affairs* 86: 2, March 2010, p. 501.

⁴³ Tusk, cited in Neil Buckley, James Fontanella and Jan Ciencki, 'Poland calls for NATO troop deployment', *Financial Times*, 1 April 2014; Sikorski, cited in Peter Baker and Rick Lyman, 'Obama, in Poland, renews commitment to security', *International New York Times*, 2 June 2014.

⁴⁴ Tarik Oğuzlu, 'Turkey's eroding commitment to NATO: from identity to interests', *Washington Quarterly* 35: 3, 2012, pp. 153–64.

⁴⁵ Burak Ege Bekdil, 'Allies intensify pressure on Turkey over China missile deal', *Defence News*, 25 Feb. 2014, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140225/DEFREG01/302250026/Allies-Intensify-Pressure-Turkey-Over-China-Missile-Deal>, accessed 11 June 2014.

have been acute in recent years. Well known in this respect are the comments of the outgoing US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates that NATO faced a 'dim and dismal future' if the transatlantic resourcing gap was not narrowed.⁴⁶ More recently, Gates's successor Chuck Hagel has argued that European members could usefully spend more (in 2013 only Greece, Estonia and the UK, along with the United States, were meeting the NATO target of spending at least 2 per cent of gross domestic product annually on defence),⁴⁷ but also that they could spend more 'strategically'.⁴⁸ This reflects the view that, in an era of declining military spending, the utility and effectiveness of remaining capabilities can be maximized by agreeing on *coordinated* reductions, thus ensuring that essential capabilities are maintained by NATO members collectively.⁴⁹

That exhortations towards greater efforts in defence have had to be constantly made says something interesting about the way the alliance works. Historically, NATO has been a venue for the shifting rather than the sharing of defence burdens, as allies have attempted to offset commitments to the common defence by either bargaining down their own contributions or exhorting to greater effort those regarded as not pulling their weight. In the aggregate, however, such bargaining processes have strengthened rather than weakened NATO, as all allies have retained a core interest in the organization's continuation. Without it, all would be worse off and none would have access to the avenues of advantage which NATO affords; intra-alliance bargaining among 'friendly rivals' is thus the key to NATO's survival.⁵⁰ But NATO's members are only willing to commit to this process if the organization of which they are part is seen, in the long term, as credible.

Alliance credibility is, therefore, in its own right, a marker of institutional health. Since the end of the Cold War, this quality has rested on perceptions of operational commitment and effectiveness. During NATO's 1999 Kosovo air campaign, 'ensuring NATO's credibility' was considered to be of such importance that the US Defense Department listed it as a formal war aim.⁵¹ In Afghanistan, meanwhile, to quote Secretary Gates once more, 'the credibility of NATO, and indeed the viability of the Euro-Atlantic security project itself', were seen to 'depend on how [well] we perform [in that country]'.⁵² Appeals to credibility can serve to galvanize the alliance; but, equally, they can serve to advertise the challenges ahead. In Bosnia and Kosovo commitments were made—and kept—to maintain a NATO-led military presence until conditions were judged to warrant withdrawal, force-downsizing or a handing over of responsibilities to another

⁴⁶ Gates, 'The security and defense agenda'.

⁴⁷ See 'Financial and economic data relating to NATO defence', press release (Brussels: NATO, 2014), http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_topics/20140224_140224-PR2014-028-Defence-exp.pdf, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁴⁸ Remarks of US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel at the Munich Conference on Security, 1 Feb. 2014, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1828>, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁴⁹ Xavier Pintat (rapporteur), 'From smart defence to strategic defence: pooling and sharing from the start', NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Defence and Security Committee, 12 Oct. 2013, pp. 4–5.

⁵⁰ Wallace Thies, *Friendly rivals: bargaining and burden-shifting in NATO* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2003).

⁵¹ *Kosovo/Operation Allied Force after-action report* (Washington DC: Department of Defense, 2000), p. 1.

⁵² Speech to the Munich Conference on Security, 10 Feb. 2008, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1214>, accessed 11 June 2014.

institution. NATO and its member states could thus claim to be withdrawing in good order and leaving behind a more secure and stable situation than they had found. In Afghanistan, by contrast, the commitment to withdraw from combat missions by the end of 2014 (and, as seems likely, from training and mentoring by the end of 2016) seems set in stone *regardless* of what may happen on the ground in the interim, or afterwards.

The virtues of NATO

Our excursion through NATO's current travails should not be seen as tending towards a view that the cause of the alliance is lost. The motors of NATO may be exhibiting wear and tear, but they are serviceable. Before we consider the ways in which that servicing might be done, it is worth qualifying the picture we have painted so far of a NATO bogged down by problems. While we accept that these problems are real, it is important to bear in mind some important qualifications.

