

## **“NATO 2030”: SURVIVAL IN A NEW ERA**

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### **Abstract**

NATO is going through a time of high complexity, resulting largely from the deep internal divisions that limit its ability to deal with the various strategic challenges. Based on the recently published document “NATO 2030: United for a new era”, which analyses the strategic environment and recommends a set of lines of action for the organization over the next ten years, this article argues that most of the proposed measures to strengthen the Alliance's political cohesion can only be successfully implemented if two essential measures are taken: rapprochement with Turkey and strengthening cooperation with the EU. The survival of NATO is also dependent on the identification of a common threat, fundamental to this type of community, a condition that currently does not exist, especially in relation to the two identified systemic adversaries: Russia and China.

### **Kwy words**

NATO 2030, European Union, Turkey, systemic rivals, political cohesion, strategic environment

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## **"NATO 2030": "NATO 2030": SURVIVAL IN A NEW ERA<sup>1</sup>**

**MARCO ANTÓNIO FERREIRA DA CRUZ**

### **Introduction**

On 25 November 2020, a report was presented listing the main strategic lines of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the next 10 years. The document is called "NATO 2030: United for a new era" (NATO, 2020) and was prepared by a group of ten experts from different backgrounds, from academics to politicians, invited and nominated by the NATO Secretary-General himself, Jens Stoltenberg. Although the reasons for choosing each member have not been presented, it is important to highlight the absence of Portugal and Spain from this forum for reflection.

Although the group works autonomously from the NATO structure, Jens Stoltenberg made three guiding recommendations for the reflections to be made, namely:

- i) reinforcing Allied unity, solidarity and cohesion, including to cement the centrality of the transatlantic bond;
- ii) increasing political consultation and coordination among Allies in NATO;
- iii) strengthening NATO's political role and relevant instruments to address current and future threats and challenges to Alliance security, emanating from all strategic directions (NATO, 2020: 3)

Two main ideas stand out in the document. The first concerns the global repositioning of NATO. It is recognized that in the current context the challenges and threats are of a global nature. In order to address them, a broad approach is necessary.

Conceptually, the idea is that NATO should remain a Regional Organization. However, it must be closer to the network of indispensable global partners (such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and India) so that together they can address challenges that affect everyone and surpass the isolated capacities of single countries, including the greatest world power, the United States of America (USA). Thus, cooperation with the allies has become a fundamental requirement.

The second idea is the intention to strengthen its political capacity. The last few years have highlighted the permanence of risks and challenges and the increase in their complexity. They have shown a public mismatch in the transatlantic partnership and the emergence of internal democratic issues in relation to Alliance countries, as well as unthinkable strategic attitudes and military stances as in the case of Turkey with its

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<sup>1</sup> Article translated by Carolina Peralta.



military intervention in the western Mediterranean, in Libya or Syria. Thus, the document focuses on measures that can generate the political capacity necessary to overcome this current situation.

This paper reflects on these two points. While there is a need to develop a new strategic concept for NATO that translates this new international context, with another type of threats arising from climate change, nuclear proliferation, space disputes, and cyber-attacks, among others, it also involves actors who have (re) emerged and dispute power on a global scale.

Russia "threatens the security of individual NATO Allies and the stability and cohesion of the Alliance as a whole" (NATO, 2020: 25) and China has become "a full-spectrum systemic rival" that, although not posing an immediate military threat to the Euro-Atlantic area on the scale of Russia, "is expanding its military reach into the Atlantic, Mediterranean and the Arctic".

However, whereas the proposed measures are understandable, their consensual adoption by the Alliance depends on complex factors, particularly the attitude of the new American administration, Turkey and the relationship with the EU, which are critical successful or unsuccessful factors.

The establishment of NATO, in 1949, and the successive adaptations it underwent, almost always took unanimity for granted, namely in relation to the type of threats it intended to fight. In its original phase, the need to deter and defend from a Soviet attack and later the Warsaw Pact was widely accepted. After the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Warsaw pact, there was unanimous response to the crises that immediately erupted on its periphery and which led to the first operations outside the area. It intervened in the Western Balkans, in response to the atrocities committed by Serbian military forces in Bosnia and Kosovo. Following the September 11 terrorist attack, NATO invoked Article V to support the USA and in 2003 deployed forces in Afghanistan, further expanding the external area of intervention to combat international terrorism led by Osama Bin Laden.

However, today the situation is much more complex both externally and internally. The definition of threats or challenges is less consensual and the transatlantic departure by the United States, initiated with the Obama administration<sup>2</sup>, left a trail of doubt about the Alliance's longevity and even about the sharing of values, principles and effective involvement in the common cause. Perhaps this is at the root of the feeling that NATO may be "brain dead", as French President Emmanuel Macron recently stated (The Economist, 2019).

Likewise, the sharing of values, namely the validity of democracy, presented as the "cement" of political unity among the member states, in contrast to the distinct values of other regions and actors, proves to be quite fragile. This is taking into account past NATO enlargement to countries that had been in the Soviet orbit for many years, or are following controversial and debatable political principles, as is the case with Turkey.

