



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

NATO 2030 REPORT OF THE NATO GROUP OF EXPERTS: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS, AND NATO PA REFERENCES

Policy Brief

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INTRODUCTION

The Group of Experts, appointed by the NATO Secretary General in April 2020 to assist him with the reflection process labelled *NATO 2030*, published their report on 1 December. The 66-page report, entitled [NATO 2030: United for A New Era](#), includes an **analysis of the threat environment** in the coming decade and **138 recommendations in three areas**:

- Strengthening NATO's political role and tools with regards to emerging threats and challenges from every direction;
- Strengthening NATO's political cohesion and unity; and
- Strengthening NATO's political consultation and decision-making.

While the main focus of recommendations is NATO's political role, their report takes a much broader look at the state of the Alliance and ways to adapt it for the coming decade. As such, it offers interesting **groundwork for the upcoming revision of NATO's Strategic Concept**, which NATO Heads of State and Government are likely to initiate at their Summit meeting in 2021.

The experts' report highlights the **significant shifts in the international environment** characterised by a new great-power competition and the simultaneity of complex challenges. It also describes the **increased internal strains among Allies**, which risk weakening Allied unity, solidarity, and cohesion and benefiting Russia and China, which the report calls NATO's "systemic rivals".

In light of these external and internal challenges, the report calls on Allies to **rededicate themselves to the Alliance's enduring values and purpose** as the bedrock of Europe and North America's unity and security. The report makes clear **much relies on Allies' political will** to a) continuously and actively use NATO as the essential transatlantic forum for consultation on all challenges which Allies feel affect their security and b) align national policies with the positions taken within NATO and refrain from politically motivated blockage.

The report's core vision is **a more proactive and agile political Alliance** which stands as a bulwark against the competing visions of systemic rivals, actively anticipates challenges, routinely consults formally and informally on all perceived threats and challenges, does not shy away from discussing issues beyond its traditional agenda, exercises speedy political decision-making in crisis response, and proactively chooses the partnerships which will help it achieve its security goals.

The sections below include the experts' vision statement and excerpts of the recommendations. **Specific reference is made when recommendations are inspired by, or align with, the Assembly's own.**

The NATO PA and the Expert Report

- The Assembly's Standing Committee met with the Group on 7 October.
- The Assembly's then President Attila Mesterhazy (Hungary) submitted a report to the Group on 2 November which summarised the main recommendations contained in delegations' answers to the NATO PA survey on NATO 2030 conducted between July and October 2020.
- **Some of the survey recommendations and proposals contained in Assembly reports and resolutions were incorporated into the Group of Experts' report.** The report's other recommendations are well in line with the Assembly's agreed positions.
- **The report includes one explicit reference to the NATO PA's role** in the section on Strategic Communications, Public Diplomacy, and Tackling Disinformation (pp. 48-49):

"While NATO accelerates digitalisation of its public communications functions, Allies should amplify face-to-face engagements with broader audiences while partnering with stakeholders in NATO's rich network of force multipliers like the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and Atlantic Treaty Association."

VISION STATEMENT (Group of Experts' report, p.11)

<p>The Reflection Group's vision for NATO in 2030 is one of an Alliance defined by vitality, utility, relevance, and endurance. By the end of the decade, no matter the strategic environment, NATO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uphold its role as the bedrock of peace, stability, and the rule of law in the Euro-Atlantic area; • Remain the strategic centre of gravity for collective defence of all its members on the basis of an up-to-date Strategic Concept; • Strengthen its role as the unique and essential forum to which Allies turn on all major national security challenges, proactively seeking to forge consensus and build common strategies for dealing with common threats; • Play a larger part in an international order in which open societies can flourish and be secure and prosperous; a world in which a plurality of worldviews and fundamental differences of opinion are no obstacle to dialogue and cooperation; • Enjoy deeper strategic and mutually reinforcing connections with partners that share these principles and aspirations, affirming the Helsinki Final Act principle that all states have the right to choose their security arrangements; and, where partnership is not possible, a commitment to work towards shared security on the basis of mutual respect; • Possess a stronger relationship and intensify consultation on issues of common concern with the European Union built on the foundations of cooperation, with a view to taking advantage of different capabilities and toolkits. 	<p>To achieve this, Allies should redouble their commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to the democratic principles enshrined in the North Atlantic Treaty, with all Allies free to shape their own destinies within these bounds; • Share the burden that comes with collective security, maintaining equitable responsibilities for the common defence; • Ensure their actions do not undermine the utility and cohesion of the Alliance for unrelated ends or narrow national goals without prejudice to their sovereign rights and core national security interests; • Put collective defence, from conventional to nuclear and hybrid, at the forefront of consultation and decision-making on security in the Euro-Atlantic area; • Enable swift decision-making and policy implementation—preserving the principle of consensus but ensuring the Alliance is equipped to deal with a changing strategic environment.
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MAIN FINDINGS: Moving Towards NATO 2030

[Below find abstracts from the Group of Experts' Report, pp. 12-15. Text boxes highlight when recommendations are inspired by, or align with, the Assembly's own]

1. The starting point must be to **update the 2010 Strategic Concept** [...]. [I]t should update content related to the principles undergirding the NATO Alliance, changes to the geostrategic environment (including both Russia and China), and the need to incorporate terrorism more fully into NATO's core tasks.

