

Projecting Stability to the South: NATO's 'New' Mission?

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In 2014 the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was surprised by the sudden emergence of a renewed threat from Russia on its Eastern flank that threatened the sovereignty and security of the member states and their home territories. The Alliance found itself forced to turn its attention back to Europe and its previous core missions of collective defense and deterrence, reversing a 20-year trend that was driven by one general assumption: since Europe was free from traditional military threats, the member states were also free to pursue larger ambitions on a global scale. The end of the Cold War had removed the military threat from the USSR, but also contributed to the emergence of crises in the eastern periphery of the Alliance, including in the Balkans, which led to the first wave of NATO out-of-area operations. Nevertheless, the perspective that Europe no longer faced an existential threat was formalized in the 2010 Strategic Concept, which emphasized three pillars for NATO strategy: collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security. While each was nominally equal in importance, in reality the Alliance and its member states had pursued the latter two pillars at the expense of the former for nearly a generation. The concept of “projecting stability” was highlighted in the 2016 Warsaw Summit Declaration as a way of accommodating both of those two pillars. This document emphasized projecting stability as one of the most important missions for the Alliance, almost on a par with the core missions of collective defense and deterrence, to ensure the sovereignty of member states in Europe.

This paper argues that projecting stability is not a new concept for the Alliance, having been applied to Eastern Europe for nearly 30 years since the end of the Cold War. While we question whether NATO is the international organization best suited for this mission, we also propose some suggestions focusing on states and challenges in the Middle East and North Africa for making that mission a success.

We approach these issues in the following way: The next two sections examine the origins and development of the projecting stability agenda with an emphasis on the military concept for projecting

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stability which has recently been adopted by NATO's Military Committee. The following two sections then examine two waves of projecting stability, one directed eastward after the end of the Cold War, the other aimed at the Alliance's southern neighborhood and ongoing since the Warsaw Summit in 2016. Based on these considerations we then offer some thoughts on the extent to which the Alliance is fit for the purpose of projecting stability and how current activities could be improved, before closing with recommendations for improving the chances of NATO successfully achieving its mission of projecting stability to the South.

Background

One would have expected general agreement on the need to return to collective security in Europe as a result of the events of 2014, given that during that interregnum nearly all of NATO's national military forces had become much smaller and less prepared for a mission emphasizing collective defense in Europe. This was the result of two factors: the perceived peace dividend that accompanied the disappearance of the Soviet threat, and the concomitant need to provide more agile and lightweight forces for dealing with out of area challenges, especially after 9/11. The latter responsibility required a different set of equipment than the armor-heavy Cold War militaries could provide. The necessary retooling and restructuring for military operations out of Europe were expensive, took years to complete, and resulted in a new mindset among Western militaries regarding their purpose and role in the post-Cold War world. There was, accordingly, little desire to reverse course again after 2014. The result was considerable push-back within the Alliance against having to return to collective defense. "We don't want a return to the Cold War" was a refrain heard regularly in the halls of NATO for more than two years, until the Warsaw Summit declaration of July 2016 made the requirement to focus on collective defense once again the primary responsibility for the Alliance. Some observers argue that the push for continued emphasis on out of area issues, especially threats emanating from the South, reflects the previous mindset in which some member states preferred such post-Cold War missions rather than those with a more traditional military emphasis. There is no reason that the Alliance could not accomplish both missions, of course. The allies simply have to choose to do so, and to pay the necessary price. Furthermore, each member state can, in principle, determine where and in what manner to contribute to the various security missions.

In fact, NATO has been projecting stability outside its borders for a long time—since the first days of the post-Cold War era—and thus the concept is hardly new. NATO expansion to the East in the second half of the 1990s was explicitly referred to as an exercise in ‘projecting stability’ by some analysts at the time, and the notion has reappeared regularly in statements by NATO officials.² Indeed, in a 2006 speech, Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer referred to projecting stability as “NATO’s new approach to security.” “[T]o defend our values,” de Hoop Scheffer said, “NATO, as a political-military Alliance, requires a range of tools: stronger partnerships and partnerships with key Nations; not a global NATO but a NATO with global partners that share our values.”³ Substantially the same idea was reflected more recently by current NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, suggesting in a speech at the Graduate Institute in Geneva in March 2017 that “when our neighbors are more stable, we are more secure.”⁴ In this sense, the projecting stability agenda can be seen as the Alliance’s answer to the increasingly interconnected nature of the security environment on its periphery.

Yet, despite this history, and notwithstanding the fact that projecting stability experienced a renaissance of sorts following the 2016 Warsaw Summit, important questions remain. To begin with, the Alliance has yet to provide a coherent political definition of what stability is and how it can be projected. Currently, the Alliance’s military bodies are ahead of their political masters in the development of the concept, a situation which creates tensions and inconsistencies. This gap between political ambition and strategic thinking and planning severely hampers Alliance efforts. In fact, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Operations John Manza recently suggested that NATO deserved an “F” for projecting stability.⁵

Secondly, on a more general level, there are those who question whether such a broad mission as is implied by the projecting stability agenda is really the best fit for a political military alliance. Would it be better served if led by a different organization, such as the European Union or the United Nations?

² Robert E. Hunter, “Enlargement: Part of a Strategy for Projecting Stability into Central Europe.” *NATO Review* 43 (3), 1995, pp. 3–8.

³ See speech by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at FRIDE in Madrid, 10 July 2006, at https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/opinions_22477.htm?selectedLocale=en.

⁴ Speech by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, 2 March 2017, at https://www.nato.int/cps/ic/natohq/opinions_141898.htm.

⁵ See <http://www.gmfus.org/blog/2017/12/13/john-manza-gives-nato-f-projecting-stability>.

Origins and Development of the Concept

In 1997 a book was published with the intriguing title “NATO’s New Mission: Projecting Stability in a Post-Cold War World.”⁶ The title referred to the Alliance’s decisions to go out of area in an attempt to stabilize its neighborhood, in hopes that by so doing it would reduce conflict, improve the living standards of the recipients of such stability, and thereby increase Europe’s and NATO’s own security by damping down dangerous tendencies along its periphery.

