

# WHAT NATO NEEDS FROM BRITAIN:

How the UK can most effectively contribute to the Alliance in the light of emerging geopolitical, technological and strategic threats.





Meeting of the North Atlantic Council Heads of States at Governments at the NATO Wales Summit, 5 September 2014.  
Source: NATO.

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines various ways in which the United Kingdom (UK) can contribute politically, economically, and strategically to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in order to sustain both the UK's national security and the collective security of NATO allies. The functions of NATO are briefly evaluated in relation to the context of modern threats facing the alliance and then the limitations of the UK's Trident nuclear weapons programme in addressing these threats are discussed. The paper analyses a range of approaches for sustaining security against contemporary geopolitical, technological and strategic threats along with both the main issues and arguments by which the challenges can be understood. The paper presents the argument that the UK is an important member of NATO as it is a significant contributor to the alliance politically, financially, and through its military assets. Overall, the UK's strategic contribution to European NATO is particularly important in geopolitical and cyber domains.

## INTRODUCTION

NATO's main function is to maintain collective security and to respond to threats to American and European interests in military and political affairs. Soon after the end of World War Two, the NATO coalition was conceived by the United States in the emerging climate of the bilateral global conflict of the Cold War to supplement American military capability with the financial and military reinforcement of Europe. However, in its modern form NATO aims, in addition to the collective security role, to undertake global crisis management through political and military co-operation and peace-keeping interventions.<sup>1</sup> The controversies around the utility of NATO in the modern day evolve from its status as an outdated Cold-War structure which was set up to challenge conventional, total-war-gearred adversaries and the nuclear-armed threat of the Soviet Union. In modern times, inter-state war between two nations with total war tactics is much less of a risk than asymmetric warfare, and NATO appears unwieldy to meeting this challenge. As cyber technology moves into expanded globalised usage along with expanded reach, communication range and connectivity, the threat of cyber-attack becomes another source of vulnerability to both the United Kingdom and NATO partners<sup>2</sup>, alongside other emerging threats such as terrorism, energy security, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

As an international organisation NATO has been active and influential in contemporary politics in attempting to find solutions to recent conflicts, but success in this area requires correct synergies between the contributing members and crucial co-operation in both planning and action.<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 Sloan, Stanley R. *Permanent Alliance? NATO and the Transatlantic Bargain from Truman to Obama*. Pp.212- 220.
  - 2 Dogrul, Murat, Adil Aslan, and Eyyup Celik. "Developing an International Cooperation on Cyber Defense and Deterrence against Cyber Terrorism."
  - 3 Harsch, Michael F. 'The Logic of Inter-organizational Cooperation' in 'The Power of Dependence: NATO-UN Cooperation in Crisis Management'. Pp.1-2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

NATO partners currently face a number of political and security challenges, including:

- The threat of network warfare and the test of maintaining cyber security.
- The risk of conflicts in the East with Russia as a direct military threat to NATO and threats from terrorist factions such as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).<sup>4</sup>
- The challenge of resourcing NATO's capability, linked to the controversial demand to spend 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence and lack of cohesion between NATO members on agreement to invest.

What changes will be required from both NATO and the UK to create a reformed 'NATO Version 2.0' that is required for a more efficient response to these threats? This paper will discuss the challenges NATO currently faces and how it can adapt to address them, and the role the UK can play in contributing to NATO both through political leadership and military capabilities.

## NATO AT THE CURRENT TIME

NATO has faced a myriad of complex geopolitical challenges right from the moment of its creation. From 1949, after the end of World War II and into the emergence of the Cold War, NATO incorporated the functions of core political, diplomatic and military processes to sustain collective capacity to repel armed attacks.<sup>5</sup>

The organisation has the main task of operating institutionalised procedures for American-European military command and control, as military formation and power projection is seen as a vital key to maintaining security in the transatlantic area. However, because NATO works as an alliance and by consensus, a problem arises from the lack of true central authority which sometimes leads to limitations in co-ordinating common action and policy.<sup>6</sup> The United States has traditionally shown leadership in this respect, but there have always been divisions within the alliance of one sort or another. In the last decade a key area of division has been within Europe: between central and eastern European leaders who have observed that NATO needs to re-embrace collective defence and strengthen in relation to Russia, in the face of the reluctance of longer-standing members such as Germany and France<sup>7</sup>. The UK, as one of the major contributors and components for NATO, has straddled both of these positions, and may need to undertake a stronger leadership role in order to sustain both domestic and international security.