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<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of his term, President Barack Obama declared that the United States needed to look more at the Asia-Pacific region, where American interests would have to be defended. This was reflected in the National Security Strategy Obama signed at that time, in what became known as the "pivot" for Asia. Trump has not changed this redefinition of strategic priorities, or at least this has not been reflected in his National Security Strategy.



In addition to this introduction and the final notes, this article is divided into three main parts. In the first, the aspects behind the creation and maintenance of the NATO community and the questions of adapting to the international strategic context are identified. In the second, the central theme of the document that is the basis for this analysis is addressed, which is the reinforcement of the political role of the organization, focusing on the internal dimension of this ambition. In order to present lines of reinforcement of the internal cohesion mechanisms, in the last part two essential measures are discussed: the rapprochement of NATO with Turkey and the reinforcement of cooperation, in different areas, with the EU.

### **1. A community of (in) security**

It is important to identify the aspects that help to understand NATO, its establishment and its evolution in the international context, in particular after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. At theoretical level, it is important to retain the aspects identified by Karl Deutsch, in 1957, regarding the creation of the so-called security communities. The author helps us to realize that integration in this community intended to make war unlikely among its members (Deutsch, 1957: 5), developing a sense of cooperative and collective security. The work of Adler and Barnett (1998: 55-57), published 40 years later, also gives important indications regarding security communities. Reinforcing the principles identified by Deutsch, the two authors emphasize that the creation of this type of community has as its main pillar the identification and common recognition of a threat with an external origin. In addition to the intention of creating a security community, the establishment of NATO intended to answer questions of a geopolitical nature, the principles of which can be found in the theory proposed by Mackinder (1919, 1943). He argued that only a union of the maritime (Atlantic) powers may contain the (natural) expansion of the continental power (Soviet Union). Also the speech by the first NATO Secretary-General, Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, gives us elements that reinforce this geopolitical sense of NATO. He stated that the main objective of NATO is "to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down" (NATO, n.d.). In fact, a large part of NATO's efforts, from its inception until the end of the Cold War (1991), sought to fulfil this purpose.

The relationship with the Russians during this period was always tense, sometimes dramatic, not only in the Euro-Atlantic area, in particular on the borders between Soviet space and Western Europe, but also in the peripheral regions where European powers and the US sought to maintain their influence. At this time, the world was divided into two large blocs, in addition to the existence of non-aligned countries. On the one hand, the Western bloc, with democracy and the market economy as a reference, and NATO as a collective defence organization. On the other hand, there was the alliance of the USSR with the countries that had come under its control after the WW II, characterized by sharing a single-party regime and a centrally planned economy, with the Warsaw Pact as its military structure.

They were completely opposite in philosophical, political, economic and military terms. The threat of catastrophic nuclear war led, in the 1950s, to the establishment, at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, of "peaceful coexistence", with the decision to attack "capitalist regimes" outside the European area by supporting



the liberation of colonies. In the following decades, support for the liberation movements became the central focus of the Soviet foreign policy.

In the western field, the danger of a nuclear cataclysm was also taken into account and, in the framework of the 1960s Harmel Report, the "dual track" stance was established. Always maintaining a defence without quibbling, NATO opened space for negotiations with the Warsaw Pact and the USSR. Although militarily there were never direct confrontations between these two blocs, there were, however, several proxy conflicts, where each party supported the insurgent groups in countries under the influence of the other party in some way. Examples include the conflicts in Vietnam, the Korean Peninsula, in Afghanistan, and in much of the former Portuguese colonies (Hobsbawm, 1996: 241-243).

Political differences and the threat of expansion of communism in Europe in particular, and in the world in general, formed the basis for common recognition of the Soviet threat and to "fuel" the effort that all Member States devoted to NATO's political and military structure. For the EU countries, the security pillar was completely entrusted to the security guarantee of the Atlantic Alliance.

Regarding Germany, during the Cold War, NATO always tried to keep the German military instrument "under surveillance" (Hobsbawm, 1996: 240), in the first place, in the face of the context of the First and Second World Wars. Despite being divided into Federal and Democratic Republics, NATO, along with the EU, gave guarantees for European stability through the peaceful German integration into the other European powers, especially France. The maintenance of a substantial American military contingent in Germany during the Cold War was certainly a guarantee of internal stability and affirmation of shared responsibility in the event of an eventual attack by the Warsaw Pact.

Finally, in Ismay's words, NATO served to "keep Americans inside". The creation of NATO, for the various North American administrations, can be seen as being similar to the Marshall plan, which economically supported a Europe devastated by World War II. Despite this support, which was vital for the European economic recovery, since then the American influence has been strongly felt, not only in Europe but also globally.

Similarly, NATO allowed the Europeans to redirect all their efforts towards the recovery of economies and the construction of the EU<sup>3</sup> (Gaddis, 2007: 45), rendering investment in the military sector insignificant, given the guarantees "offered" by the alliance with the North Americans. It is therefore not surprising that NATO's capabilities, especially in nuclear terms, have depended (and still do today) almost exclusively on the United States. However, as in the Marshall Plan, NATO also allowed the various North American administrations to influence European states in political and military terms, becoming the main source of acquisition of military weapons, installing military bases and making their military doctrine available, including in the information domain.