NATO’s strategic concepts after the end of the Cold War never made explicit reference to projecting stability. In the current document published in 2010, the substantive idea of securing Alliance territory by stabilizing the security environment in the periphery is visible in the fact that the classical core task of collective defense was complemented by an emphasis on crisis management and cooperative security; however, projecting stability had not made it to the level of a strategic concept.⁷ In brief, even though the idea is two decades old, it still does not go much beyond the fundamental hypothesis that “when our neighbors are more stable, we are more secure.” In short, the Alliance lacks focused political reflection on what projecting stability means.

In lieu of such reflection, NATO has developed a military concept for projecting stability⁸ that has been approved by the Military Committee and, at the time of writing, awaits approval by the North Atlantic Council (NAC). While the latest draft of this document (MC 0655/4) remains classified, previous versions suggest a ‘means-focused’ approach to projecting stability with little effective reflection on the desired political end-state.

MC 0655/3 contains both a working definition of stability and one of projecting stability.⁸ According to this document, stability refers to

A situation where capable, credible, legitimate and well-functioning institutions and a resilient state/society create the conditions in which the risk for outbreak, escalation,

⁶ Rebecca Moore, *NATO’s New Mission: Projecting Stability in a Post-Cold War World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2007).

⁷ “NATO 2010, Active Engagement, Modern Defense,” at https://www.nato.int/cps/ua/natohq/official_texts_68580.htm.

⁸ MC 0655/3 is an unclassified draft document. The fourth version, MC 0655/4, which has been adopted by the MC remains classified. The definitions quoted here might have changed in the final document.

recurrence of conflict is reduced to acceptable levels, leading to a more secure and less threatening environment.⁹

Building on this definition, as well as on prior guidance in MC 0400/3, projecting stability is therefore defined as

a range of military and non-military activities that influence and shape the strategic environment in order to make neighboring regions more stable and secure in support of both NATO's strategic interests and those of its neighbors.¹⁰

Two observations regarding these definitional efforts should be made. First, reflecting the military function of the document, the definitions appropriately refrain from specifying a concrete political end-state. In fact, MC 0655/3 clearly states that projecting stability “includes both political and military efforts, recognizing that all efforts should serve a clear political aim” (MC 0655/3, para. 4). Reflecting NATO's character as a political-military alliance, this political guidance needs to come from the political level.

Second, the definition of stability is rather ambitious, including as it does “capable, credible, legitimate and well-functioning institutions” as well as a “resilient state/society.” These formulations not only imply activities far beyond NATO's comfort zone, but also suggest that the Alliance take an active interest in the domestic political configurations of non-allied countries. While this does not necessarily suggest that the Alliance is in the business of democratization, it does imply that, as a recent commissioned report from Allied Command Transformation put it, “local political institutions... need to be sufficiently resilient and representative of local societies as to avoid and resist further crises in the near future.”¹¹

In the larger scheme of things, the Alliance has thus put the cart before the horse when it comes to its approach to its periphery, speaking about ways without having first discussed the ends. Indeed, in the absence of a coherent policy and appropriate direction and guidance from the political level, NATO military authorities are left with the task of translating an overly vague notion into concrete activities.

⁹ MC 0655/3, para. 5a

¹⁰ MC 0655/3, para. 5b

¹¹ Stefano Costalli, “What is ‘Stability’ and How to Achieve it?”, in: Sonia Lucarelli, Alessandro Marrone and Francesco N. Moro (eds.), *Projecting Stability in an Unstable World* (Allied Command Transformation, Università di Bologna, Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2017), p. 25.

While attempts to develop definitions of central concepts are welcome, the political implications of Alliance efforts to project stability are best understood in reference to concrete historical settings. In the following we trace two waves of projecting stability in two major compass directions some 20 years apart: to the East in the 1990s, and to the South in the 2010s.

The First Wave of Projecting Stability: Partnership with and Enlargement to the East

In the early post-Cold War years of the 1990s, a belief arose that even though Europe was now peaceful, facing no imminent threats, it could not be truly secure if instability reigned along its periphery. With the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the end of the dangerous long peace, many analysts thought that NATO had accomplished its mission and outlived its usefulness. Some of these experts called for an end to the Alliance, or at least a much-diminished role that perhaps kept part of the old structure around for discussions among the member states, but with no real military responsibilities.

Others, however, felt that instead of fading away, the Alliance should now take on a new role: helping erase the divisions of the Cold War, and creating a Europe that was whole, free, and at peace. This was an opportunity for the United States to push its longstanding desire to expand NATO's focus beyond Europe. As one observer put it, "don't just protect the old order; create a new one."¹² This new world order would be based on NATO's core values and shared beliefs: democracy, personal freedom, the rule of law, and a just international order. As an American publication opined, it was "time to transform NATO from an alliance based on collective defense against a specific threat into an alliance committed to projecting democracy, stability, and crisis management in a broader strategic sense."¹³

The idea of projecting stability was born from this context immediately upon the end of the Cold War and was based on the idea that, as U.S. Senator Richard Lugar put it in 1993, NATO had to go "out of area or out of business."¹⁴ At NATO's London Summit in July 1990, Alliance members thus made a pledge to construct a new security environment in Europe. They declared that the Soviet Union was no

¹² Interview with NATO Headquarters official, February 2018.

¹³ Ronald Asmus, Richard Kugler, and F. Stephan Larrabee, "Building a New NATO," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1993, at <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/southeastern-europe/1993-09-01/building-new-nato>.

¹⁴ Richard Lugar quoted in Stephen Rosenfeld, "NATO's Last Chance," *Washington Post*, 2 July 1993.

longer an enemy. These efforts may have been, in part, a way for NATO to counter some of the initiatives of Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, who was seeking to win the global public relations game with his policies of openness and economic freedom. It was a way to maintain Alliance cohesion in an uncertain time, by providing a new mission for the Alliance. In years ahead it also provided a new home for the nations of the former Warsaw Pact by telling them that they were all part of the greater Europe and would not be left out in the cold. For all of this to work, however, the Alliance would have to project stability and democracy to its former enemies in the East. As Vaclav Havel put it, “If the West does not stabilize the East, the East will destabilize the West.”¹⁵

At the Rome Summit in 1991 the Alliance took the next step and declared that it would pursue dialogue and cooperation as well as security. As one tangible result of this decision, the North Atlantic Cooperation Council was created (later renamed the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council). In 1994 the Alliance created the Partnership for Peace (PfP), which grew to include 21 member states, including all the independent republics that came out of the former USSR, and all the neutral states of Europe. In 1997 the Alliance signed the NATO-Russia Founding Act which put relations between the two on a more equitable footing.