NATO is *sui generis* in the sophistication of its permanent command and planning structures, and the degree to which relations and processes among allies (consensus decision-making, standardization, interoperability, joint doctrine, common infrastructure and so on) are institutionalized. These assets, precisely because they are permanent and are tried and tested, place NATO at some advantage when compared with more transient coalitions of the willing.⁵³ After the Cold War, the tasks to which these assets should be directed have become much less easy to articulate, yet the centrality of NATO remains. Russia has not taken the place of the Soviet adversary, but the need for deterrence and reassurance is still urgent for some allies. NATO's transatlantic character may have been diluted, but alternative transmission routes such as the TTIP lack NATO's security logic. Even the German question, long considered solved, retains a contemporary resonance—not because Germany needs to be nailed down by the discipline of alliance, but rather because a Europe without NATO (and, hence, without America) would recreate a destabilizing balance-of-power logic premised on competing centres of Russian and German influence.⁵⁴

Yet, as noted above, the most visible manifestation of NATO's development in the post-Cold War period has been deployment in operations. Here, the alliance has demonstrated a surprising resilience. Patricia Weitsman, in a comprehensive survey of its 'era of interventions', has noted NATO's 'increasing robustness, adaptability, and vitality' in the face of 'repeated missions'.⁵⁵ Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Libya have certainly given rise to problems of alliance management and inequitable contributions but, as Weitsman makes clear, in each case 'painful lessons' have been learned and NATO can claim at least to have averted a far worse state of affairs than

⁵³ Celeste Wallander, 'Institutional assets and adaptability: NATO after the Cold War', *International Organization* 54: 4, 2000, pp. 705–35.

⁵⁴ Sten Rynning, 'Germany is more than Europe can handle: or, why NATO remains a pacifier', NATO Defence College Research Paper no. 96 (Rome, Sept. 2013).

⁵⁵ Patricia A. Weitsman, *Waging war: alliances, coalitions, and institutions of interstate violence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), p. 190.

would have been likely had it not intervened. Even in Afghanistan, NATO adjusted and refocused the cumbersome ISAF command structures, acted as the format for coordination between what had been separate allied and American operations in the country, and through a hugely ambitious training programme of the Afghan national security forces has set the country up with the best hope in decades to achieve a modicum of security sustainability.⁵⁶ Further, in Afghanistan the allies have fought together for over a decade—a test of collective resolve almost unparalleled in modern warfare. NATO, Hew Strachan has observed, has emerged from Afghanistan looking ‘more robust, rather than less so’.⁵⁷

Crucially, the benefits of NATO are also felt by the United States. A perception that the opposite is true has flowed from an argument that NATO is irrelevant to American global strategic priorities, whether the ‘global war on terror’ of the Bush era, the counterterrorist strategies of the Obama administration focused on North Africa and the wider Middle East, or the rebalance to Asia.⁵⁸ NATO’s value to America should, however, be judged by other measures. As a global power, the United States relies on a worldwide network of alliance arrangements. Some, such as NATO, are formally multilateral, while others cluster together a series of bilateral commitments (as in US relations with Taiwan, South Korea and Japan in East Asia, or with Israel and Saudi Arabia in the Middle East). NATO is thus one of the many moving parts of US global strategy. It should not be judged by how well it services goals for which it was never intended and where the United States has little expectation of effort. We accept that Afghanistan may appear anomalous here: there should have been no assumption that NATO would undertake stabilization and counter-insurgency work in Central Asia. But it is the exception that, in many ways, proves the rule. As Sarah Kreps has argued, where the United States faces a direct threat and decides to act within a short time-frame, it is likely to operate alone or with select partners (as it did in Iraq and initially in Afghanistan); but where the engagement is prolonged, difficult and complex (as the Afghan case came to be and as the Balkans was before it), it will seek the involvement of allies. Working with allies boosts legitimacy, spreads the burden of intervention and relieves the pressure of overstretch in the light of America’s multiple global commitments.⁵⁹

As NATO moves towards a less interventionist posture, these benefits are perhaps less obvious. However, the material resource built up by NATO remains a known quantity for the United States, as does the reservoir of shared operational experience with allies.⁶⁰ It is for this reason that NATO retains a particular status in US strategic thinking. Ignoring that fact can result in a misreading of the US

⁵⁶ Sten Rynning, *NATO in Afghanistan: the liberal disconnect* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), pp. 176–206.

⁵⁷ Hew Strachan, *The direction of war: contemporary strategy in historical perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 84.

⁵⁸ Charles A. Kupchan, ‘The last days of the Atlantic alliance’, *Financial Times*, 19 Nov. 2002, <http://www.cfr.org/international-law/last-days-atlantic-alliance/p5208>, accessed 11 June 2014; Manea, ‘NATO’s post-ISAF challenges’.

⁵⁹ Sarah Kreps, *Coalitions of convenience: United States military interventions after the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 1–13.