After the Cold War and significantly until 2007, part of Ismay's assumptions were less relevant, although they have not disappeared. Germany continued to be very military dependent on NATO, always fearing how these developments could be viewed internally and internationally (Kaplan, 1961; Daehnhardt, 2011). For the United States, NATO, and

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<sup>3</sup> At the time organized into three communities: the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and the European Economic Community (EEC).



in particular the bases in European countries, constituted an important platform for the projection of power, including for the Middle East, through Turkey.

In the case of Russia, the establishment of partnerships for dialogue with NATO and the signing of cooperation agreements, such as the Open Skies treaty, removed tension in the relationship between the two parts. The distension of this relationship, however, influenced one of the central pillars of the Alliance, the recognition of a common threat. Despite Eastern European countries, formerly belonging to the Soviet Bloc during the Cold War, considering the threat of Russian military invasion to be an ever-present reality, most EU countries, especially those in the South and Centre, which maintain deep economic dependencies related to the import of energy (gas and oil) from Russia, had different opinions. It is therefore not surprising that, at this point, some voices were raised questioning the maintenance of NATO, given the absence of the threat that was at its base, the Soviet Union, the Warsaw Pact and its red army.

NATO's readjustment to the new international context was achieved with the intervention, in the 1990s, in the conflicts of the Western Balkans (Gaspar, 2017: 110), and later, in the fight against terrorism resulting from the 9/11 attacks, led by al-Qaeda and directed by bin Laden. Whereas in the first intervention, NATO awakened the attention of Europeans to the risks of contagion from the conflicts on its periphery, while continuing to guarantee security in the European space, the fight against terrorism gathered a global consensus on this type of threat. Here, too, NATO played a central role, to the point that, for the first time in its history, Article 5 of the Alliance (Collective Defence)<sup>4</sup> was invoked. The strategic concept of NATO currently in force, approved in 2010, largely emphasizes the organization's objectives in combating terrorism.

2007 marked a new turning point in the relationship between Russia and the USA, and consequently, with NATO. During an annual meeting on security held in Munich, the guest of honour Vladimir Putin, in addition to stressing that the implosion of the Soviet Union was the main geopolitical error of the 20th century, challenged the Eastern European enlargement policies (NATO and EU), and claimed a new role for Russia in the International Order. It was then expected that relations between NATO and Russia would worsen. In 2008, Russia invaded Georgia. In 2014, and after US President Barack Obama referred to Russia as a regional power, thus contradicting Putin's narrative in Munich years earlier, Moscow ordered the invasion of the Ukrainian peninsula of Crimea<sup>5</sup>.

In addition to this change in Russia's stance, during this period, new terrorist attacks were carried out on European soil, in particular in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, France, Spain, Belgium, and Germany. The EU reacted unanimously following

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<sup>4</sup> The parties agree that an armed attack on one or more of them in Europe or North America will be considered an attack on all and, consequently, agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each one, in exercising the right of legitimate defence, individual or collective, recognized by article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the attacked party or parties, taking without delay, individually and in agreement with the other parties, the action it deems necessary, including the use of armed forces to restore and guarantee security in the North Atlantic region. Any armed attack of this nature and all measures taken as a result of that attack are immediately reported to the Security Council. These measures will end as soon as the Security Council has taken the necessary measures to restore and maintain international peace and security.

<sup>5</sup> The conflicts in Georgia and Ukraine were also related to the invitations made to these two countries by the EU and, especially, by NATO, for future accession (Matsaberidze, 2015). Despite internal differences, at the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, the official statement states that these two countries will become members of NATO (NATO, 2008).



the attacks in Paris, invoking, at France's request, the EU's "defence or mutual assistance" clause, introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 (art. 42/7). In addition to the terrorist attacks, thousands of migrants and refugees began to arrive in Europe, fleeing conflict zones along the EU's external border. The conflicts in Syria, Libya, Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan, just to mention a few, are some of the causes of this migratory wave towards Europe.

It is in this international context, marked by Russia's more assertive stance, the increase in terrorist attacks on European soil and the mass movements of populations towards Europe that NATO sought to respond, through the actions of strengthening land, air and maritime patrolling in the Baltic and Black Seas and operations in the Middle East (Iraq and Afghanistan) and the Mediterranean Sea (Operation Sea Guardian).

The widening of the type of threats that NATO began to combat, trying to respond to threats to the East (bellicose) and to the South (fragile and unstable), meant that within the community there was no longer a common recognition of the main threat. For countries on the eastern border, Russia should be the top priority, for southern (Mediterranean) states, NATO should be more focused on migration issues and seek to stabilize the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. In addition, the election of US President Donald Trump was strikingly negative for NATO, which reinforced divergences with European allies, especially with Germany and France, and even with Turkey (a subject that we will return to later).

The analysis and recommendations identified by the think tank that produced the document *NATO 2030: United for a new era*, materialize the enlargement that NATO proposes to achieve by 2030. In addition to Russia, measures are identified in relation to China<sup>6</sup> (both systemic rivals). The latter (re)emerging power challenges the American hegemony and has made a remarkable modernization progress in all domains, including nuclear, naval and technological (which it applies in its projection into space (NATO, 2020: 17)). In addition to these two actors, challenges related to the emergence of disruptive technology, cyber and hybrid threats, weapons control and nuclear threats, energy security, pandemics and natural disasters are identified. Terrorism is also identified, as well as threats originating in the South, including climate issues, human security, outer space, strategic communication, diplomacy and disinformation. Of all the recommendations, in addition to the permanent reference to the word 'resilience', which appears in the document on 35 different occasions (out of curiosity, the global strategy of the EU, approved in 2016, also emphasizes this word), directed above all to the call for the greater empowerment of societies, there is a suggestion for broadening the spectrum of NATO's operations in different domains and geographical spaces.