These initiatives towards NATO’s eastern neighborhood were concrete efforts to project stability.¹⁶ An article by U.S. permanent representative Robert Hunter, published in *NATO Review* in 1995, for example, declared NATO enlargement as “part of a strategy for Projecting Stability into Central Europe.”¹⁷ The idea was to fundamentally transform the security environment in Central Europe, to “move Eastward one of the most thrilling human achievements of the past half century: the abolition of war itself among the states of Western Europe.”¹⁸ NATO would offer its erstwhile adversaries to the East various levels of cooperation ranging from membership perspectives to close consultation through the framework of the Partnership for Peace, or through specialized procedures such as the NATO-Russia Founding Act.¹⁹ Hunter outlined the Alliance’s three-pronged approach: engaging countries from the former Warsaw Pact through consultations in the framework of the PfP initiative; offering a long-term perspective to these countries either through membership, or through sustained partnership; and putting

¹⁵ Havel, in (1993)

¹⁶ Hunter; also David Yost, “The New NATO and Collective Security.” *Survival* 40 (2), 1998, pp. 135–60, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.1998.10107846>.

¹⁷ Hunter, pp. 3–8.

¹⁸ Hunter, p. 3.

¹⁹ Hunter, p. 3.

the NATO-Russia relationship on a new footing by winning “Russia’s confidence in NATO’s intentions by developing a rich and productive relationship with Moscow.”²⁰

This regional approach thus combined incentives for countries to adapt their security sectors to the requirements of partnership with, and eventual membership in, the North Atlantic Alliance, with attempts to diffuse the potential of geostrategic tensions between Russia and the West resulting from NATO enlargement. Events have shown that NATO was clearly more successful in the first of these aims than in the second: NATO enlargement to Eastern Europe has contributed to the reform of the defense and broader security sectors in these countries. Zoltan Barany has suggested that it is difficult to determine the exact effect of a membership perspective on a country’s domestic policies given the simultaneous efforts of other international organizations, most notably the EU.²¹ Yet, he also concluded that, given NATO’s focus on “military effectiveness, civil-military relations, defense expenditures, and a host of other issues that other organizations are not concerned with [...] a causal link between NATO and domestic policy change may be identified with some measure of confidence.”²²

In addition to the effects of NATO’s eastward expansion, the allies also conducted a series of out of area kinetic and non-kinetic operations to the East. At the time these generated considerable debate on both sides of the Atlantic, as experts and politicians considered the future role of the Alliance, whether it should be conducting operations outside its traditional area, whether it should be conducting offensive military operations at all or remain a defensive alliance, whether an alliance decision obligated all members to comply, and so on. But these existential considerations did not prevent the Alliance from taking actions when it saw a pressing need for some organization—any organization—to take prompt action in a crisis. NATO discovered that it was the only organization available and capable of doing that in most cases. Some of its actions included:

- Allied Goodwill I and II, humanitarian aid and medical expertise provided to Russia and former Soviet states, 1992
- US arms embargo in the Adriatic, supported by NATO, 1992-93
- Operations Deadeye and Deliberate Force, countering Bosnian Serb actions, 1995
- International Force (IFOR), Bosnia, 1995-96

²⁰ Hunter, p. 7.

²¹ Zoltan D. Barany, *The Future of NATO Expansion: Four Case Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²² Barany, p. 4.

- Security Force (SFOR), Bosnia, 1996-2004
- Operation Allied Freedom, air campaign over Serbia to protect Kosovo, 1999
- Kosovo Force (KFOR), 1999-present
- Operations Essential Harvest, Amber Fox, and Allied Harmony, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), 2001-03
- NATO Headquarters in Skopje, FYROM, 2002-present
- Operation Eagle Assist, the NATO AWACS mission to protect the skies over North America, 2001-02.

Each of these missions included operational air, sea, and land military forces of multiple NATO member states, which greatly extended the Alliance's view of itself, its purpose in the new world order, and its ability to conduct relatively small-scale military operations in the pursuit of stability for Europe and its immediate neighborhood.

The ultimate step in projecting stability, for many partner nations, was when that partner was invited to join NATO as a full member. For some, this was also the best way to confirm the success of the entire effort. This was the logic behind much of the enlargement debate of the 1990s. The original thinking was based on valid liberal principles: the belief that NATO enlargement would be a beneficial contribution to the democratization, and hence pacification, of Eastern Europe. New members were required to abide by the norms espoused by NATO and the OSCE. This concept had a political purpose as much as one of military expediency. The lure of membership would create a positive link between the development of a state's foreign and defense policies and its prospects for membership. The Membership Action Plan became the bible for states wishing to become members, and served as a tool for outreach and a way of projecting the values of the Alliance. The importance of this concept for the Alliance can be seen in the continued support of NATO's "Open Door" policy for all European states, in accordance with Article 10 of the Washington Treaty.

The success of projecting stability to the East can be explained in part by the fact that European partner states were motivated by the possibility of eventual NATO membership. In addition, the parallel effort underway by the European Union to enlarge its zone of peace through shared economic, social, and cultural relationships also supported NATO's efforts in the same region. As we shall see, the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) partnership programs were

hamstrung to some extent since they did not carry the same incentivizing aspects of future membership in either organization. This made cooperation with NATO in the MENA region more pragmatic, seen primarily in military-to-military programs.

The Second Wave of Projecting Stability: NATO Looks South

Having shaped NATO's approach to its Eastern neighborhood in the immediate post-Cold War era, the notion of projecting stability has undergone a renaissance of sorts since the 2016 Warsaw Summit—this time with an emphasis on the South.²³ The Summit Communiqué made reference to 'projecting stability' six times (almost as often as to the core tasks of crisis management and cooperative security with nine and seven references, respectively), compared to no references in the declaration following the Wales Summit of 2014.²⁴ The development of the military concept for projecting stability, moreover, constitutes an attempt to give concrete meaning to the notion. This renewed emphasis on projecting stability, somewhat paradoxically, must be seen against the backdrop of increased Alliance efforts in collective defense and deterrence since 2014. Given the Alliance's renewed focus on its classical core task after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea,²⁵ including the return of the nuclear issue,²⁶ the simultaneous resurgence of projecting stability reflects NATO's attempt to balance different risk perceptions by its Eastern and Southern members.²⁷

Renewed emphasis on projecting stability notwithstanding, the Alliance has so far failed to produce a succinct political definition of the term. The Secretary General's 2017 Annual Report,²⁸ for example, contains an entire chapter on projecting stability—yet, following an affirmation of the importance of the approach, and without presenting a definition of the concept, the chapter proceeds to discuss specific NATO activities such as counterterrorism, defense capacity building, and the like. Similarly, major

²³ Ruben Díaz-Plaja, "Projecting Stability: An Agenda for Action." *NATO Review*, March 2018.

