Young Professionals Day 2015 was generously supported by
NATO Allied Command Transformation.
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## Part 2. Discussion Outcomes: Strategic Priorities and Recommendations

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PART 1. EVENT OVERVIEW

ACT Young Professionals Day (YP Day) is an annual, solutions-oriented exercise hosted by NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT) alongside the NATO Transformation Seminar (NTS). This year’s event was hosted in partnership with the Atlantic Council in Washington, DC, and built on the success of the previous three YP Day events by convening sixty rising leaders, aged thirty-five and under, from across the NATO Alliance. The goal of YP Day 2015 was to engage the next generation of leaders in the process of producing creative and practical solutions to key NATO challenges.

To facilitate the development of innovative solutions, the Atlantic Council coordinated a full-day “Design Thinking” exercise designed to unleash the participants’ creativity. Design Thinking is an innovative system for generating creative solutions to complex challenges through understanding the needs, behaviors, and context of relevant stakeholders. It encourages collaboration and diverse perspectives, while offering concrete techniques that translate innovation from an abstract art into a linear and replicable process. More information on the Design Thinking exercises can be found in the annex.

Over the course of YP Day, participants utilized these techniques, which were modified to fit the transatlantic context. They used specialized tools to rapidly develop and explore potential solutions to the challenges facing NATO, with the goal of producing a list of concrete recommendations for NATO decision-makers by the end of the event. The event took the format of working group discussions—all sixty participants were divided into five groups of twelve, each tasked with a different challenge set from the following list:

- Rising challenges in NATO’s east
- Rising challenges in NATO’s south
- Preparing NATO to meet its ambitions and deliver on the promises of the 2014 Wales Summit
- The role of innovation in the Alliance
- Hybrid warfare and its implications for NATO

Delegates participated in a series of dynamic activities and visualization exercises to produce over five hundred unique ideas, which were then honed and developed into fifteen recommendations. These recommendations took the form of “concept posters” which were presented at the end of YP Day to a panel of senior experts. A complete and detailed description of the exercises as well as the images of each group’s concept posters can be found in the annex (Design Thinking and Concept Posters) of this report.

Throughout the day, participants engaged with peers from around the world and senior thought leaders assigned to their working groups. The day opened with remarks from NATO-ACT Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Policy, Brigadier General Matthew L. Brand, and a keynote address from NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation General Jean-Paul Paloméros, who issued the delegates’ call-to-action—to produce innovative ideas that advance NATO’s mission in the evolving, modern global security environment.
PART 2. DISCUSSION OUTCOMES: STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

NATO’s Strategic Perspective: Rising Challenges in the East

This group focused on NATO’s strategic perspective regarding rising challenges on its eastern flank. They were encouraged to consider the strategic context in which NATO operates, the political and military implications for the Alliance, and its broader strategic concept and political guidance.

Discussion centered largely on Ukraine and Russia and focused simultaneously on ensuring NATO’s collective security, defending the values of NATO countries, and attempting to avoid military escalation. Significant debate centered on NATO’s inherent mission and how its response to the Ukraine crisis should depend on whether NATO is a values-based organization or merely a collective security alliance. After debate and analysis with its senior mentor, the group came up with the following.

Strategic priorities/objectives in the form of questions beginning “how might we…”:

- Pose a greater viable conventional military deterrent?
- Forge a consensus among NATO members of NATO threats?
- Address nonconventional threats in the east?
- More effectively coordinate with other organizations?

The three main presentations chose to focus on clusters of the best ideas chosen from the Importance-Difficulty Matrix. These suggestions were to increase and adjust NATO policy and interoperability to further cooperation, focus on areas of common interest with Russia, and increase NATO’s military readiness and military cooperation.

Recommended Actions:

1. Increase and adjust NATO policy and interoperability to further cooperation

The presentation focused on spending NATO’s money more effectively. Participants proposed a twenty-year timeline of financial-cooperation escalation, with joint research and development (R&D) and technology funding in five years, target spending areas for members in fifteen years, and joint procurement in twenty years. Some major challenges to this proposal were deemed to be sovereignty concerns, protests from military production firms, and the varying desires and requirements of specific militaries. However, the group determined that there were also myriad benefits to this strategy, including saving resources over the long run, avoiding duplication, deployment of the best technologies, efficient resource use, interoperability, and mission-focused investment.

The group concluded that, while profits would remain the main driver of the military-industrial complex, the creation of transatlantic military-industrial champions—“super-contractors,” or transatlantic contractor associations with enforced common standards—would account for the scope and commonality needed for economies of scale. This would lead to a decrease in the number of platforms, and reduce duplication of efforts and materials. The reduction in platforms would make logistics easier, as fewer types of parts would require distribution. Moreover, this reduction in platforms would automatically ensure interoperability between hardware. The transatlantic military-industrial champions would then have the capacity to channel multiple states’ R&D spending into the priorities of their clients, while serving the interests of NATO.