This expansion to geographic spaces and other fields of activity (cybernetic and spatial) accentuates the Allies' divisions regarding the common recognition of threats. Considering only Russia and China, we have not found, at least for now, this unanimity

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<sup>6</sup> For the group of experts, China has an increasingly global strategic agenda, supported by its growing economic and military weight. It has proven to be willing to use force against its neighbours, in addition to using economic coercion and intimidating diplomacy far beyond the Indo-Pacific region. It is also underlined that in the next decade, China will likely challenge NATO's ability to build its collective resilience, to safeguard its critical infrastructure, to deal with new and emerging technologies, such as 5G, and to protect sensitive sectors of the economy, including supply chains. In the long run, China is increasingly likely to project military power globally, potentially including in the Euro-Atlantic area (NATO, 2020: 17).



in relation to the challenges that each of the actors poses for NATO member states. There are profound internal divisions in this domain, resulting largely from the interdependencies, especially economic ones, of the majority of the Allies in relation to China and Russia. This prevents the aggressive views, objectively or subjectively evaluated, from having effects on the internal and external politics of all members, as happened during the Cold War in relation to the Soviet Union, or during the fight against terrorism, more recently. The difficulties in imposing sanctions on Russia after the invasion of Crimea, an issue that remains dormant today, and the issue of adherence to Chinese 5G technology are just some of the dividing points. The recent trade agreements between the EU and China further deepen the possibility of consensus on the challenges that Beijing poses to the international order.

The extension to climate issues, pandemics, natural disasters, gender issues, space and disinformation seems to overlap areas already addressed by European allies in the EU context. Although a point has been devoted to political consultation with the EU and the Secretary-General has emphasized that NATO aims to be an organization that brings together other sub-organizations, the view of European allies, including their societies, on these matters is more focused on European responses, given the nature of its instruments (political and economic), and not so much on NATO. Like other areas, there are also distances between the two organizations. It is therefore important to underline, based on the identified theoretical assumptions, in addition to the greater relevance in security terms for the Euro-Atlantic area, that the document "NATO 2030" does not favour its main objective, which is the strengthening of the political cohesion of the organization. Its scope, multiple spaces and multi-domains, make it difficult to achieve this political unity, which is aggravated by tensions among its members.

## **2. A political identity**

Political issues form a significant part of the "NATO 2030" document. It states that the military instrument is adapted to carry out the missions under the responsibility of the Organization, as a result of the developments achieved in recent years (NATO, 2020: 6). But it also points out that political cohesion among the Allies is the main weakness. Regarding the external relationship, a significant part of the recommendations is directed to the need to strengthen political instruments through greater coordination among the Allies, in order to make NATO's actions more effective. Internally, these recommendations apply to decision-making processes and consultation mechanisms. We can therefore conclude that the main objective of the document and its recommendations is to promote the political dimension of NATO, including its democratic principles, which are the basis of its foundation, the consultation mechanisms, the decision-making processes and the development of policy instruments to respond to current and emerging threats (NATO, 2020: 6).

In a recent statement, as part of the debate promoted by the Carnegie think tank on the document discussed here, Jens Stoltenberg emphasized the issues of NATO's political identity to refer to China's challenges. For the Secretary-General, China does not share the same democratic values as NATO, including respect for fundamental rights. The appeal to NATO's political identity has been used at different times in the organization's history since its foundation (capitalism vs socialism). Also in the fight against terrorism,



the issue of values and their defence was emphasized, through the reference was to the threat that terrorist attacks produce in democratic values (Carnegie Europe, 2020).

However, it is important to realize the consistency that this call on NATO's political identity produces in its internal cohesion. This identity results from the identification of a set of common characteristics among the elements of a given community, which distinguish them from other groups. The maintenance of those characteristics, always in comparison with external groups, is therefore the "cement" of the integrity and survival of these communities. With regard to NATO's political identity, we find in different references, such as the declaration of its current Secretary-General, the identification of democratic values, respect for freedom, justice and human rights. The EU has also used these issues as a way to Europeanize the policies of its member states, applying this "recipe" to countries in the process of integration, through the so-called Copenhagen criteria<sup>7</sup>.

Unlike the EU, democratic values were not, however, a priority issue for NATO in the membership processes of its members. Above all, it took into account issues of a geopolitical nature. Portugal's accession in 1949 is an example of this relationship between values and responses to needs of a geopolitical and geostrategic nature (Hobsbawm, 1996: 244). The guarantee of the use of the Lages base by the Americans dictated the integration of Portugal, at the time admittedly an authoritarian regime, not democratic, in the organization (Marcos, 2014). As a result of these options, which are widely perceived by the societies that are part of NATO, the appeal and the narrative that is made to values is extremely fragile, given the current context of some of the countries that are part of the Atlantic Alliance, in particular Turkey and Poland (Petrova & Aydin-Düzgit, 2021). The latter is even in dispute with the EU over the same matter.