²⁴ Projecting stability is addressed in paragraphs 6, 48, 80, 81, 84, and 85 of the Warsaw Summit declaration. See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

²⁵ Matthew Kroenig, "Facing Reality: Getting NATO Ready for a New Cold War." *Survival* 57 (1), 2015, pp. 49–70, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2015.1008295>.

²⁶ Karl-Heinz Kamp, "Nuclear Reorientation of NATO." NDC Commentary 01/18. Rome: NATO Defense College, 2018.

²⁷ Caitlin Vito, A False Dichotomy: The Choice Between Protecting NATO's Eastern and Southern Flanks, November 17, 2015, <http://natoassociation.ca/a-false-dichotomy-the-choice-between-protecting-natos-eastern-and-southern-flanks/>.

²⁸ See

https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_03/20170313_SG_AnnualReport_2016_en.pdf.

public pronouncements by NATO's political leaders never seem to go beyond enumerating a range of activities, often with an emphasis on the cooperative nature of these activities and the related role of partnerships.

The second wave of projecting stability is directed towards the South, more specifically towards North Africa and to some extent the Eastern Mediterranean. To the extent that the projecting stability agenda as applied to the South is seen in parallel to earlier efforts in the East, it is important to point to a number of core differences in the regional and global context which might impact the effectiveness of such an agenda.

First, even though the Alliance maintains its 'open door policy,' there is no prospect for membership when it comes to NATO partners in the South. While fiercely criticized at the time²⁹ and controversial due to its effects on NATO-Russia relations,³⁰ NATO's eastward enlargement must be considered successful from a technical point of view. With four waves of enlargement between 1999 and 2017, NATO has integrated a total of 13 new member states in Central and Eastern Europe since the end of the Cold War—necessitating massive transformations in their security sectors as well as regional security arrangements.³¹ This certainly transformed the security environment in the region and had significant effects on domestic security sectors as well. In the absence of a membership perspective—and the attendant prospect of being allowed under the security umbrella of Article 5—a similar dynamic is unlikely to unfold in the MENA. In other words, incentives for Southern partners to adapt their policies and open up their security sectors are limited when compared to candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Second, NATO does not have the best of reputations in the Southern neighborhood. Despite lacking systematic public opinion data, public attitudes toward NATO in most countries of the MENA range from ignorance to opposition. Even on the level of security professionals and military officers, NATO is seen with some skepticism, and Alliance intentions in the south are generally perceived as unclear.³² The Libya intervention—or rather its aftermath—certainly did not help to present NATO in a better

²⁹ Amos Perlmutter and Ted Galen Carpenter, "NATO's Expensive Trip East: The Folly of Enlargement." *Foreign Affairs* 77 (1), 1998, pp. 2–6, at <https://doi.org/10.2307/20048356>.

³⁰ R. Dannreuther, "Escaping the Enlargement Trap in NATO-Russian Relations." *Survival* 41 (4), 1999, pp. 145–64, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/713869437>.

³¹ Barany.

³² Based on the authors' regular interaction with officers and officials from MENA countries at the NATO Defense College in Rome, 2013-18.

light in the MENA. NATO thus starts from a difficult position in the south, underlining the importance of outreach and confidence building activities.

Third, NATO enlargement to the East occurred in parallel with EU enlargement there and it is difficult to disentangle the causal effects of these two processes. It must be understood, however, that similar incentives for and pressures towards larger political reforms do not exist in the MENA. Quite to the contrary, given strategic interests, major Western powers have traditionally supported authoritarian regimes with dubious security practices in the region.³³ For example, Egypt—one of the largest recipients of western military aid in the MENA—is probably furthest removed from the standards of security sector governance encouraged by NATO, even though the country has long cooperated with western powers on a bilateral level and with NATO as part of the Mediterranean Dialogue.

Lastly, Western attempts to project stability (or influence) to the MENA do not occur in a vacuum. Russia's September 2015 intervention in the Syrian crisis has proven beyond doubt that Russia is, and will remain, a crucial player in the Middle East.³⁴ This not only has the potential of transporting some of the re-emerging East-West confrontation into the MENA, but also means that the West and NATO are not the only game in town. Research has shown that ties with non-democratic patrons can help stabilize authoritarian regimes.³⁵ From the perspective of regional countries, cooperating with Russia might thus appear more attractive given the fact that Russian support does not come with strings attached regarding domestic political processes. While the first wave of projecting stability to the East thus occurred during a period of reduced geopolitical competition, NATO's attempts to project stability to the South occurs in a context of resurgent NATO-Russia tensions—not least in the MENA region itself given Russia's role in Syria, but also its increased engagement in Egypt and Libya.³⁶

Given this less-than-optimistic starting point, what can NATO hope to achieve with regard to regional security? We argue that NATO should focus its efforts around the vision of a cooperative (and in the

³³ Jason Brownlee, *Democracy Prevention: The Politics of the U.S.-Egyptian Alliance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³⁴ Dmitri Trenin, "The Mythical Alliance: Russia's Syria Policy," Carnegie Paper (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 2013); also Trenin, *What Is Russia up to in the Middle East?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018).

³⁵ Oisín Tansey, Kevin Koehler, and Alexander Schmotz. "Ties to the Rest: Autocratic Linkages and Regime Survival." *Comparative Political Studies* 50 (9), 2017, pp. 1221–54, at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414016666859>.

³⁶ Steven Cook. "Putin is Sneaking Up on Europe from the South," *Foreign Policy*, 31 August 2018, at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/08/31/putin-is-sneaking-up-on-europe-from-the-south/>.

long term integrated) regional security order. Such a regional security order is currently a long way off, but it is not an entirely unrealistic prospect. Indeed, NATO's existing partnership frameworks, the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative can both be seen as attempts in this direction—even though they reflect the regional constellations at their respective inception and should therefore be updated to deal with new realities which have emerged since then.