⁶⁰ Remarks of US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel.

position. The inference drawn by some that NATO has been downgraded by the American military's 'rebalancing' towards the Asia-Pacific region has tended to overlook certain unambiguous statements in the Department of Defense's 2012 strategic guidance. In this document, Europe, significantly, was still seen as America's 'principal partner in seeking global and economic security', and would 'remain so for the foreseeable future'. The United States, in this context, retained a critical interest in 'bolstering the strength and vitality of NATO' and the capabilities of European allies.⁶¹ The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review has, more recently, made essentially the same point.⁶² Consequently, American military engagement in Europe, while in decline, still serves the important purposes of affirming its commitment to NATO, of maintaining the interoperability of allies and of developing the military capabilities of NATO's new members.⁶³ Also important in this connection is American thinking on European security. A secure and peaceful Europe is viewed as NATO's singular contribution to American global priorities. It is also a precondition for the pursuit of other objectives: a forward presence in Europe (which includes the US Navy Sixth Fleet headquartered in Naples and US Air Forces Europe in Ramstein, Germany) affords the United States the means for operations in both Africa and the Middle East.⁶⁴

As for the European allies themselves, here the perceived benefits of NATO clearly vary. But again, context is important. NATO has not experienced defection, a problem common to alliances, and while NATO has certainly been troubled by disagreement, it is significant that the two continental powers that have over the years voiced the greatest anxieties—France and Turkey—have never come close to renouncing membership. The former has, in fact, since the late 2000s shifted from its once semi-detached position by embarking upon a reintegration into NATO military structures, a course recently confirmed in the 2013 French white paper on defence and security.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, it is perhaps so obvious as to be unremarkable that NATO remains central to national strategies. As pressures on national defence budgets have persisted, so has the view grown among Europe's major powers (the UK included) that 'delivering capability' in defence is best achieved through working with allies.⁶⁶ NATO, in other words, becomes more important, not less.

NATO's agenda

NATO summits tend to be comprehensive affairs. They survey the entire sweep of alliance activities, comment on pressing international issues, and situate NATO

⁶¹ *Sustaining US global leadership*, pp. 2–3.

⁶² US Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (Washington DC, 2014), p. 18.

⁶³ John R. Deni, 'Maintaining transatlantic strategic, operational and tactical interoperability in an era of austerity', *International Affairs* 90: 3, May 2014, pp. 583–600.

⁶⁴ US Department of Defence, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, p. 35.

⁶⁵ *French white paper: defence and national security 2013*, pp. 60–61, http://www.rpfrance-otan.org/IMG/pdf/White_paper_on_defense_2013.pdf, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁶⁶ Julian Lindley-French cited in House of Commons Defence Committee, *Towards the next defence and security review*, Part One: 7th Report of Session 2013–14, vol. 1 (London: The Stationery Office, Jan. 2014), pp. 20–21.

in the context of a range of security challenges.⁶⁷ Each summit also serves to reaffirm transatlantic solidarity and the principles of the North Atlantic Treaty, to agree shifts in priority (often occasioned by dramatic movements in NATO's security environment) and to provide NATO's bureaucratic and military structures with high-level political guidance. Within this context, one can expect the 2014 summit to consider the shape of NATO's post-ISAF mission in Afghanistan and the implications of the crisis in Ukraine. Unlike the summits of 2010 and 2012, however, the first of these matters will not be the summit's signature theme. Whatever the challenges of the ongoing transition, Afghanistan is now 'more of an issue of the past' for NATO, and one which will be less and less determining of its future.⁶⁸ In this light, it would be tempting to see a switch from Afghanistan to Ukraine as somehow emblematic of a major reorientation in NATO, away from expeditionary missions and back towards territorial defence. Such a shift in gears, however, is not as simple as it sounds. It might also narrow NATO's mission far too much, and do so in ways which are neglectful of other business, not least the need to stabilize relations with Russia.

In the run-up to the Wales summit, this debate is already being played out, and it will clearly inform the summit outcome. But what happens at Newport will also emerge from the wider mix of issues already described. How these issues might be addressed we see as falling within three categories: readiness, reassurance and renewal.

Readiness, the first category, has already become a buzzword in NATO circles. It builds on the notion that NATO after ISAF ought to be prepared for a range of contingencies once that major deployment comes to an end. As Secretary General Rasmussen made clear in February 2013, the alliance is 'shifting from operational engagement to operational readiness. From campaign to contingency. From deployed NATO to prepared NATO.'⁶⁹ This characterization of the alliance has not gone down well with some NATO insiders, who view it as imprecise ('prepared for what?') and unambitious (implying NATO is of decreasing relevance).⁷⁰ But, read closely, Rasmussen's prescription portrays a NATO still with plenty of life, committed to collective defence, 'cyber resilience' and crisis management.⁷¹ NATO is unlikely to conduct an ISAF-style major expeditionary land operation in the near future, but KFOR remains in place—a modest but still essential mission for the stability of Kosovo—as do NATO's two maritime missions (Operation Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean and Ocean Shield around the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf of Aden). Additional missions are difficult to foresee, given the current aversion among NATO governments to intervention, but NATO has undertaken

⁶⁷ See e.g. Chicago summit declaration, 20 May 2012, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87593.htm?mode=pressrelease, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁶⁸ Karl-Heinz Kamp, 'NATO's 2014 summit agenda', NATO Defence College Research Paper no. 97 (Rome, Sept. 2013), p. 2.