Domestic policy issues are even more relevant when disputes among its members are analysed. Thus, In addition to the threats of conflict between Greece and Turkey over the Cyprus issue and disputes over area of influence and access to resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, there are also tensions resulting from Ankara's purchase of the Russian S-400 defence system. Turkey's disagreements with NATO and the United States over this acquisition have led Washington to impose harsh trade sanctions on Turkey recently<sup>8</sup>. The Turkish foreign minister, in addition to classifying the North American decision as a serious mistake, said that the sanctions had an effect on NATO cohesion, promising that Turkey will do everything to retaliate, in an appropriate manner and at the appropriate time (Gumrukcu, 2020). Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, in a public statement, referred to the sanctions, underlining that "from our NATO ally, the USA, we expect support in the battle against terrorist organizations and not sanctions" (Gumrukcu, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> The Copenhagen criteria, formulated in 1993 by the Copenhagen European Council, set out the requirements that candidate states have to fulfil before integration at three different levels: at the level of political criteria (stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities), economic (a functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and EU market forces) and legal (ability to take on obligations arising from accession, including the ability to effectively apply the rules, standards and policies that make up the EU's legislative body (the *acquis*) and adherence to the objectives of political, economic and monetary union).

<sup>8</sup> Sanctions include the export ban of Turkey's leading military procurement agency, as well as asset freezes and visa restrictions for the organization's senior officials (Barkey, 2020).



The political differences among some NATO members pose a serious risk to the organization as they allow the intervention of external actors, who exploit these same divisions. The NATO 2030 document makes reference to China and Russia working in this field, calling into question the interests and security of the Allies in areas traditionally a priority for NATO. These are its internal and transatlantic cohesion, also extending to the cyber domains, technological and commercial strategies (5G), threatening the democratic way of life (NATO, 2020: 9).

In addition to "opening space" for the intervention of external actors, the lack of political cohesion calls into question NATO's capacity for intervention. It is in this sense that a large part of the proposed measures are directed at decision mechanisms and processes, such as the strengthening of consultation mechanisms among allies, a little like the principle of constructive abstention in the EU. Regarding the consultation mechanisms among the Allies, through the North Atlantic Council (NAC), its strengthening among the Allies in the measures related to the two systemic rivals (Russia and China) and on nuclear issues is defended. The intention is to achieve a "common understanding and position" (NATO, 2020: 37), in the sense that this position is even identified by the Allies in other international organizations (UN and OSCE). In this same context, the strengthening of consultation between NATO and the EU should also be highlighted, in order to increase transparency between the parties.

In relation to political decision-making processes, the main issue lies in the blocking of most decisions, due to the lack of consensus among the Allies. This matter is particularly relevant in the report since it significantly affects NATO's cohesion. Of total five recommendations, a large part seeks to overcome this type of constraint in the decision-making process. Therefore, it is proposed to create structural mechanisms to establish coalitions within the Alliance's structure, in a kind of reinforced cooperation, also planned by the EU to overcome the difficulties of unanimous decision-making processes, in which more "capable" and more willing members can conduct joint projects, and the decision by qualified majority is in force.

For NATO, these coalitions can even be used to carry out new operations, under the umbrella of the organization, including Allied and Non-Allied countries that express the desire to participate. In this regard, the document identifies the possibility of using NATO's command structures and decision-making processes. A final suggested aspect concerns the question of the financing of the missions, with the possibility, in some cases, that the principle of payment by the participating States will no longer be applied (according to the idea that "costs lie where they fall", that is, they pay the costs to the participating Member States), for common funding some expenses resulting from military operations (NATO, 2020: 61).

Still in relation to the decision-making process, it is important to identify the attribution of greater autonomy to the NATO Secretary-General in routine decisions (without mentioning which ones and under what circumstances). This measure allows to overcome the issues of political consensus and the need to satisfy strategic conditions, motivated by the speed of the decision. On this aspect of the speed of the decision, a time limit is proposed for the response, under the risk of a delay jeopardizing the security of an Ally and the credibility of NATO.



One of the most relevant aspects of the recommendations regarding the Alliance's decision-making process concerns the blocking, at ministerial level, by some of the Allies. Whereas the measures relating to the speed of the decision that gives more powers to the Secretary-General are aimed at the issues related to threats to the East and the Baltic countries' fears of military intervention in the region, the second point is directed to the tensions created within NATO related to the blockades to Turkey. This situation has, moreover, prevented close cooperation between NATO and the EU.