The most prominent feature of NATO's multinational agreement is Article 5 of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty, which states that an attack against one NATO member is considered as an attack against all members. The article can be viewed as the Three Musketeers "one for all

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4 Blagden, David. 'Global Multipolarity, European Security and Implications for UK Grand Strategy: Back to the Future, Once Again'. *International Affairs* 91.2 (2015): 333-50. Wiley-Blackwell. Web. 10th Aug. 2015. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-2346.12238/abstract>

5 Webber, Mark, Ellen Hallams, and Martin A. Smith. 'Repairing NATO's Motors'. *International Affairs* 90.4 (2014): 773-93. Wiley-Blackwell. Web. 14 Aug. 2015. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/doi/10.1111/1468-2346.12140/abstract>

6 Hodge, Carl C. 'A New Paradigm for NATO' in Hallams, Ellen. *NATO Beyond 9/11: The Transformation of the Atlantic Alliance*. Pp.32-36. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

7 *Ibid.* P.779.

and all for one" collective vow. In order to be able to uphold the Article 5 commitment and contribute to NATO security operations, it will remain imperative that the UK can contribute economically, politically, technologically and militarily to the alliance.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, as independent sovereignty remains the primary concern of a state, fulfilling the commitment under Article 5 may prove to be tough to deliver in a crisis as no central authority is there to ensure equal footing in weight of command between the interests of Europe and the United States.

## DO WE NEED A NEW NATO?

*NATO functioned as an agent for collective security for both American and European interests after the watershed caused by the 9/11 terrorist attacks which led to US intervention (later supported by NATO) in the war in Afghanistan. Though fatigued and strained both financially and militarily after the Afghan war, NATO is still a durable and powerful alliance which sees itself as necessary to oppose the rise of terrorist threats such as ISIS and the risk of Russian aggression against the West<sup>9</sup>. To counter challenges to collective security, an important NATO aim is to maintain interoperability between the member states. Interoperability is defined as "a measure of the degree to which various organisations or individuals are able to operate together to achieve a common goal"<sup>10</sup>.*

As a result of its experience with the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, NATO has learnt that the key to successful future collaboration and planning for collective security lies in the ability for nations to work together in a co-operative manner using agreed tactics to achieve common goals. At present, different NATO members contribute to the alliance in a variety of different capacities. However, as Mark Webber has pointed out, the pluralistic nature of the organisation with its multiple members results in a complex, muddy mixture of different concepts and conditions that can combine to render significant decisions unmanageable<sup>11</sup>. At NATO's 2011 ministerial meeting in Brussels, then US Defense Secretary Robert Gates warned that the North Atlantic alliance was in danger of becoming a 'soft' organisation as a result of the doctrines adopted by some European nations which placed a relatively low premium on combat operations. Gates highlighted the differences "between members who specialise in 'soft' humanitarian, development, peacekeeping, and talking tasks, and those conducting the 'hard' combat missions, between those willing and able to pay the price and bear the burdens of alliance commitments... those who enjoy the benefits...but don't want to share the risks and the costs"<sup>12</sup>.

While the American side of the organisation has maintained a strong grasp on military prowess and capability and a dominant influence on decision making throughout the existence of NATO,

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8 NATO. 'Collective Defence'. 7 July 2015. [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_110496.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm).

9 Hodge, Carl C. *A New Paradigm for NATO in Hallams, Ellen. NATO Beyond 9/11: The Transformation of the Atlantic Alliance*. P.28

10 Maranian, Stephen J. 'NATO Interoperability: Sustaining Trust and Capacity within the Alliance'. *NATO Research paper* 115. June 2015. Pp.1-2.

11 Cited in Hodge, Carl C. 'A New Paradigm for NATO'. Pp.32-38.

12 Matlary, J.H. and Petersson, M. 'Introduction: Will Europe Lead in NATO?' in 'NATO's European Allies: Military Capabilities and Political Will'. pp.1-3 Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Europe has been seen as free-riding on the benefits of the alliance while assisting substantially less in meeting the costs and duties of membership. In terms of spending, the American contribution to military forces stands on a 75/25 ratio above their European counterparts<sup>13</sup> (although not all US military spending is directed towards transatlantic security<sup>14</sup>). The UK and other European members have recently seen periods of financial crisis and are currently experiencing economic austerity measures that have limited military spending, exacerbating concerns over this imbalance. The pooling of resources is one of the foundations of NATO's approach to security but the reluctance to send troops and engage in threats away from home soil has become a controversial issue for political and military leaders in Europe - including Britain.

The balancing of geopolitical power since the end of the Cold War has resulted in a potential tension between the goals of individual sovereign states and NATO's collective security goals. The main needs the North Atlantic alliance has from the United Kingdom stem from burden-sharing. This includes assuring financial support, deploying military forces when necessary, contributing to the common strategic vision and finally to maintaining the coalition through compromises and installation of military adaptability<sup>15</sup>.

A reformed version of NATO can move in the right direction by envisaging and setting out a new structure which can consolidate domestic priorities for security and address political differences between members, building further on the new Strategic Concept adopted in 2010. In working with NATO, as well as meeting its share of NATO's financial and military burdens, the UK can play a positive role by acting as a champion for the necessary political reform needed to underpin development of a more powerful strategy for collective security.

This strategy could be based around a 'sustainable security' approach (see below) which does not repeat the errors from the post 9/11 crisis and improves NATO's ability to adapt to the rise of modern hybrid warfare.