⁶⁹ Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'NATO after ISAF: staying successful together', speech to the Munich Security Conference, 2 Feb. 2013, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_94321.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁷⁰ Kamp, 'NATO's 2014 summit agenda', pp. 7–8.

⁷¹ Rasmussen, 'NATO after ISAF'.

contingency planning for a coercive air campaign in Syria, and has been the subject of a proposal to undertake border patrols in any future Palestinian state.⁷² Neither of these scenarios is likely to gain political traction at present, but they demonstrate NATO's latent potential. In the meantime, readiness has a certain political logic. Its aim is to preserve, at a time of economic austerity and political wariness, 'NATO's ... conventional military core structure' and 'integrated command system', such that the alliance can mount operations when deemed necessary, while still preserving the capacity to service its collective defence obligation.⁷³ It is also meant to prioritize developing areas where NATO has a commonality of interest—hence the agreement by defence ministers in June 2014 that the alliance would strengthen its cyber-defence policy.⁷⁴

Announcing in April 2014 a proposal for an 'action plan to strengthen [NATO] readiness', Rasmussen was aware that success would depend on making headway against some difficult resourcing issues.⁷⁵ Rasmussen's appeal here was, in part, predictable—to get allies to meet the NATO defence spending target of 2 per cent of GDP. This burden-sharing measure has become a lost cause for the alliance, and the Ukraine crisis is unlikely to make much of a difference. A resurgent Russia directly threatening the continent is too distant a prospect to alter budgetary priorities across much of Europe. In Poland, Norway and the Baltic states, an already discernible trend of rising defence spending might continue, but the most that can be expected in the short term among NATO's other European states (including the biggest spenders, France, the UK and Germany) is a halt to, rather than a reversal of, reductions now under way.⁷⁶ Looking further ahead, the prospect of an uplift in defence spending is no brighter. As a study of the EU Institute for Security Studies has recently noted, 'further reductions will inevitably occur due to a mix of demographic pressures and budgetary necessities ... With an ageing population and growing social security and healthcare costs, the armed forces remain a likely target for further cuts.'⁷⁷

What all this suggests is that NATO's most effective contribution to maintaining military readiness is not to exhort allies to spend more but to 'do better with less'.⁷⁸ Coordination in service of efficiency has, in fact, always been at NATO's heart, and in recent years the alliance has sought to make headway in this respect through the Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) system, a joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance initiative to enhance situational awareness in support

⁷² Jodi Rudoren, 'Palestinian leader seeks NATO force in future state', *International New York Times*, 2 Feb. 2014.

⁷³ Jamie Shea, 'NATO post-2014: preserving the essentials', in Sven Biscop and Daniel Fiott, eds, *The state of defence in Europe: state of emergency?* (Brussels: Egmont, Royal Institute for International Relations, 2013), p. 29.

⁷⁴ 'NATO steps up collective defence, support for reforms in Ukraine', NATO press release, 3 June 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_110609.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁷⁵ Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, speech at the NATO transformation seminar, Paris, 8 April 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_108909.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁷⁶ Steven Erlanger, 'Doubt that Europe will beef up forces', *International New York Times*, 27 March 2013.

⁷⁷ Antonio Missiroli, James Rogers and Andrea Gilli, 'Enabling the future. European military capabilities 2013–2025: challenges and avenues', Report no. 16 (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, May 2013), p. 12.

⁷⁸ See the recent article with this title ('Doing better with less') by two NATO officials, Mels de Zeeuw and Mike Rowland, <http://www.act.nato.int/article-2013-1-8>, accessed 11 June 2014.

of operations, an enhanced NATO Defence Planning Process, a streamlining of its command structures and the creation of a joint cyber-security capability.⁷⁹ In parallel, NATO has pursued two headline policies endorsed at Chicago in 2012. The first, Smart Defence, aims to 'develop, acquire and/or operate capabilities collectively rather than individually, thereby making more efficient use of scarce resources' and has so far given rise to 150 projects gathering together clusters of nations within NATO.⁸⁰ The second, the Connected Forces Initiative, is concerned with maintaining interoperability of NATO forces, and has focused on education, training and exercises (Operation Steadfast Jazz in 2013 was NATO's largest exercise since 2006), an enhancement of the NATO Response Force (NRF) and the coordination of special forces, building on the NATO Special Operations HQ (NSHQ) set up in 2010. Progress in each of these areas may well have been halting,⁸¹ but taken together they offer three distinct benefits. First, they play to NATO's unique strengths as an institution of coordination. Taking the focus away from a defence spending target makes clear that, as an alliance, NATO's capability aggregation function lies as much in the qualitative as the quantitative domain.⁸² Second, they provide a very practical way of sustaining partnerships. Austria and Sweden, for instance, have personnel at NSHQ, and Sweden, along with Finland and Ukraine, has also assigned forces to the NRF. Third, the benefits of interoperability and shared experience that such initiatives engender plays into complementary policies being pursued by allies outside a formal NATO setting. This includes important bilateral arrangements such as the 2010 Franco-British Defence Treaty as well as regional projects such as NORDEFECO, which since 2009 has involved defence cooperation among three NATO allies (Denmark, Iceland and Norway) plus Finland and Sweden; the trilateral Belgian–Dutch–Luxembourg defence agreement of 2012; and defence coordination within the Visegrad Group of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