A final, serious issue that NATO must face is parochialism, which remains a major concern in defense contracting. In order for these reforms to succeed, there needs to be a commitment to open bidding across the Alliance by defense contractors for all NATO contracts. This may help to avoid protests from the military-industrial complex and assuage fears that large American and British defense contractors could dominate the process. In addition, some form of commitment that no single company can hold more than a certain proportion of contracts (e.g., 20-25 percent) would stop the process from being dominated by one or two of the largest companies.

The poster for this group can be found in the annex.
2. Focus on areas of common interest with Russia

The presentation stated the importance of adhering to NATO’s original mission of collective security for its members. A point was made that Russia’s actions in Ukraine cannot be automatically assumed to predict any future actions it might take with an actual NATO ally; thus, the presentation suggested that NATO avoid intervening in the Ukraine crisis altogether.

When assessing the situation in Ukraine and wider relations with Russia, the group decided that it was important to step back and consider the security situation more broadly. NATO has interests in areas where Russia can play a role, such as Iran, North Korea, and Syria. While peace in Europe is paramount, it was concluded that NATO must balance its desire to roll back the Russian position in Ukraine with its desire to prevent further escalation in Europe.

A direct conflict between NATO and Russia would lead to greater insecurity in Europe in the near future. Participants cited a consensus among NATO allies that collective security only applies to NATO members. They also pointed out that this strategy would allow for much greater cooperation opportunities between NATO and Russia, NATO and the European Union (EU), and the EU and Russia. The points of cooperation might include: violent extremism, Iran, Afghanistan, proliferation of WMDs, massive migration, trade, and energy policy.

The group reasoned that a pullout of Ukraine could be accomplished if NATO takes actions that are reassuring to the existing members of NATO, particularly with regard to military readiness and cooperation. The key would be to maintain robust communication within NATO and to maintain, and in certain cases amplify, its deterrent capacity for current members. Additionally, all efforts would be made to avoid public relations debacles, such as the recent one in which the American President did not meet with the NATO Secretary General.

A pullout of Ukraine, without a robust deterrence policy for existing members, would certainly lead to a “loss of face.” However, the group concluded that the key is to leave no ambiguity for Russia. If NATO does not expand east, Russia must not move to destabilize present NATO members. A robust expansion of deterrent capacities to reinforce that deal should avoid losing face, at least as it pertains specifically to NATO.

The poster for this group can be found in the annex.

3. Increase NATO’s military readiness and military cooperation

The presentation focused on deterrence and reassurance, and advocated a permanent rotation of military troops. This policy would solve the problem of western NATO members preferring a rotational presence in Eastern Europe, whilst eastern members want permanent deployments. It would achieve the permanent buy-in of western allies, along with the provision of continued reassurance to NATO’s eastern allies. To accomplish this, the participants suggested easing restrictions on the transportation of NATO troops and equipment, and exploring multinational funding. During this permanent rotation, national troops would operate under the NATO command structure, thereby increasing deterrence and interoperability benefits, and, most importantly, improving battle readiness.

In addition, it was decided that the Alliance should reconsider the deployment of a ballistic-missile-defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, as originally envisioned. This would bring a degree of greater comfort, particularly to Poland, that the Alliance will remain committed to the defense of Eastern European members.

Further, NATO should clarify that it will not only maintain its current tactical nuclear doctrine, but it will also upgrade those capacities to assure their deterrent value. This upgrade should be clearly articulated as a response to any aggression toward existing NATO members.

Transportation by air seemed to be the method that would face the lowest hurdles. Therefore, the aim would be to transport as much equipment and as many troops as possible by air. If a participating country does not have the necessary airlifting capabilities, then these should be provided by NATO for this task. Of course, some equipment—such as explosives, heavy armored units, and artillery—might be difficult to transport by air, so the restrictions for transportation on the ground would also need to be loosened for this particular NATO permanent rotation.

The group concluded that a legislative solution might also be possible. Pressure could be put on national governments to pass legislation that permits freer movement of NATO-assigned troops through Europe. Given the current threat climate, such legislation might be quite easy to pass. It would also provide a strengthening function for the Alliance, implying that member states trust
NATO’s Strategic Perspective: Rising Challenges in NATO’s South–North Africa and the Middle East

This group focused on NATO’s strategic perspective with rising challenges on its southern flank—North Africa and the Middle East. It was also encouraged to consider the strategic context in which NATO operates, the political and military implications for the Alliance, its strategic concept, and its political guidance.

In discussion, this group often found itself reacting to events in the east, and concluded that events in Ukraine and Russia were very important to how NATO should proceed in the south. It was decided that NATO must focus on being more proactive in the south, improving public opinion there and using local issues and advantages to address larger problems. In other words, NATO must balance micro and macro issues in the region. An important conclusion was that progress will stem from a “ground-up” approach, winning the hearts and minds of the people first. After debate and analysis with its senior mentor, the group came up with the following.