Regional Security Integration

In terms of regional security integration, the Middle East and North Africa lags behind other regions.³⁷ The League of Arab States (LAS), to begin with, does not have a security component and is largely ineffective as a political organization.³⁸ Similarly, while the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) had shown some signs of increasing cooperation in military and security matters, the current crisis between Qatar on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the other has largely blocked what progress had been achieved beforehand.³⁹ In brief, the MENA region remains one of the least integrated regions of the world—economically, politically, and in security terms. Instead of a regional security order, the regional security complex⁴⁰ in the Middle East is shaped by a high degree of international penetration on the one hand,⁴¹ and by a Saudi-Emirati hegemonic project based on strategic competition with Iran on the other.⁴²

These systemic processes are punctuated by sub-regional security cooperation, largely based on necessity. Examples include the G5 Sahel (G5S) formed by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger and supported by the EU. Founded in 2014, the G5S has set up a joint military force (FC-G5S) in

³⁷ Paul Aarts, “The Middle East: A Region without Regionalism or the End of Exceptionalism?” *Third World Quarterly* 20 (5), 1999, pp. 911–25, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599913406>.

³⁸ Marco Pinfari, “Nothing But Failure: The Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council as Mediators in Middle Eastern Conflicts.” Crisis States Working Paper Series 2. (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2009).

³⁹ Jean-Loup Samaan, *Toward a NATO of the Gulf? The Challenges of Collective Defense Within the GCC* (U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2017).

⁴⁰ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations 91 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁴¹ Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*. Regional International Politics Series (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

⁴² Marc Lynch, *The New Arab Wars: Uprisings and Anarchy in the Middle East* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2016).

an effort to contribute more efficiently to security provision in the region.⁴³ Further examples include the Gulf Cooperation Council with its Peninsula Shield Force, and steps towards the establishment of a joint command and missile defense coordination—largely driven by increased demands on Gulf militaries in the context of their countries’ more assertive posture since 2011.⁴⁴ As the current GCC crisis illustrates, however, GCC integration was not strong enough to prevent political differences between the UAE and Saudi Arabia on the one hand and Qatar on the other to escalate into a full-blown diplomatic crisis since June 2017.⁴⁵

NATO’s partnership formats, the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, have not played a role in these developments. Cooperation between NATO and the G5S, for example, has been limited to the participation of G5S representatives—along with officials from the European Union delegation in Mauritania and representatives from the African Union (AU)—in the fifth Mediterranean Dialogue Policy Advisory Group Meeting in Nouakchott, Mauritania, in October 2017.⁴⁶ Moreover, while both the UAE and Qatar (but not Saudi Arabia) are members of NATO’s ICI, and while all parties to the dispute—including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt—have continued to participate in NATO partnership activities alongside Qatari participants, the fact that most parties to the GCC crisis share membership in NATO partnership initiatives did not play a role. In other words, despite the relatively long history of NATO partnership initiatives in the MENA, they have not developed into effective drivers of cooperative (much less collective) security, nor did they live up to their potential as fora for Track 2 or Track 1.5 political dialogue on security issues.

Part of the reason for this somewhat sobering state of affairs can be seen in the context in which these initiatives emerged. In the case of the Mediterranean Dialogue, initiated in 1994, this background crucially included the Oslo peace process between Israel and Palestinians and the associated prospects for a solution of this long-standing conflict.⁴⁷ Given this backdrop, it made political sense to include countries as diverse as Algeria, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan in the same dialogue initiative. After the failure

⁴³ International Crisis Group, “Finding the Right Role for the G5 Sahel Joint Force.” Africa Report No 258 (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2017).

⁴⁴ Samaan, 2017; also Karen E. Young, “The Emerging Interventionists of the GCC.” LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series 02 (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2013).

⁴⁵ Timothy Lenderking, Perry Cammack, Ali Shihabi, and David Des Roches, “The GCC Rift: Regional and Global Implications.” *Middle East Policy* 24 (4), 2017, pp. 5–28, at <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12305>.

⁴⁶ See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_147563.htm?selectedLocale=en.

⁴⁷ Markus Kaim, “Reforming NATO’s Partnerships.” SWP Research Paper RP 1. Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2017.

of the Oslo process, however, and given the current political setting—including the blockage of the Middle East peace process, but also significant shifts in the regional distribution of power in the wake of 2011, as well as the crises in Syria and Libya—it is unclear whether the format of the MD still makes political sense.

Similar things can be said about the ICI: Set up in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States and in the context of the global war on terror, the ICI was initially mainly envisaged as a tool which would help NATO increase its cooperation with Gulf countries, not least in terms of counter-terrorism.⁴⁸ The fact that two important players, Oman and Saudi Arabia, never joined the ICI, however, signaled the limitations of this approach from the get-go. Moreover, Iraq remained outside NATO's regional partnership program as a NATO Partner across the Globe together with countries such as Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Japan, and Pakistan, among others.⁴⁹ A structured form of interaction with Iran was never envisaged, even though Iran is arguably one of the main powers in the region. In brief, the ICI does not incentivize regional cooperation, and political developments since its inception in 2004 again suggest that the format should be re-thought.

Moreover, in contrast to the PfP initiative in post-Cold War Eastern Europe, the MD and ICI were never conceived of as pathways to full membership, nor do they include the same access to consultations under Article 4 of the Washington Treaty enshrined in the PfP. As a result, incentives for Partners to adapt their security practices to NATO standards have been markedly reduced. In effect, the NATO-Partner relationship in the MD and ICI is subject to some of the same principal-agent problems which beset security force assistance programs more generally.⁵⁰

Taken together, and at least partially as a result of these limitations, NATO Partners in both the MD and the ICI have generally preferred bilateral cooperation with the Alliance over cooperation through their respective partnership frameworks. Political disagreements among different members of both partnership formats are part of an explanation for this problem. Moreover, the partnership frameworks themselves do not reflect contemporary security dynamics in the region but are based on the political

⁴⁸ Kaim.

⁴⁹ See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49188.htm.

⁵⁰ Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald and Ryan Baker, "Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41(1-2), 2018, pp 89-142, at 10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745

status quo at their foundation. All of this means that one of NATO is not capitalizing on one of its greatest strengths—its experience in organizing collective security on a regional basis.