Despite the relevance of the proposed recommendations, related to decision-making processes and consultation mechanisms, their implementation is, in most cases, difficult. Two essential aspects contribute to this. The first concerns the sovereignty issues of States, the conduct of their own foreign policies and the enforcement of the military instrument. At political level, there is no consensus in NATO regarding the type of threats that affect the organization itself, which is why we sought to identify a wide range of threats. The Allies' relationship with systemic adversaries (Russia and China) is not equally consensual. They have different external policies, ranging from economic dependencies to trade "wars". In this sense, the consensus regarding the enforcement of measures by NATO becomes quite complex, affecting the cohesion and credibility of the organization. The disputes of interests among the Allies themselves raise the degree of difficulty in reaching such a consensus. A second aspect concerns the issues of NATO's political identity, based on the principles and values of democracy, freedom and strict rule of law. Despite the experts' concern not to identify Allies, this narrative does not apply to part of its members, which makes political cohesion very difficult. In fact, NATO's own enlargement processes to other states have always sought to respond to geopolitical needs and not to transform the internal structures and political model of the candidates for accession.

### **3. From the Turkish question to shared responsibility**

The current strategic environment, marked by several material and ideological challenges of a global, systemic nature and with impacts on several domains, demands from NATO great capacity for adaptation and response to show societies that it will defend its capacity to respond to current difficulties. This has always been the main concern of the Alliance, with the different strategic concepts reflecting a great capacity to adapt to the strategic environment during the Cold War and afterwards, with emphasis on global terrorism issues. However, current circumstances are profoundly different from the past due to the emergence of another type of threat. Now the military instrument does not have the relevance of the past, despite the centrality of nuclear issues and the paradigm shift in the use of military capabilities for dual use. In addition, geopolitical issues have changed radically, taking into account the emergence of new powers that seek to challenge the international order. There is also an accelerated transition of centres of power to other regions of the world, with an emphasis on East Asia. This change requires a profound readjustment of NATO, including its own strategic centre, dedicated since its origin to Europe and the Atlantic area.

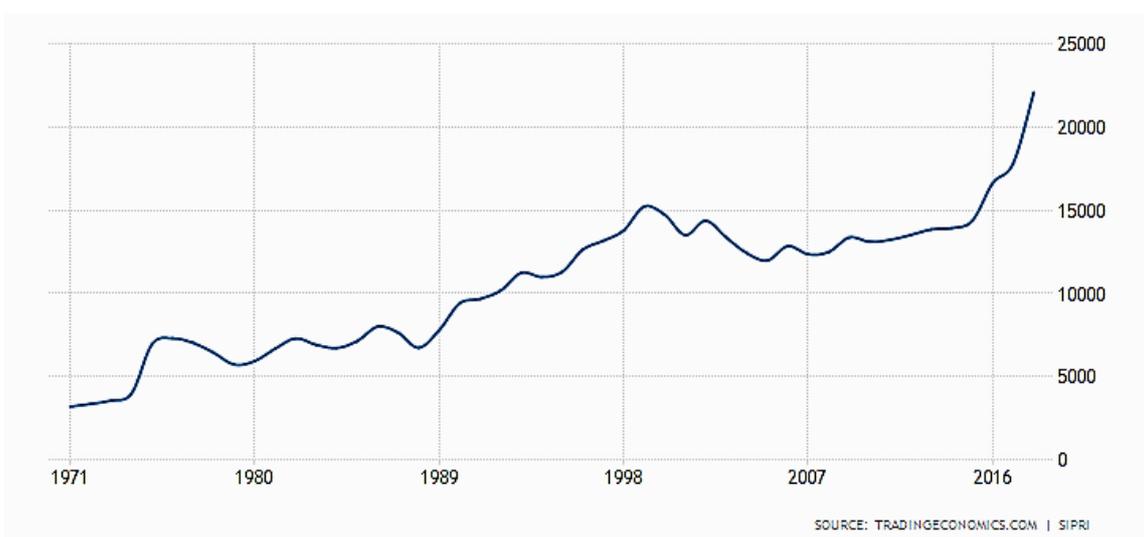
This change is so pressing that it may even jeopardize NATO's very survival, a topic that takes on even greater relevance when compared to the end of the Cold War. To achieve this same change, among others, there are two essential aspects. One of an internal



nature and the other of an external nature. While the first concerns Turkey, the second concerns the future relationship with the EU.

In addition to what it represents in geopolitical terms for NATO, Turkey has one of the largest armed forces among the Allies. Despite not having nuclear weapons, its military capabilities stand out in number and quality. Since 2001, Turkey's defence budgets have increased steadily and significantly, particularly since 2018, when over 22 billion dollars were spent. For comparison, in that same year, France spent around 50 billion, the United Kingdom 60, Spain 13 and Portugal 3 (NATO, 2019: 7).

Figure 1 – Turkey Military Expenditure (1953-2018)



Source: Trading Economics (n.d.)

Turkey's political and strategic options have led to its visible distancing from Western countries and organizations, including the EU. After years of negotiations to be included in the European space, the current cooling has led President Erdogan to demonstrate his disillusionment regarding this process, which has led to an ever greater distance from the EU. Migration management created a new point of cleavage between the parties. European leaders, in particular French diplomacy, accused the Turkish president of using migration as a political weapon to claim a reinforcement of the financial aid sent by Brussels to Ankara to support migrants stationed in Turkey intending to come to Europe. Despite European institutions, with emphasis on the current responsible for Foreign and Security Policy, Josep Borrel, and Germany and Italy mediating this dispute, the (historic) tension relations with other Member States, namely Greece and Cyprus, has not facilitated this process.