## BRITISH INFLUENCE ON NATO LEADERSHIP

Patrick Porter explains that the UK will need to overcome a number of hurdles if it is to carry its traditional share of NATO's burden<sup>16</sup>. With conventional military resources currently stretched to the limit, a lack of appetite to fight foreign wars where British blood is spilt in distant countries, and adversaries waging asymmetric or irregular warfare, the UK is less well placed to contribute effectively to NATO military engagement than it has been for many years. In particular, the UK's military capability (despite modifications in the 2015 SDR to support Special Forces and strengthen intelligence gathering), remains geared, in large part, to the needs of power projection at the end of the twentieth century. The UK's nuclear weapons capability is a prime example of this.

13 *Ibid.* Page 1.

14 NATO Watch: 'Smart Defence: or how to reconcile 'Snow White and the 27 dwarfs'. NATO Watch Chicago Summit Media Briefing No. 5. [http://natowatch.org/sites/default/files/Chicago\\_Summit\\_Briefings\\_-\\_No.5\\_Smart\\_Defence.pdf](http://natowatch.org/sites/default/files/Chicago_Summit_Briefings_-_No.5_Smart_Defence.pdf)

15 *Ibid.* Pp.1-4

16 Porter, Patrick. 'Between Theory and Practice: Britain and the Use of Force' in 'NATO's European Allies: Military Capabilities and Political Will'. Pp.121-124.

The UK's nuclear arsenal is too unwieldy to use against Russian asymmetric threats or irregular and terrorist forces and is little suited to the current context NATO faces. NATO's original purpose was an arrangement for Western nations to stand against the emergence of the Soviet Union and its nuclear threat in the interests of collective security during the Cold War. This common threat aided the understanding of collectively security within an organisation comprised of multiple national sovereignties, each with its own different security sensibilities. As the Cold War threat from Russia receded, maintaining cohesive co-operation within NATO became harder in the absence of a central governing process<sup>17</sup>. The United Kingdom, being amongst the primary members of the organisation as a result of its nuclear capability, has managed to exert political force and drive through the utility of its nuclear arsenal.

While the UK remains one of the primary NATO allies and makes a substantial contribution to the military structure of the alliance, the recent downsizing of the UK's armed forces following the wear and tear of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has emerged as a controversial security issue. An 8% reduction in spending projected in the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review has expanded into a 20-30% cut in conventional strength<sup>18</sup>. These factors bring into question the significance of the UK's military weight and the UK's ability to provide meaningful support to the USA, NATO's prime provider of military strength.

Beatrice Heuser describes the capability of the UK as a key factor for NATO because of its value as a force multiplier. Support to other nations, both NATO and non-NATO, can be provided through military partnership. But the UK can also assist with re-activation of regional expertise, support for ex-colonial forces, intelligence links, and its added presence in international affairs. Professional military top tier personnel and officers are relatively expensive to recruit and administer. A less expensive and more sustainable approach to investment for defence could include dedicated expenditure on educational sources for specialists in overseas nations who can contribute to security projects. Scholarships and funding in this area can assist in achieving solutions against both military and political threats. Extending the reach of British collaboration in this manner could prove not only to be an important way of seeking less expensive methods to strengthen security for NATO, but also to extend the force multiplier element in non-violent and sustainable directions<sup>19</sup>.

In the current environment Britain's nuclear weapons have far less currency because as individual tools they are unsuited for direct usage against modern security threats. Although advocates argue that nuclear weapons remain sound assets for the United Kingdom as a deterrent capability against major adversary threats in a conventional conflict<sup>20</sup>, others argue that the price tag of retaining them is too high and will come at the expense of conventional forces. A 'middle way' might involve extending the life of the current Trident submarines and diverting the resources saved by deferring spending on replacements to conventional forces

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17 Orakhelashvili, Alexander. 'Collective Security'. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Oxford Scholarship Online. May 2011. <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com.idpproxy.reading.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199579846.001.0001/acprof-9780199579846-chapter-2>.

18 Anonymous. 'Chapter Four: Europe'. 'The Military Balance' 115.1 (2015): 57-158. Taylor and Francis Group. Web. 28 Sept. 2015. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/04597222.2015.996348#.VjibvSvLJLc>

19 Professor Beatrice Heuser. University of Reading, Interview by Giorgio Yong. 28 September 2015.

20 Hare, Tim. 'What Next for Trident?' *The RUSI Journal* 150.2 (2005): 30-33. Taylor Francis and Online. Web. 5th Aug. 2015. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071840509441965>

in order to provide a balanced affordable military structure<sup>21</sup>. Alternatively, Beatrice Heuser suggests that a combined Anglo-French nuclear force could maintain the deterrence factor while offering opportunities to cut costs<sup>22</sup>.

Although the United States is the de facto leader of NATO, the organisation's primary goal today is to prove itself as a credible security provider with an outlook beyond solely American interests. In the USA the 2014 Quadrennial Defence Review demonstrated that different American and European documentation and frameworks for developing strategies in different manners has resulted in inconsistent doctrinal guidelines. The Iraq conflict from 2003 displayed such difficulties, with contrasting decisions that originated from differences in political language which caused a gap in coordinating military concepts between the European and American military partners. Complexity within NATO in responding to threats also originates from the different importance in defining threats between the members and creating correct anticipation strategies to respond to them<sup>23</sup>. In order to improve its effectiveness within NATO, the UK should prioritise its planning to enable the co-ordination of political and military input with the other members to maximise capabilities to identify and anticipate security challenges. NATO remains a vital international interface to exchange views on strategic doctrines, but can only fulfil its purpose if a certain level of competence is installed through solidarity between the USA and Europe.