Strategic priorities/objectives in the form of questions beginning “how might we...”:

- Demonstrate NATO’s relevance for local populations in the MENA region?
- Address transnational organized crime?
- Ensure human security across NATO’s borders?
- Ensure peaceful development and use of energy in the eastern Mediterranean?

The three main presentations chose to focus on clusters of the best ideas chosen from the Importance-Difficulty Matrix. The clusters were: focus on social media as part of a more effective communications strategy, attempt to address local issues more effectively, cooperate with other NATO members to increase on-the-ground capabilities, and increase NATO’s ability to mobilize special forces among member states.

Recommended Actions:

1. **Focus on social media as part of a more effective communications strategy**

The presentation focused on a new umbrella communications initiative for NATO, which included: public diplomacy; strategic communication; partnering with local actors; identifying young, tech-savvy local leaders to engage in social media campaigns; and rural-outreach programs. NATO ACT could sponsor a Young Professionals Day for social-media leaders in NATO member countries, such as Turkey, Germany, and Greece, and partner countries, such as Qatar, Kuwait, Morocco, and Tunisia. The Young Professionals Day could be structured as an opportunity for NATO ACT to leverage its communications initiative for NATO, which included: public diplomacy; strategic communication; partnering with local actors; identifying young, tech-savvy local leaders to engage in social media campaigns; and rural-outreach programs. NATO ACT could sponsor a Young Professionals Day for social-media leaders in NATO member countries, such as Turkey, Germany, and Greece, and partner countries, such as Qatar, Kuwait, Morocco, and Tunisia. The Young Professionals Day could be structured as an opportunity for NATO ACT to leverage its communications initiative for NATO, which included: public diplomacy; strategic communication; partnering with local actors; identifying young, tech-savvy local leaders to engage in social media campaigns; and rural-outreach programs.

An overall strategic-communication narrative is imperative to establishing NATO’s stated goal. Such a message should communicate the shared, fundamental values necessary for NATO partnership: the right to life, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom of information and knowledge. However, targeted messaging would be more effective when taking into consideration the many cultural and regional differences that are present in NATO’s south. A combination of locally targeted messaging, with a consistent overarching narrative, would present NATO as open and transparent in its strategic goals for the region. The goal should be “a narrative to the moderate minds of the region, not to the moderate Muslims of the region.”
2. **Address local issues more effectively and cooperate with other NATO members to increase on-the-ground capabilities**

The presentation focused on a strategic vision for a more connected NATO community. This included suggestions of policies centered on collective interdependence that reinforced the idea that individual challenges have nonlinear repercussions throughout the Alliance. This would result in greater resonance of NATO’s relevance with its southern allies. It would also allow NATO to develop and harness political capital with emerging nontraditional partners in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Benefits would include further local inclusion, respect of core values, local ownership of shared solutions, and more open channels for proactive engagement.

One example of a collectively interdependent policy is a potential immigration policy. While standards can be set across the Alliance that are in line with core values, member states can also share resources to address migration from NATO’s south and redistribute the burden placed on NATO’s southern border. By engaging with member states such as Greece, Italy, and Spain, which have established military protocol in regards to migration, the Alliance can use immigration policy to bolster goodwill within NATO’s southern borders and strengthen defenses without. This policy could be crafted in such a way as to utilize NATO’s traditional military capabilities, while also providing an opportunity for targeted marketing and branding aimed at engaging with NATO’s southern populations.

The poster for this group can be found in the annex.

3. **Increase NATO’s ability to mobilize special forces among NATO member states**

The presentation focused on a new and reformed NATO military structure, which participants dubbed “Team NATO.” This structure features joint training of armed forces, one common headquarters, shared intelligence, special operations fitness (SOF) exercises, smaller active rotational membership, and voting rights to be determined upon active participatory status. These teams could even be pre-deployed in certain theaters among sympathetic states. The detailed benefits to this structure include local knowledge, pre-deployment, higher military tech, responsibility sharing, and the ability for quick and specialized responses to nonstate actors. The group’s timeline for such a structural reform aimed for full operationalization by 2018.

These proposed forces would have the ability to provide a tailored response for situations that do not require full military force. With the concept of war changing rapidly, the response to acts of war must also change. For the Team NATO proposal to gain consensus, partner states must understand that this responsibility for providing equal protection is shared. Operationally, Team NATO responses can be determined by the states that are actively participating in the team at any given time; as these are rotating terms, the consensus will come from a smaller participating group. While Team NATO is not meant to be south-specific, it is tailored to handle the region’s unique, emerging threats.