Regarding the US, these relations have been marked by similar tensions since the beginning of the Iraq conflict. Turkey has not forgotten the incident of 4 July 2003, when US forces carried out an action in the city of Sulaymaniyah (Northeast Iraq), and captured 11 Turkish military personnel belonging to special operations. The treatment of the Turkish military, who had their equipment confiscated and their heads covered, was



considered a serious diplomatic incident. Alongside this issue, the American refusal to provide military technology to Ankara, like the Patriot air defence missiles, led to Turkey's purchase of this capability from Russia, which has generated major cleavages within NATO (Johnson & Gramer, 2019). Also Turkey's increasingly active foreign policy, seeking to retake the areas of influence occupied by the Ottoman empire (Colborne & Edwards, 2018) (Ayoob, 2020), has distanced an understanding in terms of the relationship with NATO and with the rest of the Allies. Turkish intervention in the Syrian and Libyan conflicts are two of the many examples of this.

Due to the importance of Turkey to NATO and the many current tension relations, the materialization of most of the recommendations proposed by the experts can only be viable when there is a Turkish rapprochement with the West. In this sense, the imposition of sanctions by the US, the lack of consensus in relation to the management of migration and the disputes in the Western Mediterranean that oppose the EU to Turkey over sovereign areas make this very difficult, the same applying to NATO's cohesion and credibility.

In this context, the establishment of a "Code of Conduct" that will be able to define in more detail what is or is not accepted in the behaviours of the Allies makes sense.

In addition to the Turkey issue, NATO's relationship with the EU is also vital for the realization of the political ambition of the recommendations of "NATO 2030". Firstly, due to the role that the EU can/should play as a mediator in relations with Turkey, due to its geographical proximity, historical relationship and economic interests. Despite the existing disputes, this rapprochement relationship has been happening for much of the past two decades in the Western Balkans region, where Turkey has even integrated its military contingent into the EU's mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR). Enhanced cooperation between the EU and Turkey will certainly also contribute to bring Ankara politically closer to NATO. This strategy of bringing Turkey closer to and integrating into the EU, in order to promote its Europeanization, was even sponsored, for years, by the US, the main motivation being that such integration would be beneficial for Turkey's "way of being" in NATO (Önis & Yilmaz, 2005) (Kivanc *et al*, 2014: 1697).

Secondly, due to the sharing of responsibilities between the two organizations, preventing redundancies in performance through the exploration of the distinctive capabilities of each and the sharing of geographical spaces. Although part of the threats are global and in multiple domains, fighting them requires a comprehensive approach to the instruments. The document discussed here and the EU's global strategy, approved in 2016 and updated over the past few years, indicate clear areas of common interest, such as migration, terrorism, threats to the south, assertiveness to the east. The discussion around the EU's strategic autonomy, in areas such as the economy, health and above all in security and defence, should therefore be clarified. According to the document, it should be established in such a way as to lead to the mutual reinforcement of the two organizations and not to their mutual competition.

The establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation and related programmes and structures, such as the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and the European Defence Agency (EDA), should be understood as a form of contribution of EU Member States to NATO. This point is not new, taking into account the permanent effort of the European institutions to identify and explain European developments in the field



of Defence. It is true that, since its creation, the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the corresponding Common Security and Defence Policy, the second being part of the first, have generated major debates in the relationship with NATO and the US. At this point, it is important to identify two distinct views that have occupied a large part of that discussion.

Bearing in mind the EU's increasing external engagement in crisis management missions and operations, the first trend defends the EU's autonomy, stating that strengthening its capacity to act in regions of strategic interest is required. This view stresses that the EU will only begin to be taken seriously as a security actor when it has new operational capabilities to safeguard European interests, including the employment of European military forces (Leonard and Rottgen, 2018).

For this current, the pursuit of the EU's specific interests is not at odds with NATO, as the established capabilities even strengthen its military capabilities given the Member States' commitment to the transatlantic alliance. The second current stresses that a more "muscular" Europe can jeopardize NATO itself, if it is done against the will of the US, fearing that the increase in European capacities and strategic autonomy may condition the transatlantic relationship (Boniface, 2016:102).

The relationship with the US and NATO, together with the identification of threats to the European space, are therefore the critical points of the EU's strategic autonomy. During the Cold War, the development of European capabilities was, as a rule, seen by various US administrations as reinforcing NATO's own capabilities. In other words, for the Americans, the existence of an effective European military capability was considered benign, as long as it was done within the framework of NATO.

The emergence of the CSDP in the late 1990s raised the question of the EU's military, defence and security culture, distinct from that of NATO and the US (Helly, 2018: 13). The creation of this new European path was seen by some as an echo of the divergences between the US and some EU member states, like the one that occurred in late 1997, when the Clinton administration sought to increase the pressure on Baghdad.

At the same time, France joined Russia and China in vetoing US proposals submitted to the Security Council (Kagan, 2003: 53). The turning point in American scepticism about European military development, at least in public terms, happened during the management of the Iraq conflict in 2003, a time when several European countries decided not to accompany the US in the invasion of Iraq. At that time, the George W. Bush administration became aware that a stronger EU would be a less collaborative partner, conditioning American foreign policy and NATO itself (Ghez e Larrabee, 2009).