## HYBRID WARFARE

NATO's performance against irregular, terrorist and insurgent forces can be judged by the questionable success of the war in Afghanistan. According to Michael Rühle, the entire operation in response to the terrorist-style attacks was exceedingly 'personal' and related to American interests. The case of NATO's 'entrapment' into the Afghan war has shown a lack of solidarity in the political and military agendas of the NATO members, and current events are demonstrating that NATO still has to adapt and reshape itself to become an effective force against the rise of African and Middle Eastern terrorist factions such as ISIS<sup>24</sup>. A November 2014 NATO Defense College Report warns that the threat of ISIS from South Eastern Europe has emerged to become a true threat to European security both domestically and internationally<sup>25</sup>. Britain is included in the scope of targets for the terrorist faction, which is currently ravaging the northern territories of Africa and the husks of Middle Eastern nations torn through civil war. A report from May 2015 proposes how NATO can translate its concepts of defence into a practical scheme to apply to a new hybrid method of warfare and terrorism<sup>26</sup>. The entire concept of countering hybrid threats will require a robust

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21 Chalmers, Malcolm. 'Like for like Renewal of Trident Will Come at Expense of Conventional Forces'. RUSI. RUSI, 28 July 2010. Web. 14 Sept. 2015. <https://www.rusi.org/news/ref:N4C4ED70C3F1F7/#.VfdS3BGqqko>

22 Professor Beatrice Heuser. University of Reading, Interview by Giorgio Yong. 28 September 2015.

23 Lagadec, Erwan. 'Defining threats and interests: drivers, processes and objectives' in 'Transatlantic Relations in the 21st Century'. Pp.33-35. London: Routledge, 2012

24 Rühle, Michael. 'Reflections on 9/11: A View from NATO' in Hallams, Ellen. 'NATO Beyond 9/11: The Transformation of the Atlantic Alliance'. Pp.54-57. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

25 Larsen, Jeffrey A. 'The Wales Summit and NATO's Deterrence Capabilities - An Assessment'. NDC Research Report. November 2014. NATO Defense College.

26 Lindley-French, Julian. 'NATO and New Ways of Warfare: Defeating Hybrid Threats'. NATO Defense College Conference report. No. 03/15. May 2015.

and coordinated mobilisation between both the American and European decision-making structures. The report suggests the UK should develop capabilities ranging from prevention through to engagement. Prevention needs are behind the establishment of NATO's Strategic Communications policy ('Stratcom') that will result in a central communication entity for active logistics closely linking the USA and European NATO members, with the main function of countering imminent strikes from terrorist cells<sup>27</sup>. The strengthened partnerships which result should further enhance resilience.

Domestic vulnerabilities open to exploitation include the risk of manipulation of minority groups by terrorist sources and media manipulation by external saturation and proselytising that undermine the procedures needed to respond to a hybrid warfare crisis. The report indicates that the most important capabilities that the UK can create to bolster collective security would result from reformation of engagement tactics. Implementation of guidance from the 2014 NATO Wales summit should demonstrate credibly that NATO members are prepared to engage in combat in both political and military fields in order to press irregular forces off balance. The UK should be able to co-ordinate its military power in tandem with other NATO states in efforts to tackle terrorist adversaries<sup>28</sup>.

The importance of the process of tasking in NATO policy making and planning depends upon ensuring that there is a balance between military and civilian input throughout both the NATO organisation and within individual member states. The United Kingdom's support in transforming political decisions into the respective military equipment and capabilities will be among the primary contributions that could facilitate the transition into a NATO which is more effective in responding to hybrid threats<sup>29</sup>.

## COMPUTER WARFARE

Among the main concerns facing collective security under current NATO plans is the rise of threats to cyber security. Network warfare has been defined by Everett Dolman as a combination of emerging tactics, techniques, and procedures that a fully or even partially networked force can employ to create a prominent war fighting advantage<sup>30</sup>. Cyber weapons are the main 'armaments' in network warfare, ranging from standard low potential assets to more specialised devastating digital code sequences that can cause extensive infrastructure damage<sup>31</sup>. The effectiveness of a cyber weapon results from the amount of digital resources, intelligence and time invested in its development and its level of sophistication rests on the ability of the code producer. More complex cyber weapons require greater investment and

27 Reding, Anais, Kristin Weed, and Jeremy J. Ghez. 'NATO's Strategic Communications Concept and Its Relevance for France'. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010. *Rand.org*. *Rand.org*, 2010. Web. 16 Sept. 2015. [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical\\_reports/2010/RAND\\_TR855.2.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical_reports/2010/RAND_TR855.2.pdf)

28 Lindley-French, Julian. 'NATO and New Ways of Warfare: Defeating Hybrid Threats'. NATO Defense College Conference report. No. 03/15. May 2015.