Team NATO would have the ability to specialize in combating nonstate actors and transnational crime. Given the small size and specialized nature of Team NATO, it would be able to serve the interests of NATO countries without a declaration of war. Given the proposal for shared training and intelligence, the participants would only come from NATO countries, and would only protect the interests of said states. Intelligence information must be closely held, and would serve as a way to build stronger trust and partnerships among NATO states.

The poster for this group can be found in the annex.
Preparing NATO to Meet Its Ambitions

This group focused on NATO meeting its strategic ambitions. Participants were encouraged to prioritize the capabilities and corresponding investments required to address current and future threats, and to better leverage multinational cooperation and partnering.

Before expanding in scope, the discussion initially focused heavily on budget concerns. Main topics included the overhaul of defense spending and capabilities, as well as how to increase NATO interoperability, meet the Wales Summit commitments, expand and intensify NATO’s strategic partnerships, confront regional threats, and address public-diplomacy concerns. After debate and analysis with its senior mentor, the group came up with the following.

Strategic priorities/objectives in the form of questions beginning "how might we...":

- Simultaneously address the eastern and southern flanks?
- Incentivize the 2 percent defense spending requirement?
- Address nonmilitary transnational threats?
- Increase public support for NATO?

The three main presentations chose to focus on clusters of the best ideas chosen from the Importance-Difficulty Matrix. The clusters were: boosting and overhauling defense spending, increasing NATO interoperability and expanding NATO’s strategic partnerships, and addressing public-diplomacy concerns.

Recommended Actions:

1. **Overhaul defense spending and capabilities**
   The presentation focused on being more efficient with NATO funds. The group suggested more spending in less-traditional areas, such as science, tech, and health. Participants thought that a slightly broader definition would make it easier for individual countries to meet their NATO spending requirements. The benefits would include greater EU employment, greater regional health, and an improved industrial policy.

   *The poster for this group can be found in the annex.*

2. **Increase NATO interoperability and expand and intensify NATO’s strategic partnerships**
   The presentation focused on increasing NATO’s nonmilitary capabilities. This included creating a “center of excellence at NATO,” focusing on energy, tech, and health, as well as bringing in new partners (such as private industry), and setting up NATO-sponsored NGOs to address specific threats and opportunities. The results would be increased public interest, twenty-first-century approaches, new partners and new ideas, new audiences, and increased efforts for a sustainable mission.

   The group concluded that energy security should be a priority for the Alliance. Several pipeline projects are ongoing between the European Union and Eurasia, trying to create an alternative to the Russian South Stream project. Still, some European countries show resistance to the strong energy ties with Russia’s Gazprom and Lukoil. By leveraging its political tools, such as the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP) platform, NATO could enhance its partnerships with countries from Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia, such as Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

   *The poster for this group can be found in the annex.*

3. **Address public-diplomacy concerns**
   The presentation focused on enhancing NATO’s reputation and recruitment among a vast majority of member nations’ populations. This would be achieved in a couple of ways. The first would be to fund an effort to produce informative documentaries or films about NATO’s mission, in order to increase interest in NATO. The second would be to mirror the Model United Nations program that has worked successfully over the last few decades, and create model NATOs throughout NATO member states. This would involve NATO speakers visiting high schools and universities and taking NATO students to visit NATO installations, developing interest in the Alliance starting in primary schools and continuing all the way up to the professional level.

   For NATO to meet its twenty-first-century challenges, it is imperative to engender a spirit of support for the Alliance and its mission in the citizenry. What emboldens the foundation of NATO is the unified allegiance to a set of principles, the defense of which is absolute. Through a concerted public diplomacy effort, an unprecedented understanding of NATO’s historic legacy,
due to the volume of threats facing the Alliance, from a range of actors in different domains. The military superiority that NATO has gained through technological innovation and operational coordination is no longer sufficient to deter these actors. The group decided that NATO’s problem isn’t in the generation of innovative ideas, but in their implementation. The group concluded that NATO is not a corporate entity, and must overcome its consensus-based structure in order to be “innovative” and “agile.” After debate and analysis with its senior mentor, the group came up with the following.

**Strategic priorities/objectives in the form of questions beginning “how might we…”:**

- Measure and improve innovation and effectiveness?
- Manage innovation across twenty-eight member states?
- Work with partners?
- Promote process innovation and product innovation?

The three main presentations chose to focus on clusters of the best ideas chosen from the Importance-Difficulty Matrix. The clusters were: focus on increasing innovation among NATO personnel and increasing experimentation; improve the generation and actual implementation of innovative ideas; and create an innovative solution to counteract declines in defense spending and lack of investment in R&D.

**Recommended Actions:**

1. **Reduce NATO’s risk aversion and increase experimentation**

   The presentation focused on a hypothetical program called the “NATO Innovative People Interchange (NIPi).” This program would feature exchange programs between NATO, academia, and the private sector. The goal would be to facilitate the exchange of ideas and best practices. It would also feature virtual conferences, “hack-a-thons,” tech incubators, and a big-data analytics relay. The benefits would include the creation of new perspectives for NATO, new collaboration and idea generation, and a deeper understanding and appreciation for NATO from a broader base of stakeholders.

