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New Cycle of the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP)

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In the coming years, NATO will increase the pressure for the development of technologically advanced weapons. Superiority over Russia in this area will be crucial for the ability to conduct a collective-defence mission. The simultaneous development of capabilities for crisis-response missions also will be necessary to maintain political cohesion in the Alliance. NATO's ability to perform both types of missions at the same time will be crucial for Polish security in the long term.

NATO will begin a new cycle of capability planning, necessary for conducting joint, multinational missions. To this end, the Transformation Command (ACT) has published the Strategic Foresight Analysis (SFA)—a description of trends affecting Alliance security with a 15-year horizon. Based on the SFA, the ACT and NATO's other strategic command, Allied Command Operations (ACO), have developed the Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO), which contains suggestions of capabilities the Allies should possess to neutralise potential threats. Both documents should help political leaders decide how many and what types of missions their countries should be able to perform together. The formal Political Guidance (PG) indicating the level of NATO ambition will be given at the beginning of 2019 and will comprise the reference for the four-year cycle of the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP). NATO's structures will develop a catalogue of the necessary capabilities (types of forces, their size, equipment, logistics, training support, etc.) and, after consultation with the members, will task them with their development. The stage of the planning and assessment determining whether the Allies have delivered will be confidential.

Strategic Trends and Their Implications for NATO. An analysis of strategic trends published in 2017 and replacing the 2013 version, indicates an increasing threat from Russia and China and the growing importance of non-state actors. Access to new technologies enhance these states' and actors' ability to use lethal force. The centre of power is shifting away from the West toward Asia. Regional conflicts in the Middle East and Africa will continue to contribute to the terrorist threat and mass migration to Europe. The Alliance must take into account the shift in U.S. strategic attention towards Asia and the Pacific. NATO and the EU, which remain dependent on U.S. military support, will be forced to take greater responsibility for Europe's security. To deal with the challenges from different directions, NATO will have to deepen cooperation with like-minded partners. The transatlantic ties and political cohesion of NATO will depend on whether the Allies will be able to effectively respond to threats from the east and south.

The 2018 framework for NATO operations, which replaces the 2015 document, underlines an increased threat from "peer or near-peer adversaries" (in practice, Russia and China). The importance of collective defence and nuclear deterrence is emphasised. NATO should have the capacity to conduct a large-scale, high-intensity multinational operation. It also must be able to mount joint forces globally. Compared to the previous document, the number of conflict situations that could undermine the stability of NATO has increased. Additional scenarios include hybrid threats, information warfare, and internal instability among member states. It will be crucial for NATO to maintain a technological advantage over adversaries and ensure access to regions of operations. The operations framework indicates in a more detailed way the

capabilities and technologies on which the success of NATO missions may depend. The Alliance will need the ability to move troops and equipment over strategic distances. It will be necessary, among others, to strengthen firepower with precise-strike capability from long distances, including the use of hypersonic weapons. The future battle space will rely on “electromagnetic dominance” and unmanned and autonomous systems. To mitigate the financial constraints, NATO members should lower the cost of the use of force by the development of directed-energy weapons.

Main Trends in NATO’s Capability Development. Since its inception, NATO has been struggling with ensuring the appropriate size and quality of forces for the needs of defence and deterrence and out-of-area missions. The lack of political will to support the U.S. outside Europe and insufficient investments by European Allies in their military potential has led to attempts to limit the American military presence in Europe. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO member states have increased their ability to operate outside their own territory, but they still rely on U.S. support. At the same time, they neglected the development of the ability to conduct traditional manoeuvre warfare. As a report by the U.S. National Defense Strategy Commission (NDSC) points out, even the United States would have a problem with resolving a possible conflict with Russia on favourable terms.

Since Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO members have started to increase defence spending and the readiness of their forces. Political leaders recognised the necessity to invest in heavier and more high-end capabilities needed to deal with threats from peer or near-peer rivals. The Declaration on Transatlantic Security and Solidarity adopted at the 2018 NATO Brussels summit underlines the need to maintain NATO’s global role and potential to operate outside its own territory.

Such decisions and the recent military documents indicate growing consensus between the political establishment and military on the adaptation of NATO to new threats. However, the quantitative and qualitative development of NATO’s potential will depend on public support for increased defence spending. It will be a priority to increase the effectiveness of multinational cooperation and to coordinate the developed capabilities with the European Union. NATO and the EU have already agreed areas for cooperation, including the development of specific defence capabilities, and have agreed to coordinate their plans. The importance of capability development in the EU format will be enhanced by the PESCO mechanism, which stimulates multinational cooperation, and the European Defence Fund (EDF), which allows co-financing of defence projects from the EU budget. All of the 34 PESCO projects approved so far also can facilitate Alliance missions. The increased transparency in the EU planning and capability development process increases the chances that the projects will be launched and delivered and the states will meet their obligations.

The necessity to enhance NATO’s potential will also increase the political and practical significance of the framework nations concept adopted by the Alliance in 2014. It assumes the development of critical capabilities by groups of states, led by a country with the largest technological and industrial potential. Capability development may also be stimulated by the U.S, which has adopted strategies and doctrines indicating a growing threat from Russia and China. This will open new opportunities for the sale of military equipment and technology transfers to the Allies. Some countries will stimulate investment into military capabilities by referring to the concept of EU strategic autonomy. This may contribute to NATO’s potential and strengthen the relationship between Europe and the U.S. provided that the autonomy is clearly defined as the ability to conduct crisis-response missions in addition to enhancing the potential of the Alliance and without duplicating its structures.

Challenges for Poland. The long-term security of Poland depends on the technological superiority of NATO over Russia and the Alliance’s ability to conduct a collective-defence mission despite Russian attempts to block access to the region of operation. Poland should stimulate the development of NATO potential through cooperation with countries of key importance for the success of the collective-defence mission, above all the U.S., France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Despite Poland’s focus on collective defence, it should enhance its support for a crisis-response mission, which will be crucial for NATO political cohesion. Regardless of the state of bilateral Polish-American relations, the lack of such capabilities by European states may limit the readiness of the U.S. to strengthen its military presence in Europe, including Poland. Effective development of the potential for both types of missions will require broader involvement in EU projects. Poland could also use cooperation in the EU format to ensure that the strategic autonomy concept strengthens the ability to conduct out-of-area missions, contributes to stronger transatlantic links, and is not promoted as an alternative to the Alliance.