29 Lagadec, Erwan. 'Defining threats and interests: drivers, processes and objectives' in 'Transatlantic Relations in the 21st Century'. Pp.38-43. London: Routledge, 2012

30 Dolman, Everett J. 'Pure Strategy: Power and Policy in the Space and Information Age'. Pp.174-175. London, Routledge 2005.

31 Rid, Thomas. 'Cyber War Will Not Take Place'. P71. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 2013.

complexity to develop them in order to produce both the maximum impact and maximise network infrastructure damage<sup>32</sup>.

Identifying actors in network centric warfare proves to be the main obstacle in considering cyber warfare a true field for 'duelling'. Cyber warfare has bridged the gap between state, non-state, military, criminal, and civilian actors in war. A NATO Defense College research report on the outcome of the 2014 NATO Wales summit describes cyber attack as a case-by-case issue, and thus a relatively inferior issue overall<sup>33</sup>. This does not, however, mean that cyber warfare should be overlooked as a threat as the relatively volatile nature of network domains in conflict can potentially impact on the infrastructure, media, finance, intelligence and data of a state. A key feature of cyber warfare is its unmatched speed and global reach. The website NORSE Attack Map<sup>34</sup> shows that the speed and capability to hit targets beyond physical boundaries has expanded offensive power worldwide in the field of espionage and intelligence gathering. Britain's main cyber security organisation is the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), which is part of the 'Five Eyes' coalition - an alliance between the United States, UK, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, originally based around intelligence sharing but now a forum for co-operation on cyber defence and data surveillance<sup>35</sup>.

Despite alliances of this nature, nations remain reluctant to become transparent with each other about their own cyber infrastructure as it could expose sensitive data and vulnerabilities. The revelations by Edward Snowden, a whistle-blower from the American National Security Agency, which exposed the intrusions into privacy resulting from the actions of the Five Eyes states, has further pulled back the appetite of NATO member states to co-ordinate on network structures<sup>36</sup>. With NATO having limited assets to devote to cyber warfare, and the continuous nature and intensive speed of network conflict, the UK needs to update its cyber strategy and could make an appreciable contribution to NATO's efforts in this area by upgrading mechanisms, resources, skills and policies to tackle conflict in the network domain. With £650 million allocated to deliver the UK's national cyber security strategy<sup>37</sup>, cyber defence has become a top priority in domestic security as data and intelligence of military, political, and financial origin can be fatally compromised by hostile interception. Overall, UK investment in cyber security will be valuable in the near future with a priority on maintaining a dedicated cyber force to defend British digital interests and network citizens.<sup>38</sup>

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32 Kello, Lukas. 'The Meaning of the Cyber Revolution: Perils to Theory and Statecraft'. *International Security* 38:2. 2013. pp.7-40 [http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00138#.Vji41SvLJLc](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/ISEC_a_00138#.Vji41SvLJLc)

33 Larsen, Jeffrey A. 'The Wales Summit and NATO's Deterrence Capabilities - An Assessment'. *NDC Research Report*. November 2014. NATO Defense College. <http://map.norsecorp.com/>

34 MacAskill, Ewen, Julian Borger, Nick Hopkins, Nick Davies, and James Ball. 'GCHQ Taps Fibre-optic Cables for Secret Access to World's Communications'. *The Guardian* (2013): 1-7. Web. 13 Sept. 2015. [http://cyber-peace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GCHQ-taps-fibre-optic-cables-for-secret-access-to-worlds-communications\\_-UK-news\\_-The-Guardian.pdf](http://cyber-peace.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/GCHQ-taps-fibre-optic-cables-for-secret-access-to-worlds-communications_-UK-news_-The-Guardian.pdf)

36 Hager, Nicki, and Ryan Gallagher. 'Snowden Revelations / The Price of the Five Eyes Club: Mass Spying on Friendly Nations'. *New Zealand Herald*, 5 Mar. 2015. Web. 22 Sept. 2015. [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11411759](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11411759)

37 'The UK Cyber Security Strategy: protecting and promoting the UK in a digital world'. Cabinet Office, November 2011.

38 Hopkins, Nick. 'British Military at Risk of 'fatal' Cyber-attack, MPs Warn'. *The Guardian*. *The Guardian*, 9 Jan. 2013. Web. 13 Sept. 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jan/09/armed-forces-cyber-strategy-criticised>