   *The poster for this group can be found in the annex.*
2. **Improve process for taking innovative ideas and actually implementing them**

The presentation focused on a structural rejuvenation and reinvigoration of NATO leadership and hierarchy. This would be achieved through two separate programs. The first would be called the “CEO Dividend.” It would involve creating NATO “Innovation CEOs” from leading innovative companies such as Google. The goal would be to identify innovation gaps within NATO, where these CEOs would have appropriate advisory capacity to implement and suggest innovative ideas.

The second program would be called the “Diversity Payoff,” and would feature exchange programs at the different levels between NATO, the EU, the World Bank, and other leading international and global organizations. This would increase cooperation and address complex issues by applying multiple lenses of analysis and experience. Other potential partners could include, but are not limited to, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the African Union.

**The CEO Dividend:** There are already short-term positions at NATO, such as the Internship Program and Consultants, for nationals of the twenty-eight allies. These positions are funded for and by the twenty-eight countries from the Common Budget. The CEO Dividend would be a similar program, and while top CEOs are unlikely to join, creative mid-level managers may be able to do so. The six-month term positions would entail a five-month-long “embedded” program in Brussels, where the CEOs would spend time directly in the front offices of the Assistant Secretaries General (ASGs), the private office of the Secretary General and the North Atlantic Council’s (NAC) secretariat, and staff-officer-level offices. This immersion would allow bottom-up and top-down views of NATO. National missions could also be included, extending the five-month period with direct funding by the mission. The CEOs would then have a period of four weeks to reflect, analyze, and prepare a presentation on suggested changes, which would then be presented to the NAC in closed sessions. The CEOs would have to go through security clearances and sign nondisclosure agreements. If the program is successful at the political-civilian level, then it can be extended into the military structure in the future.

Competitive pay is a requirement, along with the pre-scouting of leading industry members and discussions aligning these CEO-ships at NATO with intended/planned sabbaticals of interested parties.

The Diversity Payoff: This is an official staff-officer exchange program, reciprocated by the home organization. The staffer exchanged from the home organization would take up a temporary assignment at a new workplace. A NATO staff officer with a similar portfolio would then be exchanged with the home staffer, such as a World Bank staff-level official, for a year-long tour. This exchange is a political deliverable that also brings expertise and innovation from the bottom up, and could be presented at the Warsaw Summit.

*The poster for this group can be found in the annex.*

3. **Halt the defense-spending decline among NATO allies through creation of an “innovation platform” and common fund**

The presentation focused on creating an “innovation platform” or common fund for capabilities development. The fund would build on the Wales Summit declaration to spend 2 percent of GDP on defense by dedicating a subset of allied defense dollars to a common NATO fund. The fund would also allow additional national contributions based on interest, similar to current Smart Defense projects, and could also feature private funding. The expected benefits would include the increase of NATO-wide investments in long-term capabilities building, improvement of NATO’s agility against challenges, and development of technological innovation. This project and its technology outputs could be promoted by the NATO brand to increase its attractiveness to investors and consumers.

To create consensus for the capabilities-development platform, NATO ACT could present the innovation platform concept to the NAC as a potential Warsaw Summit deliverable specifically as a NATO common fund, to augment current defense planning and capability development processes and ensure that allies meet their defense-spending commitments. Over the next several months, this concept would be discussed, developed, and agreed on among allies, for inclusion in the summit declaration.

If member-state proponents of the new innovation platform are identified early on, the concept could also take the form of a Smart Defense proposal.
Lead nations could outline the following advantages when discussing this concept with other allies:

- They would gain access to more diverse ideas and innovations.
- The innovations could be shared among the members through NATO-wide distribution of the results of studies and concepts.
- Member states would not be overtaken by the technologies of civil companies. Using this kind of forum, members would have access of spreading critical technologies across the Alliance.
- Specific research could be initiated in interoperability and standards, which is relevant for all members.

The implementation of the innovation platform concept could also take the following forms:

- The concept could be borrowed from projects like the International Space Station (ISS). As with the ISS, each nation could focus on specializing in a particular “module” or concept that is relevant to NATO as a whole.
- A NATO Steering Group on innovation could be founded—or created as a subcommittee of the Defense Policy and Planning Committee, Partnerships and Cooperative Security Committee, or Conference of National Armaments Directors—with representation that is proportional to the amount a member spends.