These functional solutions appear largely uncontroversial, but the logic of efficiency raises at least two major issues which the alliance needs to address. First, a concerted move to bring together NATO's efforts with those of the EU ought to be a priority. The political complexities of this challenge (relating to the vexed matter of relations between Turkey and Cyprus and the absence of these two countries from, respectively, the EU and NATO) ought not to be allowed to act as a break on attempts to harmonize what are essentially complementary processes at work in the two organizations. The EU's Common Security and Defence Policy has since its inception in 1999 been concerned with enhancing European capabilities, while its 'pooling and sharing' programme addresses 'precisely the same [challenges]' as Smart Defence.⁸³ As Sven Biscop has argued, this requires far more meaningful coordination of the work of the EU and NATO, the price of which

⁷⁹ *Secretary General's Annual Report 2013*, pp. 16–18.

⁸⁰ Pintat, 'From smart defence to strategic defence', pp. 1, 5.

⁸¹ On the problems of the NRF, for instance, see the comments of the NATO Secretary General in 'NATO: ready, robust, rebalanced', Carnegie Europe, Brussels, 19 Sept. 2013, p. 11, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/2013-09-19_NATO.pdf, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁸² On capability aggregation in alliances, see Weitsman, *Dangerous alliances*, p. 3.

⁸³ Pintat, 'From smart defence to strategic defence', p. 1.

may well have to be the creation of specific arrangements that allow Turkey (as is already the case with Norway) access to the European Defence Agency (EDA).⁸⁴ Second, in a seemingly indefinite period of defence austerity it is worth considering just how far a pooling of capabilities can extend. Political barriers remain significant here. A pooling of European land forces, whatever the gains it offers in functional efficiency,⁸⁵ is currently off the NATO agenda, but in other respects there is clear forward momentum. Common funding has long been the premise of NATO's Airborne Warning and Control (AWAC) fleet, a principle more recently applied to the alliance's theatre ballistic missile defence initiative. Practical necessity has pushed NATO to seek solutions to combined shortages of strategic airlift and, more recently, of maritime patrol aircraft. Further, NATO has developed a limited high-altitude drone capability within the AGS programme (even if European shortfalls of medium-altitude drones are seen as best met through an EU rather than a NATO platform).⁸⁶ There is also scope for NATO to extend its current cyber-defence policy beyond the protection of allied communication and information networks towards more effective coordination of national cyber-defence efforts.⁸⁷

The discussion of NATO capabilities has become even more urgent as a consequence of the crisis in Ukraine. Here, readiness has been a prerequisite of NATO's role in reassuring allies. That role also has a long-term relevance to NATO. At a time of operational pause, it is a means of drawing together many of the elements of purpose noted earlier—of partnership, transatlantic commitment and security provision; in the Ukrainian case, it also has implications for enlargement.

Reassurance is, in fact, a crucial function of alliances. If this purpose cannot be served, then credibility and resolve are cast into doubt and the very survival of an alliance is called into question.⁸⁸ The need for reassurance, however, poses a particular dilemma for more powerful states: do they firmly commit themselves to their more vulnerable allies and so court the risk of entrapment, or do they commit in a qualified fashion (or not at all) in order to avoid becoming embroiled in defending interests of marginal concern? If the latter course is chosen, the danger of entrapment is minimized, but it comes with a cost elsewhere, in that more vulnerable states feel abandoned and the alliance is undermined.⁸⁹

In such circumstances, support for vulnerable states, when it does occur, is as relevant to upholding the integrity of an alliance writ large as it is in showing solidarity with the particular country in trouble. Thus, whatever the feeling in Turkey at the level of protection NATO has provided on the Syrian border, that

⁸⁴ Sven Biscop, 'The summit of our ambition? European defence between Brussels and Wales', Security Policy Brief no. 55 (Brussels: Egmont, Royal Institute for International Relations, March 2014). The validity of this position was also confirmed in discussions with NATO officials whose brief covers liaison with the EDA.

⁸⁵ *The European added-value of EU spending: can the EU help its member states to save money* (Berlin: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2013), pp. 86, 95, 99.