# NATO RESOURCES AND THE 2% GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT DEFENCE SPENDING TARGET

Among the decisions of the North Atlantic Council that have sparked controversy is the 2006 decision that NATO member states should spend 2% of their national GDP on defence. For the UK, this amounts to a sum of approximately £40 billion. As this is a relatively high commitment only a few NATO members are currently meeting this target - the United Kingdom, Estonia and the United States - while other nations in poorer economic circumstances are only able to input a lesser amount<sup>39</sup> (Figure 1). In 'Between Theory and Practice: Britain and the Use of Force' Patrick Porter describes how the financial crisis has emerged at the same time as the security threats from irregular enemy factions far from British soil, highlighting the difficulty of projecting power at long range. The conflict in Afghanistan proved difficult to conclude and eventually progressed into a demoralising and exhausting war. General David Richards claimed that by the "crunch year" of 2006 the Taliban would be finished, while David Miliband repeated this empty prospect in 2010, saying that it would be "the decisive year". Instead, 2010 saw fierce resistance in Afghan territories and strong objection to the host government. However, the biggest breakdown in strategic progress has resulted from the 2008 financial crisis that led to a series of severe cuts and austerity measures. Elite professional personnel and weapon systems were regarded as luxuries and political figures decided to slice military funding<sup>40</sup>.

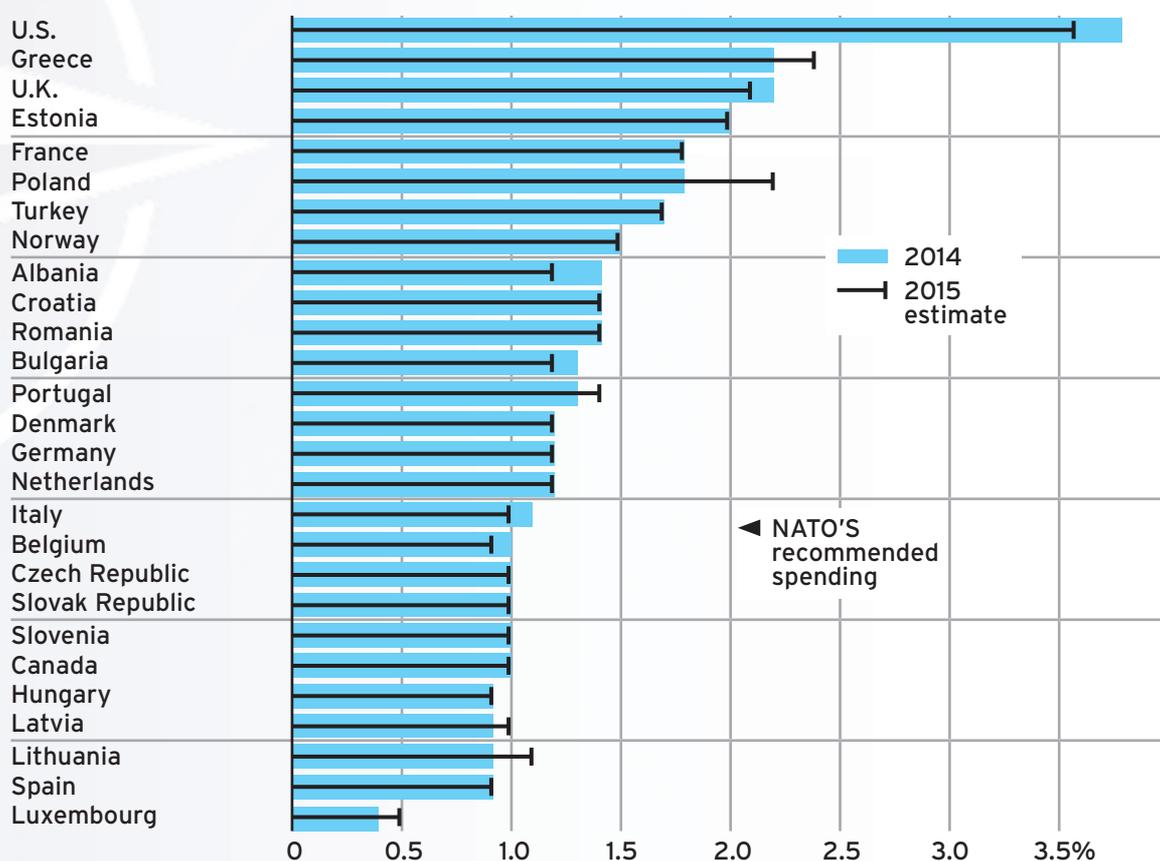


Figure 1. Defence expenditure of NATO states as a percentage of GDP: 2014 and 2015.

Note: NATO member has no armed forces. Source: NATO.

39 Norton-Taylor, Richard. 'Ignore US and NATO - cuts in UK defence budget could be a good thing'. *Guardian*, 16 March 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/news/defence-and-security-blog/2015/mar/16/ignore-us-and-nato-cuts-in-uk-defence-budget-could-be-a-good-thing>.

40 Porter, Patrick. 'Between Theory and Practice: Britain and the Use of Force' in 'NATO's European Allies: Military Capabilities and Political Will'. Pp.122-123.