NATO should work towards increased cooperation with regional organizations—the LAS, GCC, G5S, AU, and others—to incentivize and promote stronger regional security cooperation. While this is admittedly a long-term process, there is much to gain and very little to lose from redirecting NATO partnerships with MENA countries in this direction. This would involve reorganizing existing partnerships into a new framework which better reflects the current security environment, and reinvigorating these frameworks through a stronger emphasis on multilateral cooperation. Current efforts by the U.S. administration to revive the idea of an ‘Arab NATO’ based on cooperation between Gulf countries and Egypt and Jordan—mainly as a tool to counter Iran—could go in such a direction.⁵¹ There are some encouraging signs that current divisions can be overcome—at least on the level of practical security cooperation. On 12 September 2018, the GCC Chiefs of Defense—significantly including Qatar—met with their Egyptian and Jordanian counterparts as well as with representatives from U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in Kuwait to discuss a deepening of defense cooperation.⁵² While such initiatives do not preclude bilateral cooperation between the Alliance and specific partner countries, multilateral cooperation should be a strategic priority for NATO.

The Domestic Picture

All of NATO’s partnership programs—PfP, MD, ICI, Partners across the Globe, as well as close relations with the EU, the UN, and the OSCE—have served the Alliance in many ways. The 41 official partner nations serve as essential force multipliers in NATO operations.⁵³ In fact, partners have been critical to the success of some missions. For example, at one point there were 51 nations represented in ISAF, including all 28 NATO members and 23 others—most of them NATO partners. Each nation provided expertise, military forces, funding, or other contributions to the effort to modernize Afghanistan and coordinate military operations there. The Alliance has created several Enhanced

⁵¹ Lucinda Smith, Hannah. ‘Donald Trump in Push to Build an Arab NATO,’ The Times, 30 July 2018, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/donald-trump-in-push-to-build-an-arab-nato-sf7qr05gz>.

⁵² Egypt, GCC and Jordan Discuss Military Alliance in Kuwait, AlBawaba News, 13 September 2018, at <https://www.albawaba.com/news/egypt-gcc-and-jordan-discuss-military-alliance-kuwait-1185410>.

⁵³ NATO’s 41 partners still include Russia, which is currently not a partner in good standing. NATO has had no practical cooperation with Russia since April 2014.

Partnership Interoperability Programs with those countries that primarily train, exercise, and deploy with NATO. In addition, at the 2014 Wales Summit NATO announced a Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative with Georgia, Moldova, and Jordan.⁵⁴ The hope, not yet proven, is that partnership with NATO and its democratic member states will rub off on the partners, and thereby advance the Western orientation and values of those states.

On the domestic level, NATO has been involved with a number of regional states—mainly in providing educational opportunities and specialized training. These activities, as a rule, are demand-driven—meaning that the content of individual cooperation programs is determined by Partners. We argue that NATO should re-think its ‘free for all’-approach to cooperation with Partners and should use the instruments available to the Alliance strategically. This highlights an inherent tension between the Alliance’s emphasis on a demand-driven approach and strategic interests in “capable, credible, legitimate and well-functioning” (security) institutions. Activities related to reforming the security sector—such as NATO’s Building Integrity program—can be perceived as invasive by Partners due to their implications for the domestic balance of power. Given this situation, NATO needs to consider ways of incentivizing partners to make the investment necessary to advance in this realm. An important aspect of this incentive structure is to increase coherence between Alliance activities and bilateral initiatives by Allies.

From a strategic vantage point, the aim of supporting partners in developing into effective security providers implies different things for different Partners, mainly depending on which obstacles a specific Partner Country faces. Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, face different issues than do Algeria or Egypt—even though all four countries profit from cooperation with NATO. NATO’s current approach to partnership to a large extent relies on Partners themselves choosing which types and areas of cooperation they prefer and on formalizing these preferences in a bi-annual Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme (IPCP). In this area, the political level within NATO should take a stronger lead, capitalizing on existing bilateral cooperation schemes and the development of new ones to help guide Partner countries towards the desired end-state. In other words, based on a political vision of security in the MENA, NATO should use its partnership tools to incentivize partners to move in the right direction.

⁵⁴ Wales Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government, Wales, NATO Press release 2014 (120), 5 September 2014, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm

A pre-condition for such an approach is a clearer picture of what effective security provision implies for the structure and capacity of partner security sectors. To put it simply, effective security provision in the MENA is hampered by two different problems: A lack of capacity preventing effective security provision despite best efforts, and deficiencies in security sector governance preventing capacities from being deployed efficiently. If states lack capacity, they might be unable to confront domestic or regional security challenges simply because they do not command the human or material resources necessary to do so. On the other hand, if security sectors are governed poorly, states might have considerable resources at their disposal, yet they might be deployed in ways which do not effectively contribute to security provision. One might refer to the first as a capacity shortfall and to the second as a lack of strategic leadership. In reality, these problems are not independent of each other but are more likely to occur in different combinations and configurations. On a systematic level, it nevertheless makes sense to examine the two dimensions separately

Examples which come close to the ideal type of a capacity shortfall are Afghanistan and Iraq after the respective invasions. In both countries, security institutions had to be built up almost from scratch so as to enable national security sectors to eventually take responsibility for security provision. This led to the establishment of the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I) after the dissolution of the country's Baathist military on orders of coalition authorities.⁵⁵ Given this context, the NTM-I's main mission was to "assist in the development of Iraqi security forces training structures and institutions so that Iraq can build an effective and sustainable capability that addresses the needs of the nation."⁵⁶ NATO assistance to Iraq has been renewed recently.⁵⁷ In Afghanistan, NTM-A was set up in 2009 to complement existing capacity building efforts under U.S. auspices.⁵⁸ Similar programs might be expected to take place in Libya once the situation on the ground allows such efforts—and EU training of the Libyan coast guard under the auspices of EUNAVFOR Med (Operation Sophia)⁵⁹ as well as bilateral Italian efforts already

⁵⁵ Florence Gaub, "An Unhappy Marriage: Civil-Military Relations in Post-Saddam Iraq," *Regional Insight* (Beirut: Carnegie Middle East Center, 2016).

⁵⁶ See <https://shape.nato.int/page136952>.

⁵⁷ See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-nato/at-u-s-urging-nato-agrees-training-mission-in-iraq-idUSKCN1FZ1E5>.

⁵⁸ See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52802.htm.