Recommendation included in the NATO PA's [Resolution 457](#) of 2019 on NATO @ 70 and [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030

2. NATO should continue the dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue with **Russia**. [...] NATO should [...] ensure its continued effectiveness by raising the costs for Russian aggression and develop a more comprehensive response to hybrid forms of Russian aggression, while at the same time supporting increased political outreach to negotiate arms control and risk reduction measures.

3. NATO [...] needs to develop a political strategy for approaching a world in which **China** will be of growing importance through to 2030. The Alliance should [...] consider establishing a consultative body to discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China. It must expand efforts to assess the implications of China's technological development and monitor and defend against any Chinese activities that could impact collective defence, military readiness or resilience in the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's (SACEUR) Area of Responsibility.

Recommendations in line with 2020 NATO PA Reports on China for the [CDS](#), [PC](#) and [ESC](#); [Resolution 464](#) of 2020 on A Transatlantic Strategy on China; and then President Mesterhazy's report to the Group of Experts, particularly the need for a comprehensive China strategy and the proposal to create a Centre of Excellence on the Indo-Pacific

4. **Emerging and disruptive technologies** are a challenge but also opportunity for NATO. Competing with the efforts underway by large authoritarian states to achieve dominance in key [emerging and disruptive technologies] must be a strategic priority for the Alliance and its members. NATO should serve as a crucial coordinating institution [...]. NATO should hold a digital summit of governments and private sector [...] [on] security-related AI strategies, norms, and research and development (R&D) [...].

Recommendations in line with reports in the [STC](#) between 2017 and 2020 and Resolutions [465](#) of 2020 on Defence Innovation, [453](#) of 2018 on Maintaining the Science & Technology Edge and Enhancing Alliance Agility, [443](#) on Maintaining NATO's Technological Edge.

5. [...] NATO should more explicitly integrate the fight against **terrorism** into its core tasks. [...] NATO should enhance the fight against terrorism as part of the hybrid and cyber conversation and ensure that the threat from terrorism figures in exercises and lessons learned. NATO should strive to improve current practices of intelligence-sharing [...].

6. NATO must articulate a consistent, clear, and coherent approach to the **South**, addressing both traditional threats like terrorism, and the growing presence of Russia and to a lesser extent China. NATO must maintain political focus on building up military preparedness and response for the southern/ Mediterranean flank [...]. NATO should strengthen ties and cooperation, especially with the EU, in the framework of a coordinated approach. It should increase the frequency of political consultations [...] on the South. [...].

Recommendations in line with [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030.

7. NATO should reaffirm its support for **arms control** while maintaining an effective **nuclear deterrence**. It should play an enhanced role as a forum to debate challenges to existing arms control mechanisms and consult on any future arrangements. [...] It should develop an agenda for international arms control in key areas of [emerging and disruptive technologies] with military application. NATO should further adapt its defence and deterrence posture in the post Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty setting to take into account the threat posed by Russia's existing and new military capabilities. It should continue and revitalise the nuclear-sharing arrangements that constitute a critical element of NATO's deterrence policy.

Recommendations on deterrence in line with [Resolution 455](#) of 2019 on Supporting NATO's Post-INF

8. **Climate change** [...] NATO has a role to play in increasing situational awareness, early warning, and information sharing, including by considering the establishment of Centre of Excellence on Climate and Security. It should build on efforts to include climate change and other non-military threats such as pandemics in NATO planning on resilience and crisis management [...]. NATO should [...] develop and implement better green military technology.

The report makes specific reference to the impact of climate change on the High North / Arctic and calls on NATO to "enhance its situational awareness across the High North and the Arctic and, for the High North that falls within SACEUR's Area of Responsibility, should develop a strategy that takes into account broader deterrence and defence plans." This recommendation is included in [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030, building on the 2017 report by the PC on [NATO and Security in the Arctic](#).