One of the most important issues facing NATO is the management of these economic challenges. The 2012 NATO summit in Chicago considered the economic situation facing European members of the organisation, and to alleviate the difficulties new ideas emerged such as the 'smart-defence' plan. The plan aimed to align the use of military infrastructure with the sharing of facilities and services and co-operation in weapon systems development to reduce the impacts of budget cuts. This concept seems appealing but has evident vulnerabilities resulting from its interdependencies. If an ally opts out, then the entire structure could be in danger of collapse if a vital pillar for decision-making is missing<sup>41</sup>. Petersson and Kay have explained how 'smart defence' decisions made in Europe will need to closely link with American decisions and how, technically, a reduction of the US army from 570,000 to 490,000 personnel could be compensated with a corresponding increase from European partners. Financially, the potential of 'smart defence' can be further enhanced by development of innovative, low-cost and small-footprint approaches that will rely on rotational methods in both exercises and advice<sup>42</sup>.

In conclusion, the UK's strategy posture should follow rational decision-making principles and a shared direction with other NATO partners, aiming to gain maximum benefits from the pooling of resources and to complement, rather than duplicate, the equipment capabilities of other NATO members. The UK is one of the few NATO members with the financial commitment, prestige, and political clout to lead reform in the direction of a new NATO, and should take the opportunity to do so.

## HYBRID CONFRONTATION IN THE EAST

Geopolitical competition between the Russian Federation and the West, including NATO, has now reached a level of substantial concern as a result of conflicting security goals. Tensions emerged from the enlargement of NATO from 1997 to 2004, which resulted in a counter-move by Russia after NATO members refused to ratify the adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe following Russia's annexation of Georgia in 2007. Since then, Russia has seen Ukraine as important in extending its geopolitical strength and reach and as a boundary against NATO, and has adopted a hybrid warfare approach towards achieving its aims relating to Ukraine, culminating in the annexation of Crimea. As in Cold War times, the presence of an ideological gap between Russia and the West has increased the adversarial nature of the relationship, with NATO members perceiving an authoritarian Russian political structure as contrary to Western democratic ideology which promotes individual rights and freedom<sup>43</sup>.

The use of soft power by NATO to establish authority has proven ineffective at stalling the threat from Russia which is perceived to be the greatest by the NATO member states in closest proximity to Russia. The value of deterrence is being put to the test with a second contemporary Cold War potentially re-emerging. Ivo Daalder, formerly the USA's permanent representative at NATO, has indicated that NATO's nuclear weapons have become generally

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41 Kay, S and Petersson, M. 'External Power Structures and Global Security' in Mayer, Sebastian. *NATO's Post-Cold War Politics the Changing Provision of Security*. P.294. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

42 *Ibid.* P.299.

43 Niculescu, George Vlad. 'Sailing the South Caucasus through Troubled Waters towards Regional Integration' *Spring in 'Connections: The Quarterly Journal'*. Pp.65-68.

irrelevant to foreign relations strategies needed to counter the rise of Russian hybrid warfare<sup>44</sup>. Diplomatic exertion, or soft power, will become the most important tool that NATO will have to rely on to resolve the situation, as nuclear weapons risk elevating a crisis rather than providing a manageable solution. John Mueller, in 'The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons', writes that the progression of the Cold War is evidence of the value of deterrence and that any conflict, whether nuclear or conventional, would result in devastation to both the defeated and the 'victorious' nation. Risk-adverse strategic engagement was the primary conduct that emerged from the Cold War but the nuclear arsenals currently in existence will extend the nuclear security dilemma<sup>45</sup>.

With the annexation of Ukraine from 2014, the importance of resolving the dispute rests on understanding the strategic goals and interests of Russia. As NATO and European allegiance with the United States appear to be a direct competitor to the Kremlin, Russia's goal to extend towards the southern Caucasus can be seen as an attempt to re-establish reach in its immediate neighbourhood. In addition to economic promises and agreements to secure the former Soviet regions, security would also derive from success in closing a buffer zone with the West similar to the original installation of the Iron Curtain<sup>46</sup>. In a July 2015 research paper, the NATO Research Division evaluated the overall threat from Russia and its capabilities and ambitions. As of 2014, Russia can be seen as exercising military power to defend its authoritarian system while forming a boundary against the Western ideology which could threaten this system from both within and externally. Following Vladimir Putin's return to the Presidency, as of 2013 Russian military power has received a boost of approximately \$90 billion in value with systematic plans to modernise military hardware by 2020 - a source of concern for NATO's goals of collective security as Russian troops delve into and through Ukraine<sup>47</sup>. Diplomatic engagement rather than direct confrontation would seem to be the most fruitful approach to resolving such concerns.