In order to promote the idea of an innovation platform to private partners or venture capitalists, this concept could be presented in the NATO Industry Forum for feedback and further refinement. In this process, the following aspects should be emphasized to highlight the added value for private partners:

- As NATO would be sponsoring high-risk/high-reward startups, companies would benefit from buying in early. The Boston Dynamics case and Google are examples of this benefit.
- Venture capitalists could join in for companies that produce dual-use goods that are also relevant for the civil market (e.g., autonomous cars, robots, machine learning, technologies for protecting critical infrastructure, cybersecurity solutions etc.). NATO could formalize its approach to the study of dual-use technologies through the innovation platform.
- Public-private partnership with NATO would enhance branding for affiliated corporations and name recognition for smaller startups.

To govern private-sector investments, one could extend the mission of the NATO Science and Technology Organization to monitor startups and other projects under an “innovation umbrella.” A possible model for the implementation of this idea could be the co-funding model, in which NATO and private partners share the costs and risks of investments in R&D projects from the beginning. An alternative would be the seed-funding model, where NATO initially supports promising technology projects for a limited amount of time, until they have reach a developmental stage in which they are attractive for venture capitalists or business angels. Thus, NATO could actively push forward and promote technologies of high relevance for its fields of action.

The poster for this group can be found in the annex.

**Senior Mentor:** Dr. Daniel Y. Chiu, Deputy Director, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, Atlantic Council

**Rapporteur:** Alex Ward, Assistant Director, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security, Atlantic Council

**Delegates:** Mr. Mik Bodnar, International Cooperation Specialist, DARPA; Ms. Merah Baird, Regional Strategy Analyst, Department of Defense-DSCA; Mr. David Fan, Assistant Vice President, Deutsche Bank; Mr. Balazs Martonffy, PhD Candidate, American University; Mr. Andrew Polich, Congressional Relations Assistant, US Institute of Peace; Mr. Diego Scarabelli, Intern, NATO; Mr. Richard Schmidt, Chief Engineer, Airbus Defense and Space; Mr. Boyan Stanoev, Consultant, International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group; Ms. Judit Vásárhelyi-Kondor, Associate, Spitzberg Partners

**Hybrid Warfare and its Implications for NATO**

This group focused on hybrid warfare and its implications for NATO. The group was encouraged to analyze hybrid and asymmetric warfare, NATO’s capabilities, and the utility of its partnerships.

The early discussion focused on how to best define “hybrid.” It was determined that hybrid warfare contained many aspects of warfare across a full spectrum. There were several main topics discussed, including cyber warfare, misinformation, and preparing the battlespace using nonmilitary means in order to create a more advantageous environment for military action. The group decided that it takes networks to fight networks, and that NATO should
investigate the option of combating hybrid threats with its own hybrid capabilities. Another popular topic was whether hybrid attacks would or should invoke Article 5. After debate and analysis with its senior mentor, the group came up with the following.

**Strategic priorities/objectives in the form of questions beginning “how might we…”:**

- close the intelligence gap between the hybrid activities we know are happening and those we don’t, which are already actively “preparing the battlespace” by creating unstable environments?
- Deter and prevent hybrid attacks?
- Respond to hybrid attacks?
- Develop offensive hybrid capabilities?

The three main presentations chose to focus on clusters of the best ideas chosen from the Importance-Difficulty Matrix. The clusters were: build member unity, solidarity and consensus on what counts as “hybrid,” address hybrid vulnerabilities in order to command the narrative, and focus on cyber threats, as well as enhance offensive cyber capabilities.

**Recommended Actions:**

1. **Build member unity, solidarity, and consensus on what counts as “hybrid”**

   The presentation focused on building a consensus within the Alliance regarding hybrid threats. Participants determined that a political consensus was required first, followed by a greater integration of the Alliance’s military capabilities. They suggested that setting up a NATO working group on the use of hybrid warfare, both by adversaries and NATO members, could provide a basis for further consensus within the Alliance. The goal was to achieve cohesion at the operational, tactical, strategic, and political levels, which the group concluded would be more effective in fending off hybrid threats.

   *The poster for this group can be found in the annex.*

2. **Shore up hybrid vulnerabilities among member nations that would allow adversaries to “prepare the battlespace,” or create advantageous conditions, especially in strategic communication, education, and controlling the public narrative**

   The presentation outlined central tenants of the standing strategic-communications doctrine. With an aim of commanding the narrative, NATO strategic communicators must study and demarcate audiences, identify behavioral and attitudinal goals, design and disseminate targeted content, and assess to what degree those goals are being met. A common component of hybrid warfare is the persistent dissemination of disinformation, aimed at fomenting sympathy or weakening opposition toward adversarial actions. Ensuring audiences are resistant to such efforts is the primary purpose of the friendly strategic-communications effort. Accrued credibility, associated with an ongoing, well-executed strategic communications effort, can deter these adversarial attempts. NATO should coordinate multinational intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) efforts to infuse strong situational awareness of audience behaviors and attitudes into strategic-communications audience analysis and assessment.