9. Maintaining **political cohesion and unity** must be an unambiguous priority for all Allies. Allies on both sides of the Atlantic must reaffirm their commitment to NATO as the principal institution for the defence of the

Euro-Atlantic area. Allies should pledge themselves to a code of good conduct to abide by the spirit as well as the letter of the North Atlantic Treaty. Allies should maintain and meet agreed burden-sharing requirements. NATO should reassert its core identity as an Alliance rooted in the principles of democracy, and Allies should consider establishing a Centre of Excellence for Democratic Resilience dedicated to providing support to individual Allies, upon their request, for strengthening societal resilience to resist interference from hostile external actors in the functioning of their democratic institutions and processes. When disputes between Allies arise, the Secretary General should continue to provide his good offices and consider more closely involving other Allies as informal mediators.

Recommendation for the creation of a Centre of Excellence for Democratic Resilience included in [Resolution 457](#) of 2019 on NATO @ 70 and referenced in [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030 and then President Mesterhazy's report to the Group of Experts. Recommendations regarding dispute resolution mechanisms in line with [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030 and then President Mesterhazy's report to the Group of Experts.

10. The Group calls for transatlantic **consultation** to be strengthened in a systematic, credible, and powerful manner. Allies must reaffirm the role of the North Atlantic Council as a genuine forum for consultation on major strategic and political issues. Allies should strive to hold national policies to the line of policy developed at NATO. The Alliance should institute a practice whereby Allied Foreign Ministers make a periodic appraisal of the Alliance's political health and development. NATO should hold more frequent Ministerials and, when appropriate, expand their format. It should resume the practice whereby the number of annual Foreign Ministerials matches the number of Defence Ministerials, with meetings alternating between NATO HQ and Allied capitals. It should hold more informal meetings and institute regular consultations on issues beyond the traditional agenda [...].

Recommendation for more frequent and more informal consultations with the North Atlantic Council, including in new formats, included in [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030 and then President Mesterhazy's report to the Group of Experts.

11. **NATO and the EU** should seek to reinvigorate trust and understanding at the highest levels. [...] It would be useful for NATO and EU Heads of State and Government to meet in a special formal session [...]. The two organisations should create an institutionalised staff link [...] NATO should welcome EU efforts towards a stronger and more capable European defence capacity insofar as these strengthen NATO, contribute to a fair transatlantic burden-sharing, and fully involve non-EU Allies. Ongoing European efforts should be better used to increase the share of European Allies in support of NATO capability targets.

Recommendations in line with [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030.

12. NATO should outline a global blueprint for better utilising its **partnerships** to advance NATO strategic interests. It should shift from the current demand-driven approach to an interest-driven approach and consider providing more stable and predictable resource streams for partnership activities. NATO's Open Door Policy should be upheld and reinvigorated. NATO should expand and strengthen partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia, seek to heighten engagement with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and counter destabilisation across the Western Balkans. NATO should energise the Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) through strengthened political engagement, capacity building, and resilience enhancement. It should deepen cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners, including by strengthening information-sharing and creating regularised dialogues on technological cooperation and pooling of R&D in select fields.

Recommendations regarding the Open Door Policy, Ukraine, Georgia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, MD and ICI in line with [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030. Recommendation on cooperation with Indo-Pacific partners in line with [Declaration 460](#) of 2020 on NATO 2030, [Resolution 464](#) of 2020 on A Transatlantic Strategy on China, and then President Mesterhazy's report to the Group of Experts.

13. The principle of consensus is a cornerstone of the Alliance, but NATO must be diligent in ensuring that it remains capable of **reaching and implementing decisions** in a timely fashion. (...) It should consider bolstering the Secretary General's chief executive role in order to make decisions on routine matters and to bring difficult issues into the open at an early stage. NATO should create a more structured mechanism to support the establishment of coalitions inside existing Alliance structures and should examine ways to time-limit decision making in crisis. To deal with the growing frequency of single-country blockages involving external bilateral disputes, it should consider raising the threshold for such blockages to the Ministerial level.

Recommendation regarding the consensus principle and the need for faster decision-making in line with then President Mesterhazy's report to the Group of Experts.

14. With regard to **political structure, staffing, and resources**, [...] NATO should consider increasing the delegated authorities of the Secretary General to make meaningful decisions on personnel and certain budgetary matters. It should institute a practice of outside-in audits of the administrative functioning of the organisation and require a functional review process once every five years. Allies that make up a low proportional share of the civil budget should raise their national contributions. NATO should establish a centre of higher learning to cultivate future talent outside of NATO and launch a scholarship program, tentatively called the Harmel Fellowship Programme, under which each Ally would fund a scholarship programme for at least one individual every year from another NATO Ally to undertake postgraduate study at one of its leading universities.

Recommendation for a NATO scholarship programme included in then President Mesterhazy's report to the Group of Experts.