⁸⁶ Xavier Pintat (rapporteur), 'Smart defence: platform acquisition in the face of new technologies—drones: a case study', NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Defence and Security Committee, 9 May 2014, pp. 6, 9–10.

⁸⁷ Philippe Vitel (rapporteur), 'Cyber space and Euro-Atlantic security', NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Science and Technology Committee, 30 April 2014, pp. 10–11.

⁸⁸ Stephen M. Walt, 'Why alliances endure or collapse', *Survival* 39: 1, 1997, p. 165.

⁸⁹ Glenn H. Snyder, 'The security dilemma in alliance politics', *World Politics* 36: 4, 1984, p. 466.

it has been forthcoming at all is a measure of the seriousness with which alliance solidarity is taken. A similar episode has been played out in relation to Ukraine. Russian interference in Crimea in March 2014 prompted Poland and the Baltic states to seek consultations in NATO via the rarely used procedure of Article 4 of the North Atlantic Treaty.⁹⁰ There then followed a series of measures which served no obvious military purpose in altering the course of Russian actions in Ukraine, but which made considerable sense in demonstrating the practical commitment of the alliance to the security of its more exposed members. The bulk of these measures have been undertaken by the United States, involving troop rotations to the Baltic states and Poland, an enhancement of the US–Poland Aviation Detachment, and an increased maritime presence in the Black Sea in support of the Romanian, Bulgarian and Turkish navies. The United States, along with British, Danish and French aircraft, has increased its contribution to NATO's Baltic air policing mission; NATO's AWAC aircraft have undertaken additional patrols over Poland and Romania; NATO standing naval forces have increased patrols in the Baltic Sea and eastern Mediterranean; and plans have been agreed to upgrade the NATO Multinational Corps Northeast in Poland.⁹¹ Meanwhile, in April, NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, General Philip Breedlove, was tasked with bringing to the Wales summit 'a package of land, air and maritime measures that would build assurance for our easternmost allies',⁹² and in June President Obama announced (subject to congressional approval) a \$1 billion European Reassurance Initiative intended to 'increase exercises, training and rotational presence across Europe but especially on the territory of our newer allies'.⁹³

A strategy of reassurance brings with it the need for careful judgement. The corollary of reassuring allies is deterrence of a presumed adversary. The intertwining of these twin tasks renders clarity of intention essential. On one level, NATO (with American support) has responded unambiguously. In the light of Russia's 'illegal military intervention in Ukraine', NATO foreign ministers declared in early April that the alliance would continue to provide 'visible assurance of NATO's cohesion and commitment to deterrence and collective defence against any threat of aggression'.⁹⁴ President Obama's speech in Warsaw in June made the point equally forcefully, confirming NATO's (and America's) Article 5 commitment to the defence of Poland, the Baltic states and Romania.⁹⁵ However unlikely a Russian incursion against any of NATO's members may appear,

⁹⁰ All previous occasions had involved Turkey—in 1991 and 2003 in relation to Iraq, and in 2012 owing to over-spill from the conflict in Syria.

⁹¹ 'Fact sheet: European Reassurance Initiative and other US efforts in support of NATO allies and partners', The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 3 June 2014, <http://usnato.tumblr.com/post/87687039050/fact-sheet-european-reassurance-initiative-other>, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁹² Breedlove, cited in John Vandiver and Slobodan Lekic, 'NATO to focus on reassuring allies about Ukraine', *Stars and Stripes*, 11 April 2014, <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2014/04/11/nato-to-focus-on-reassuring-allies-about-ukraine.html?comp=700001075741&rank=7>, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁹³ 'Fact sheet: European Reassurance Initiative'.

⁹⁴ 'Statement by NATO foreign ministers', 1 April 2014, paras 1 and 7, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_108501.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁹⁵ 'Remarks by President Obama at [the] 25th anniversary of Freedom Day, Warsaw, Poland', 4 June 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/06/04/remarks-president-obama-25th-anniversary-freedom-day-warsaw-poland>, accessed 11 June 2014.

reassurance acknowledges that such an action is conceivable and that the alliance is primed to deter it. Yet demonstrating NATO resolve has had to go hand in hand with an appreciation of the need for some underlying stability in the principal external relationship. NATO foreign ministers decided in early April to suspend practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia. This put paid to largely inconsequential joint projects on counter-narcotics and helicopter maintenance, and closed down talks with Moscow on NATO's ballistic missile defence project; but NATO has so far managed to retain access to the Northern Distribution Network out of Afghanistan (part of which transits Russia).⁹⁶