A narrative is a story explaining past events while suggesting a particular set of future outcomes. The narrative ultimately manifests itself in the actions of the individuals to whom it was targeted. The individuals can range from a separatist fighter in eastern Ukraine to a Pashtun farmer to a Boston voter. NATO’s narrative might aim to prime these distinct groups, such that they will be more receptive to specific messaging aimed at influencing behaviors and attitudes relevant to specific issues. For the above examples, respectively, these might include inducements to abandon combat, incentives to report illegal activities, and education of the benefits of NATO in the United States. While these are diverse audiences targeted with vastly different messages, for these specific actions to have the desired impact, NATO must have the credibility associated with a resilient, enduring narrative.

The narrative itself is a singular concept, with issue- and region-specific details nesting within it. With the speed of information diffusion in the “information age,” attempts to compartmentalize these conceptualizations of history and the future will be met with a loss of credibility. NATO can add significant value in this area by eliminating information fratricide from member states that might be portraying history differently from one another and, in turn, extrapolating slightly different futures. A coordinated strategic-communications effort at the NATO level can leverage the diversity of NATO member states to overcome cultural myopias inherent to a single-state perspective.
Internal communications within these NATO structures, and related national structures, must not be neglected. The NATO narrative must be understood from the Secretary General down to the newest private. With the diffusion of media-generation technology, such as social media, nearly any NATO associate can become an inadvertent touch-point between NATO and its audiences. This “strategic corporal” concept must be addressed through some measure of coordination between NATO strategic communicators and national training-and-doctrine representatives. Representation of the NATO narrative must be as consistent as possible, in order to ensure its credibility.

The poster for this group can be found in the annex.

### 3. Focus on the cyber threat and enhance offensive cyber capabilities

The presentation focused on developing NATO’s cyber capabilities. Participants divided their suggestions into two groups: defensive cyber and offensive cyber. In defensive cyber, they decided that NATO needed to maintain command-and-control infrastructure, support member nations in developing cyber defenses, and offer logistical and intelligence support to partners. In offensive cyber, they stated that NATO needed to advance signals-intelligence (SIGINT) operations, assert control over intangible actors, and link cyberattacks with kinetic repercussions, but NATO must also achieve strategic goals without declaring war. Furthermore, the group advocated interaction and engagement with hacker communities.

Developing cyber capabilities beyond merely defensive applications is recommended for any force willing to have a stable and continuous presence in cyberspace. Deploying countermeasures during defensive cyber operations requires at least some degree of cyber-offensive expertise, and helps the management of risks throughout the cyber incident. Mitigation strategies benefit from the “hack-back” principle, and work hand-in-hand with offense, as well as defense, operations. It is also very important to keep in mind that cyber adversaries are calculating their costs and gains, and making a feasibility analysis before they decide to launch an attack. Cyber offensive capabilities would contribute to the deterrence factor, and would help keep less-sophisticated, high-volume attacks at bay.

Needless to say, purely offensive cyber capabilities would support NATO’s conventional forces, empower most of the intelligence operations, and help exploit the hybrid-warfare field as its adversaries do. It is even easier for NATO-allied countries to cooperate on offensive cyber capabilities, as the physical requirement of redeploying forces does not apply to cyber warriors in many cases. However, a unified command structure for cyber operations would be required to coordinate the efforts and direct its operations in a timely manner.

The poster for this group can be found in the annex.

### Part 3. Key Takeaways and Common Themes

Over the course of the event, a number of common themes emerged from every group’s discussions and suggestions. These themes were often developed or explained relative to each group’s specific topic, but they all shared similar sentiments. The most prominent recurring themes are listed below.

#### Joint Measures within NATO

One extremely common theme that arose in every group was a desire for greater cooperation between NATO member nations. While NATO has worked toward such a sentiment for its entire lifespan, the delegates felt that it should focus on a few specific areas. The first and most frequently mentioned was increased efforts for joint procurement, which every group felt would yield substantial practical and diplomatic benefits. Each group also independently stressed...
the importance of joint asset ownership, and greater efforts to increase interoperability.

**Adoption of Best Practices from Innovative Organizations**

Each group stressed the numerous benefits for NATO in interacting with and acquiring best practices from innovative organizations. The suggestions for achieving this goal differed from group to group, but each agreed that NATO should seek out experts from such organizations. It was thought that the inclusion of innovative practices and thinking from outside the traditional NATO community would be necessary for NATO to address unconventional threats.

**Further Integration with Other International Organizations and the Private Sector**

Many groups decided that NATO should focus on greater cooperation with other international organizations which it overlaps with ideologically, politically, geographically, or simply in terms of its goals and functions, as well as with industrial and financial actors in the private sector. Such coordination would reduce duplication of efforts and materials, and allow for greater resource pooling and allocation. Some candidates for cooperation included the European Union, the United Nations, the African Union, OSCE, and ASEAN. The infusion of private-sector interests and investments would increase NATO’s capacity to invest in new technologies and expand its current military capabilities, while allowing NATO to establish common standards across producers, which would enhance interoperability. Potential private-sector partners included companies from the military-industrial sector and venture capitalists.