⁵⁹ Operation Sophia was originally called European Union Naval Force Mediterranean (EU NAVFOR Med). It is a military operation of the European Union established in April 2015 to neutralize refugee smuggling routes in the Mediterranean.

follows such a pattern.⁶⁰ Further examples of capacity building and training efforts by NATO in the MENA include counter IED training to the Egyptian military at the Counter IED Center of Excellence (CoE) in Madrid,⁶¹ training on crisis response planning for the Tunisian armed forces by a LANDCOM mobile training team,⁶² as well as the launching of a Defence Capacity Building package with Jordan in February 2018 focused on crisis management, continuity of government, and exercises.⁶³ All of these activities proceed from the assumption that the partner countries involved in cooperation with NATO lack specific technical capacities which can be addressed by capacity building and training. The hope is that the development of such capacities will then contribute to domestic stability that will, in turn, increase Alliance security.

On the other side of the spectrum, effective security provision can also be hampered by political factors, notably by bad governance of the security sector. The Alliance's Partnership Action Plan on Defence Institution Building (PAP-DIB) which was launched at the 2004 Istanbul Summit, departs from the notion that "[e]ffective and efficient state defense institutions under civilian and democratic control are fundamental to stability in the Euro-Atlantic area and for international security cooperation."⁶⁴ This concern with security sector governance is well-founded. Research in civil-military relations and military sociology has long suggested that military effectiveness crucially depends on good governance of the security sector. It has been shown, for example, that the military effectiveness of authoritarian regimes depends on specific organizational features adopted by armed forces such as merit-based promotion regimes, specific training systems, and information sharing procedures;⁶⁵ on a general level, democracies have been found to be more effective militarily because they implement a strict separation of political leadership and military decision-making.⁶⁶ In short, political meddling in military affairs—

⁶⁰ See <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-libya-security-nato/libya-sends-new-request-for-military-training-to-nato-idUSKBN15V23B?il=0>.

⁶¹ See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_149274.htm.

⁶² See <https://www.lc.nato.int/media-center/news/2017/landcom-mobile-training-team-assists-tunisian-armed-forces>.

⁶³ See https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_152308.htm.

⁶⁴ See https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/topics_50083.htm#.

⁶⁵ Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015); and Risa Brooks, "An Autocracy at War: Explaining Egypt's Military Effectiveness, 1967 and 1973." *Security Studies* 15 (3), 2006, pp. 396–430, at <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410601028321>.

⁶⁶ Stephen Biddle and Stephen Long, "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48 (4), 2004, pp. 525–46, at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002704266118>; and Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam, "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42 (3), 1998, pp. 259–77.

through politicized rather than merit-based recruitment and promotion, politicized funding and investment decisions, and the like—decreases military effectiveness. The civilian political control of the armed forces is therefore not just a normative concern, but an important aspect of efficient security provision.

Currently the Alliance does not differentiate between different partner needs. Rather, the 1,400 activities contained in the Partnership Cooperation Menu (PCM) are principally open to all partner countries, even though Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programs are agreed upon with partner countries. If these partnership activities are to be effective components of a projecting stability agenda, NATO needs to make better use of the possibility of directing cooperation and proactively offering specific content to specific partners. In particular, generating capacity without paying attention to governance issues will not lead to effective security provision, nor will security sector reform in the absence of capacity. The case of NATO's first training mission in Iraq illustrates this point: While NATO did contribute to the establishment of an Iraqi army, the dominance of political loyalty and sectarian affiliation over professionalism in recruitment and promotion of the military leadership under former Prime Minister al-Maliki contributed to the practical dissolution of the Iraqi army in the face of an armed challenge by Daesh/ISIL in 2014.⁶⁷ This illustrates the perils of capacity building without due attention to security sector governance.

A more strategic use of NATO's partnership programs is predicated upon a detailed needs assessment, framed by an overall understanding of where the Alliance would like partner countries in the region to move. It is wishful thinking, however, to assume that disparate cooperation activities will somehow automatically lead to an outcome only vaguely defined as 'stability.' It would be outright foolish to rely on cooperation in the absence of strategy to increase Alliance security.

Counter Arguments: Should NATO be Doing This?

Of course, in an international alliance that has grown to 29 nations one cannot expect to achieve consensus easily on matters of grave import, such as the concepts of projecting stability, enlargement, and out of area military operations. As a result, one hears counter arguments to the official line that

⁶⁷ Gaub.

NATO can pursue both defense and dialogue with equal vigor; or that the two goals of European security and projecting stability are manageable, affordable, and desirable by this alliance of nearly one billion people.

For one thing, the ability to project stability outside NATO's borders must be based on an initial assumption of a Kantian peace in Europe. If the Alliance has to worry about its own borders and the security of its populations, how can it continue to pursue out of area operations and other efforts to project stability abroad? This question has been reinforced by the seeming end of the short peaceful period from 1991 to the resumption of Russian misbehavior starting in 2014.⁶⁸ Yet the Alliance has renewed its call for projecting stability, as we have seen in the 2016 Warsaw Summit communique and in documents, speeches, and meetings since. Some members of the Alliance may believe that with the strong response to Russian challenges in Northeastern Europe—including Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), forward deployed multinational forces in the Balkans, increased air policing, the creation of new command structures for reinforcements and for the North Atlantic, the enhanced NATO Response Force, and so on—the problem with the Eastern frontier is “fixed.” With that done, goes the thinking, the Alliance can now turn its attention to the South, and projecting stability seems to be the best way to deal with the serious problems arising in the MENA region.

But how can NATO do it all? The Alliance is once again expected to provide significant conventional defense and conventional and nuclear deterrence forces in Europe and the North Atlantic; to perform cooperative security and collective defense missions; and now to project stability to the South. There is little appetite within allied nations for increased defense spending, increased force sizes, or new forays of operational missions in far-away places. The long war in Afghanistan took its toll on popular support for such military operations. At the same time, much of Europe's military force structure and capabilities, as well as America's role in European security, were on a steady decline from 1991 to 2014. The political leadership and the populace both liked the new world, where they did not have to worry about sudden conflict breaking out in their region, concerns their parents faced in the Cold War. Hence the common phrase, heard even within the hallways of NATO in 2014 and 2015, that “we don't want to return to the Cold War.” A reasonable desire, of course, but the West only gets one vote in

⁶⁸ Or perhaps even earlier, such as Putin's speech to the Munich Security Conference, 10 February 2007, or the Russian incursions into Abkhazia and South Ossetia, both in Georgia, in 2008.

whether that happens. It also has to respond to the real world, which sometimes has bad actors who *do* want to return to a cold war, or perhaps even a hot conflict.