More fundamentally, NATO has refrained from steps likely to be construed in Moscow as provocative. This has been evident in three ways. First, declarations of support for NATO's eastern allies have made no reference to the nuclear posture of the alliance, and in this respect it is unlikely that the Wales summit will depart from the careful language of the Deterrence and Defence Posture Review endorsed at the Chicago summit in May 2012.⁹⁷ Second, NATO's major powers have resisted suggestions (emanating from Warsaw) that forces be permanently stationed in Poland and the Baltic states⁹⁸—a move which, if taken, would arguably breach the terms of the 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act and, in all likelihood, lead to the demise of the NATO–Russia Council. Third, and perhaps most significant, NATO has extended only limited assistance to the government in Ukraine. Having witnessed a Russian-backed annexation of Crimea and having viewed askance the destabilization of eastern Ukraine orchestrated by Russian intelligence and special forces,⁹⁹ NATO states are well aware of the dangers of escalation should the alliance provide lethal military equipment to the Ukrainian government. NATO defence ministers in June agreed to work on a 'comprehensive package of long-term measures' in support of the Ukrainian armed forces, but these remained within the ambit of existing arrangements geared principally to defence reform and military modernization.¹⁰⁰ Of a piece with this approach, NATO has also refrained from renewing its commitment of membership to Ukraine (and to Georgia). NATO's pledge to these states in 2008 now seems mistaken.¹⁰¹ There is

⁹⁶ Interview with Gen. William Fraser, head of US Transportation Command, *Defense News*, 5 May 2014, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140505/DEFREG02/305050010/Interview-Gen-William-Fraser>, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁹⁷ See esp. para. 8–12, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_87597.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁹⁸ Bruno Waterfield and Tony Paterson, 'Ukraine crisis: Poland asks NATO to station 10,000 troops on its territory', *Daily Telegraph* online, 1 April 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ukraine/10737838/Ukraine-crisis-Poland-asks-Nato-to-station-10000-troops-on-its-territory.html>, accessed 11 June 2014.

⁹⁹ Sam Jones, "'Masterly' Russian operations in Ukraine leave NATO one step behind', *Financial Times*, 9 June 2014.

¹⁰⁰ NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, press conference, 3 June 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_110618.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁰¹ Note, in this light, that the membership commitment at the Bucharest summit was, in any case, a diplomatic compromise. Germany and France had opposed granting MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia. Acknowledging the possibility of membership in the summit communiqué was thus a statement of principle shorn of the practical means of achieving it. See Stephen Erlanger and Stephen Lee Myers, 'NATO allies oppose Bush on Georgia and Ukraine', *New York Times* online, 3 April 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/03/world/europe/03nato.html?ex=1364875200&en=a29985636d0e4a&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss&_r=0, accessed 11 June 2014.

no consensus within NATO to accept these countries and no appetite to defend them in a war with Russia.¹⁰² Their membership, even if it could be agreed, would therefore dangerously ramp up acrimony with Russia and cast real doubt on the credibility of NATO's collective defence commitment.¹⁰³ These matters seem at least to be accepted in Kiev, as successive Ukrainian governments (including that which replaced the ousted President Viktor Yanukovich in February 2014) have themselves ruled out any desire to accede to the alliance.¹⁰⁴ In the light of these circumstances, NATO would do well to concentrate on enlargement where it is feasible and where collective commitments can be upheld—not least among the current MAP countries in the Balkans. A NATO strategy of reassurance as outlined here has begun to crystallize in reaction to the Ukraine crisis and should be central to the business of the Wales summit. It is based on a realistic level of ambition for NATO without any immediate implications for resourcing; it also has the advantage of enjoying alliance consensus. The latter has been achieved by virtue of certain policy delimitations. These are not meant to concede the argument that Russia has a right to interfere in Ukraine, but they do acknowledge that NATO's strength lies first and foremost in protecting its members. Reassurance, bluntly put, should be about defending allies, not partners. The costs to Russia of undermining Ukrainian sovereignty are best exacted by other institutions (e.g. the G7 and the EU) and other methods (sanctions, most obviously). NATO, in parallel, has done the right thing in making clear that business as usual with Russia is no longer possible and in offering to Ukraine assistance which, while limited, at least demonstrates on which side it stands in the argument with Moscow.

The crisis in Ukraine, Fogh Rasmussen has suggested, is a 'game-changer' for NATO.¹⁰⁵ It is too soon to tell if it will fall within the lineage of events, stretching from Bosnia through Kosovo, 9/11, Libya and Afghanistan, that have shaped NATO's post-Cold War history. Some of the worst-case imaginings of Russian behaviour—an invasion of eastern Ukraine, the annexation of the trans-Dniestrian region of Moldova, and the destabilization of the Baltic states, Norway and (non-NATO) Finland—would certainly answer the question of NATO's purpose. A Russia bent on such a course would provide a clear-cut rationale for a recalibration of the alliance towards European defence, a compelling case for the reaffirmation of transatlantic solidarity, and reason sufficient to reverse defence cuts among many allies. Yet that course should not be assumed as likely—not least because the Putin regime, for all its nationalist, anti-NATO rhetoric, has much to lose from it (according to Anatol Lieven, 'a collapse of economic and cultural

¹⁰² See e.g. the comments of German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, cited in 'Searching for deterrence: Ukraine crisis exposes gaps between NATO and Berlin', *Der Spiegel* online, 7 April 2014, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ukraine-crisis-exposes-gaps-between-berlin-and-nato-a-962978.html>, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁰³ John J. Mearsheimer, 'Getting Ukraine wrong', *International New York Times*, 14 March 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Pavel Polityuk, 'PM tells Ukrainians: no NATO membership, armed groups to disarm', Reuters, 18 March 2014, www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/18/us-ukraine-crisis-nato-idUSBREA2HoD720140318, accessed 11 June 2014.