## SUSTAINABLE SECURITY APPROACHES

Rather than reliance on military force and intervention, Paul Rogers from the University of Bradford offers a different view on strategy to uphold homeland security. As already mentioned, the war in Afghanistan proved to be an exhausting and demoralising conflict with high costs; recession has limited the resources available for military interventions; and recent military interventions in Libya and Syria have been counter-productive. The Ammerdown Invitation of September 2014 established the idea that a 'sustainable security' approach is necessary to assure stability and comfort for citizens<sup>48</sup>. The Ammerdown report advocates prioritising the economic, political, health, environmental and community elements of security, rather

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- 44 Cited in Sauer, Tom. 'The humanitarian initiative and nuclear umbrella states'. Paper presented at British International Studies Association Conference: 'Global Nuclear Order'. University of Birmingham. 17-18 September 2015.
- 45 Mueller, John. 'The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World'. *International Security* 13.2 (1988): P55. Google Books. Web. 20 Sept. 2015. <http://bit.ly/1MvfUXP>
- 46 Nuriyev, Elkhan. 'Russia, the EU and the South Caucasus: Forging an Efficient Over-Arching Cooperative Regional Security Scheme'. Spring in "Connections: The Quarterly Journal." Pp.55-57.
- 47 Sinovets, Polina and Bettina Renz. 'Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and beyond: Threat perceptions, capabilities and ambitions'. NATO Research Division research paper Issue 117. July 2015.
- 48 Ammerdown Invitation. 'Security for the Future: In Search of a New Vision'. OpenDemocracy. Open Security, 23 Sept. 2014. Web. 15 Sept. 2015. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/ammerdown-invitation/security-for-future-in-search-of-new-vision>.

than military and state-centred aspects. Economic, political and community development will enhance security by maintaining order through guaranteeing employment and alleviating poverty, raising living standards, and moving towards a balanced income distribution<sup>49</sup>. Environmental threats are a prominent issue and with much of Europe potentially at risk from climate change impacts, military forces would be unable to uphold environmental or economic security.

Many questions remain to be answered about how such an approach might be applied to NATO - and whether indeed the alliance would be capable of making the changes needed to adapt to such an approach - and much more research is needed in this area. Rogers highlights the concern that the UK's security policies are often at odds with a sustainable security approach. In focusing on meeting a defence spending target of 2% of GDP, other approaches to security may be sidelined. The UK's nuclear arsenal is likely to soak up a large portion of spending, hindering the effectiveness of other forces and increasing the likelihood of their being cut. Furthermore, the building of the two planned aircraft carriers for the Royal Navy will focus UK defence spending on maritime operations and narrow the UK's military capabilities to naval military projection. Current UK military strategy and allegiance to NATO does not always represent civilian interests, and British decision-making within NATO has sometimes met criticism<sup>50</sup>. Britain could in future play a valuable role within NATO by supporting the sustainable security agenda, and helping the alliance place more emphasis on diplomatic and human developmental approaches to resolving conflicts as part of a strategy to reduce the need for 'fire-fighting' and armed intervention by NATO.

## CONCLUSION

The current status of the UK's allegiance with NATO is defined, in part, by the possession of its nuclear arsenal. Despite its role as a deterrent, Britain's Trident nuclear programme raises issues as the supposed 'ultimate guarantor' of the UK's security. Although the UK's nuclear weapons buy influence within NATO, an alternative expenditure on conventional forces and methods of for collective defence could perhaps allow the UK and NATO to develop superior soft power capabilities. The term security itself derives from being free from concern and danger which, in political terms, can be related to stability and order. However, understanding security and the threats to state power can be open to various perceptions and interpretations. Such may include economic, environmental and social security, which are areas of importance to British society that are not specifically covered by NATO's security umbrella.

The UK has always had a tradition of following conservative methods of strategy through the use of tested and applied methodologies. Amid the rise of modern security threats the UK looks to its NATO allies for support. While land, air and sea domains of warfare are still important, the addition of new ones such as cyberspace have offered other types of battlespace in which security can be threatened. These new domains come with new challenges in maintaining security which may prove difficult for NATO, particularly in terms of upholding its Article 5 promise. The contribution made to NATO by the UK will be primarily

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49 *Ibid.*

50 *Professor Paul Rogers. University of Bradford. Interview by Giorgio Yong. 7 August 2015.*

be determined by how it meets the 2% gross domestic product investment target for military and defence expenditure from 2015 onwards. The strains from previous engagements and crisis management in Afghanistan, Libya, and Syria show the limitations of what the UK can do to exert military strength on its own. The large sums of money needed to maintain the UK Trident nuclear weapons programme have created an imbalance in military spending which must be corrected to maximise both cost-effectiveness and maintain a sustainable security in response to the new wave of hybrid and cyber warfare.

Overall, British use of force and diplomacy have shown the opportunities and general problems of both soft power and hard power in attempting to maintain national and international security. The UK's allegiances can still project into sustaining collective security both domestically and internationally without diminishing Britain's role within NATO or with other vital members of the international alliance. The reformation of NATO can progress with British support for strategies against contemporary threats while at the same time working to maximise the utility of existing platforms. With the successful utility of both military and political decision-making, a reformed NATO will become a possibility while working in tandem with political, conflict resolution, and military capabilities that can adapt to the modern challenges of international instability and crises. A new NATO has the potential to become a much needed platform to create a balanced sustainable security, not solely for the United Kingdom but also for its other members.

This report was researched and written by Giorgio Yong, an intern from the University of Reading working with Nuclear Information Service. The paper was launched at a seminar on 'The British bomb and NATO' hosted by the Nuclear Education Trust at Portcullis House, London, on 1 December 2015. The author's views are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of Nuclear Information Service or Nuclear Education Trust.

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