This philosophical difference between knowing the alliance needs to provide necessary forces to stand up to an adversary, and wishing that it were not the case, has created divisions within the alliance itself. In particular, there is a divide between those who believe the existential threat facing the West comes from a recidivist, nuclear-armed Russia, and those who believe that the more serious and proximate threats are those coming from the South, including terrorism, unchecked migration, and political instability. Without the resources to deal with both, it is disingenuous to proclaim that both are equally important.

There are also divisions within the Alliance over the scope and nature of post-Cold War activities by the Alliance. Yes, all nations agreed to maintain NATO after the wall fell. And the allure of the alliance remains strong, as shown by the continuing interest in membership or partnership status by many other countries. But is the alliance overextended? Is it risking its internal integrity if it partners with nations that do not share its Western values? What are NATO's real vital interests? Is stability provision one of them? These are questions which have not yet been fully addressed by the member states.

Finally, is NATO really the best organization for handling such out of area missions? Is it the only organization available to do those? And even if the answer is yes, does that mean it has some sort of moral obligation to do so? Why cannot much bigger organizations like the United Nations or the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) be responsible for projecting stability? Why must a military organization be in charge? What about letting coalitions of the willing take the lead?

This last question really is the most challenging one. Why NATO? If the alliance truly feels that it is the right organization to tackle projecting stability, it still begs an additional question: for what purpose? NATO is a regional security organization created to ensure the security of its member states in Europe and North America. If Europe is "whole, free, and at peace," isn't that enough? Has not NATO met its charter obligations?

Apparently not. As of this writing, member states have some 18,000 military personnel in NATO missions around the world: Afghanistan, Kosovo, afloat on the Mediterranean, supporting the African Union, helping the European Union with the refugee and migration crises, deployed with Patriot missile batteries on the Turkish-Syrian border, forward deployed in the Baltic states and Poland, flying AWACS

missions. As Secretary General Stoltenberg said in 2017: “NATO is adapting partly by strengthening our collective defense in Europe and partly by stepping up our efforts to project stability to our neighbors.”⁶⁹ The Alliance, and its national members, want to do both.

The Warsaw Summit declaration amplified this point: “NATO must retain its ability to respond to crises beyond its borders, and remains actively engaged in projecting stability and enhancing international security through working with partners and other international organizations.”⁷⁰ The questions still unanswered for the Alliance remain, however. How “global” should NATO become? Should it retain its original core functions as a regional organization created for collective defense of its homelands? Or focus more on out of areas missions that fall under the headings of crisis management and collective security? Can it do it all? Should it continue to try? To do both, NATO will need a number of firm aspects that it seems to be lacking with regard to the concept of projecting stability: a strategy, a clear understanding of its ultimate goals, adequate funding, and the political support of all member states. Until it has those, the Alliance will continue to provide grandiose visions without the wherewithal to turn them into reality.

Conclusion: (How) Can we Get There?

In this paper we have advanced three fundamental and interrelated points. First, despite the hype surrounding NATO’s “new” projecting stability agenda since the 2016 Warsaw Summit, neither the underlying idea nor the phrase itself are new in Alliance political discourse. NATO has a 25-year history of projecting stability to the East. Nevertheless, the notion remains ill-defined and needs to be better understood if it is to be useful in guiding Alliance activities in the MENA and elsewhere. Second, we have outlined how NATO has attempted to project stability to the East and the South and have questioned the extent to which this overextends Alliance ambitions. Third, we have raised questions about the ability and willingness of the Alliance for taking on this mission. Is NATO really fit for purpose when it comes to projecting stability outside Europe?

⁶⁹ Secretary General Stoltenberg, 3 March 2017

⁷⁰ Warsaw Summit Declaration, 7 July 2016

These concerns notwithstanding, NATO is currently committed to projecting stability—in addition to, and based on, a strengthened defense and deterrence posture. We argue that for this ambition to be successful, a number of preconditions need to be met.

- 1) *Agree on a clear policy for the Strategic Direction South.* This step is crucial from three interrelated perspectives. To begin with, a policy agreed upon by all 29 Allies will increase the chances that coordination between Alliance activities and initiatives by individual Allies can be strengthened. Given different threat assessments and national strategic priorities, full coordination is probably difficult to achieve; yet any progress toward coordination would be positive as a way of avoiding duplication and because it would strengthen NATO's credibility in the region. Secondly, a clear policy is an important part of a new public relations approach to the region. NATO's regional Partners frequently have difficulties understanding the Alliance's strategic aims—a problem which, combined with a generally rather skeptical attitude, feeds conspiracy theories about the 'real' intentions of the Alliance. A clear strategic approach coupled with an open dialogue process could help address these issues. Third, a coherent policy would give direction to the various activities suggested under the military concept, many of which are already being conducted. In the absence of such guidance, it is difficult to prioritize and to efficiently target resources.
- 2) *Use partnerships strategically.* NATO has long insisted that its partnership programs are demand-driven. The current military concept repeats this idea.⁷¹ There are two different ways of resolving the inherent tension between a demand-driven approach and the requirements of a regional strategy. The most radical solution would be to shift from a demand-driven to a conditionality-based approach. This would allow NATO to incentivize what it sees as positive reforms and to target resources where they are most likely to produce favorable outcomes. On the flipside, it might be difficult for Partners to accept such an approach given the sovereignty concerns involved. A less radical solution could therefore be to use cooperation selectively. Here NATO would reinforce cooperation with some Partners and scale back cooperation with others based on the extent to which individual Partners are willing and able to contribute to the overall strategic aims. To some extent this approach is already in place in practical terms, but it would be useful to make it explicit so as to set the right incentives.

⁷¹ MC 6055/3, para. 20b.

3) *Take a more active approach in tailoring cooperation.* A corollary to the previous recommendation is that NATO should itself take a more pro-active approach in tailoring cooperation with Partners. If the Alliance has strategic interests in the quality and shape of (security) institutions in Partner countries, it only makes sense for the Alliance to also at least suggest specific reform steps to Partners. To the extent that such tailored offers flow directly from the Alliance's strategic objectives, this would have the added benefit of increasing cohesion and reducing the likelihood of duplication with the bilateral efforts of individual Allies or the activities of other institutions such as the EU.