¹⁰⁵ NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 'A strong NATO in a changed world', address to the Brussels Forum, 21 March 2014, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_108215.htm, accessed 11 June 2014.

ties with the west' and a reorientation out of necessity towards 'the status of a satellite of China'.¹⁰⁶

In the meantime, the crisis has focused the minds of policy-makers and so reaffirmed the notion—largely lost in the faraway conflict in Afghanistan—of NATO's standing as the core organization for the security and defence of the West. NATO summits are often occasions for unveiling new commitments or grand statements of policy, but that in 2014 could do something even more fundamental in this light. The dangers of the Ukrainian crisis, the sense of shared experience garnered in Afghanistan and the alliance's marking of its 65th year present NATO with the opportunity to make a considered statement of renewal.

What, then, might such a summit communiqué look like? First, any such document would need to be attuned to its environment, to note the significance (even the gravity) of the situation NATO faces. Second, it would need to attest, without qualification, that NATO is equal to the task of meeting that challenge. And third, it would need to do these two things in a manner that amounts to a solemn reaffirmation of NATO solidarity. In this connection, it would not be enough to simply catalogue NATO's ongoing tasks. Nor would it be enough to reaffirm the commitment of the allies to specific provisions of the North Atlantic Treaty (such as Article 5 on collective defence or Article 10 on enlargement). Much more significant would be a solemn reaffirmation of the standing of the treaty itself. This need not mean a commitment to a formal legal process of updating (that would entail a long and perilous exercise of intra-alliance consensus-shaping followed by fraught domestic legislative processes), but might entail rather a clear statement (referenced in the communiqué but drafted as a standalone document) that speaks to the commitments and spirit of the original treaty, makes clear NATO's virtues, and specifies with vigour its purpose and function. For this to be meaningful, it would need to tap into the features that are fundamental to the alliance: its historical origins, its legitimacy and durability, and its unique credentials as a body of military integration and coordination.

Conclusion

When Prime Minister David Cameron announced in September 2013 the venue of the Wales NATO summit, the date was deemed significant because it fell just a few months short of the termination of ISAF.¹⁰⁷ In looking beyond 2014, the summit, it was assumed, would be preoccupied with the implications of the drawdown in Afghanistan plus the by now routine matters of capabilities and partnerships.¹⁰⁸ The Ukraine crisis has clearly shifted the focus. In doing so, it has cast a light on many longstanding issues that need to be addressed if the alliance

¹⁰⁶ Anatol Lieven, 'Face-off in Ukraine', *Prospect*, April 2014, p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ This is also the month of the referendum on Scottish independence. A 'yes' vote would have considerable significance for NATO, but the alliance has remained studiously silent on the matter. Our soundings in Washington, Brussels and London indicate that this will not figure in the formal summit business and, out of deference to the host, has also not been an issue of discussion in the summit preparations.

¹⁰⁸ 'Kerry cites goals for 2014 NATO summit', US State Department press release, 4 Dec. 2013, <http://london.usembassy.gov/natoo44.html>, accessed 11 June 2014.

is to be reinvigorated. The NATO summit provides the ideal opportunity to take that process forward. Given its location, this is a task in which the UK government needs to join with enthusiasm.

The agenda the UK should seek to promote needs to be informed by the exigencies of the moment but, equally, should speak to the longer-term priorities of the alliance. The three categories outlined above offer a way to group these priorities together. Reassurance, readiness and renewal provide a basis for real and substantive outcomes at the summit itself, while also setting the direction for a consolidated NATO in the years ahead. Inevitably, great effort will be required once the immediate summit business is concluded. Cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and slow, consensus-seeking decision-making will require NATO to move through the gears of incremental step-change to effect the necessary repairs. Again, a comparison with the last NATO summit in the UK is instructive. Following the 1990 London Declaration, it took a full 16 months for NATO to consolidate its new ambition in the 1991 Strategic Concept (the first such document the alliance had adopted since 1968). That document would presage many of the innovations in the alliance in the 1990s, but even these did not come quickly—NATO's first post-Cold War enlargement, for instance, was not formally concluded until 1999.

But summit outcomes still matter, however long they take to implement. The summit in Wales will thus be deemed a success should it rally the allies to a meaningful set of decisions. NATO approaches the occasion in anxious times. NATO in the post-Cold War period has never, in fact, been able to contemplate its way forward from a fixed position; its business is too important to afford it such respite. The challenge, therefore, is for NATO to service its motors while they are still running.