In European terms, France, through its successive presidents (since General de Gaulle)<sup>9</sup>, has generally maintained a political line in support of strengthening European strategic autonomy. However, as stressed by Boniface (2016: 101), the more French than European nature of this project contributed to its being seen, inside and outside Europe,

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<sup>9</sup> For France, the European project is largely the result of a French desire to keep Germany at bay and also to create a counterweight to the US (Bongiovanni, 2012: 22). In the uncertainty surrounding the end of the Cold War, France found competition from the United States for a leadership position in the new Europe. Paris increasingly resented the US's attempts to preserve or even increase its influence on European security. Mitterrand was hostile to any expansion in the tasks assigned to NATO, which he saw as an instrument for the domination of America (Grant, 1996: 59-60). The creation of a European security identity was therefore seen as a means to challenge the dominance of the United States in Europe (Menon, 1996:5).



as aiming more at replacing American hegemony by French influence, than at developing a real European project. For the rest of the European partners, in particular for Germany, there was always a fear of some French arrogance and the desire to replace the Americans without having the necessary means to do so.

For the French view, which has been the "bridgehead" for strategic autonomy, the EU must become an autonomous strategic entity in order to be prepared for the eventual withdrawal or disinterest of the United States, more concerned with Asia, whose military forces will not remain forever in the centre of the European continent (Bozo, 1998). France and other EU members have never been comfortable with the EU's lack of freedom of action as it is substantially dependent on NATO (Ghez and Larrabee, 2009).

For many years, it was the United Kingdom that led the resistance within the EU in relation to strategic autonomy, defending a view close to that of the US, preferring to maintain Europe's *status quo* in this regard. When, in 2003, Belgium, France, Germany and Luxembourg proposed the establishment of a Europe of Defence and of an Operational Command in the city of Tervuren, the United Kingdom considered that this action not only duplicated those existing in NATO (namely SHAPE), but it could be seen as an unnecessary duplication of the Alliance and endanger NATO's role as a "cornerstone" of European security (Duke, 2018: 25-26).

London's resistances were shared by several Member States like Portugal, Denmark, the Netherlands and Italy, for whom the defence guarantee must be the remit of NATO and the US. For these States, European autonomy and a duplication of the Alliance's ESDP reorientation could lead to an anti-American feeling. This "Atlantic" vision of European Security and Defence was reinforced when the EU enlarged to the east in 2004 and 2007, through the integration of ten new Member States<sup>10</sup>, formerly under the influence of the Soviet bloc, for whom the strengthening of the leadership of the CSDP could mean a weakening of NATO (Ghez e Larrabee, 2009) (Faleg, 2017: 137).

In addition to these issues, over the past few years, especially since the Clinton administration (although the issue had greater visibility when Donald Trump was the head of the White House), the Americans have been calling for greater investment in the defence sector on the part of Europeans, insisting that this investment is at least 2% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The sharing of effort, the so-called burden-sharing, has been one of the most central tension points between the two sides of the Atlantic.

It is therefore important that the EU demonstrates greater willingness to contribute to the defence sector, spending more rationally and seeking consistency in its investments, and that the new US administration gives a signal of this same will, which would contribute to a return to the strategic sense of the relationship between the two blocs.

IThis way, the centrality of the discourse would no longer be focused on burden-sharing, and be centred on a new concept of responsibility sharing between NATO and the EU. This change of approach requires a realignment of the strategic documents and the visions of the respective visions, in order to share fields of action and geographical spaces in line with the instruments and their respective capabilities.

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<sup>10</sup> Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia.



This effort to generate interdependencies and cooperative relations between NATO and the EU would give advantages to both organizations to combat the threats that will affect European and North American spaces.

### Final considerations

The NATO 2030 document is an important guideline for the next strategic document of the Atlantic Alliance. However, the importance attached to internal issues, related to internal decision-making mechanisms in political terms and to the search for the strengthening of consultation forums among allies, should be emphasized, in order to give greater cohesion and credibility to NATO. In this sense, despite the identification of a very wide range of challenges that the Organization must be able to face externally, the recommendations depend to a large extent on this internal context.

Like other organizations, NATO is going through one of the greatest crises in its history, which may even jeopardize its own survival. Transatlantic issues and the departure of some allies from political norms and attitudes that have long been internalized, can lead to the absence of a common strategic vision, or even the perception of a common destiny. All this contributes to a pessimistic vision about the coming times. The proposed reinforcement of the political instrument to act in external terms, as well as the greater capacity of the military instrument, only seem achievable if the indispensable political cohesion is achieved. In this sense, the document is (perhaps too much) ambitious, taking into account that the recommendations are difficult to implement in the current context.

In order to overcome this crisis, it is important to achieve not only a rapprochement with Turkey, which in the current context is proving very difficult, given the tightening of the sanctions imposed and the territorial disputes that it has with some NATO (and EU) members. Likewise, the path to closer ties with the EU, through the sharing of responsibilities, proves to be an inevitability, because while a Europe without the contribution of NATO will not make sense, the same is true when we talk about dependency (politics) of NATO in relation to Europeans. Finally, it is important to change the narrative of democratic principles as a structural pillar of the alliance, directing these same discourses to the threats to the Euro-Atlantic area, which are identification roots of security communities.

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