**Improved Strategic Communications**

Early on in their discussions, every group decided that NATO needs to aggressively develop its strategic-communication capabilities. It is important for NATO to effectively disseminate a compelling narrative that is capable of forging stronger relationships within the NATO Alliance but also without, with partner nations and unaffiliated populations. Strategic communications were also identified as a critical tool to overcome the hybrid-warfare challenge and keep NATO relevant. Specifically, delegates identified improved social-media capabilities as a low-cost way to achieve a wide variety of outcomes, including controlling the narrative and pursuing public diplomacy both inside of and outside of the Alliance’s borders.
priorities or objectives that NATO should set in order to address the assigned challenge. Senior mentors were instructed to inform the group’s debate, but not to impose their own viewpoints or judge which strategic priorities were the “best” or “correct.” Ultimately, the goal of YP Day was to capture the opinions of the participants.

Participants were asked to phrase their proposed strategic priorities and objectives in the form of “how might we...” (HMW) or “how might NATO...” questions. This phrasing was chosen because of its effectiveness for launching solutions-oriented discussions. HMW questions encourage a wider range of ideas and facilitate creative, out-of-the-box thinking. Further details on the power of HMW statements can be found in the Harvard Business Review article titled “The Secret Phrase Top Innovators Use.” The phrasing instruction was also intended to produce outputs from the first session that could easily be uniformly plugged into the exercises planned for the rest of the day.

The Creative Matrix
Following the HMW discussions, participants transitioned into a series of Design Thinking modules known as the “Creative Matrix” and the “Importance-Difficulty Matrix.” These exercises were led by Joshua Marcuse and Zvika Krieger, professional facilitators who were trained by the LUMA Institute, a global education company that is among the leading instructors of human-centered design, and who have led workshops for government employees in the national-security and foreign-policy sectors.

This section describes in greater detail the methodology used throughout the YP Day event—Design Thinking—which yielded the results captured in this report. Design Thinking is used by many Fortune 500 companies and is taught at top business schools as a cutting-edge tool for strategy and management. A number of government agencies, including the US Department of State and the Department of Defense, are at the vanguard of applying these tools to develop policy solutions. More details on Design Thinking can be found on the website of the LUMA Institute, a professional design thinking education organization. The Design Thinking process used in YP Day includes the following four exercises:

- producing “how might we” questions;
- the Creative Matrix;
- the Importance-Difficulty Matrix; and
- concept posters and final presentations.

“How Might We” Questions
The first part of the exercise consisted of working group discussions featuring senior thought leaders as “senior mentors” for each group. During this session, each group was tasked with generating four strategic priorities or objectives that NATO should set in order to address the assigned challenge. Senior mentors were instructed to inform the group’s debate, but not to impose their own viewpoints or judge which strategic priorities were the “best” or “correct.” Ultimately, the goal of YP Day was to capture the opinions of the participants.

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The first module was the “Creative Matrix,” which aims to democratize the idea-creation process while also rapidly generating a great number of new and different ideas. For YP Day, these ideas were based on NATO’s unique capabilities and the specific strategic priorities set for each group.

The groups created interactive matrices by arranging four HMW questions on the Y axis of the matrix, and a row of predetermined NATO “enablers” on the X axis. The result was a chart with twenty-four boxes, which each delegate was instructed to populate with ideas written on Post-it notes. The assigned enablers, which reflected tools in NATO’s “toolbox,” were:

- public diplomacy;
- resources and funding;
- technology;
- weapons/military capabilities;
- political tools; and
- “wild card,” covering enablers that may not be included in the five previous categories.

By the end of the Creative Matrix module, the groups had generated more than five hundred different ideas for how NATO might accomplish the strategic priorities generated in the earlier session.

The Importance-Difficulty Matrix
The second module, the “Importance-Difficulty Matrix,” utilized the outputs from the Creative Matrix. Each delegate was asked to pick an idea, other than their own, that they considered the best from the heavily populated creative matrices. These ideas were then used to populate a second matrix that plotted importance along one axis and difficulty along the other. Through this process, delegates prioritized and evaluated each idea based on its potential impact and the cost of implementation. By the end of this exercise, the delegates had ranked each idea and grouped them into thematic clusters.

Concept Posters and Presentations
The final exercise consisted of developing a “concept poster.” The goal of this module is to flesh out the clusters of top ideas, using both textual and visual tools, and produce a substantive proposal for the final presentation. Each topic group split up into several smaller “poster groups” to address one of the clusters of ideas generated by the Importance-Difficulty Matrix. After finishing the posters, each group presented its recommendations to a panel featuring: NATO-ACT Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Policy, Brigadier General Matthew Brand; Deputy Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Lieutenant General Mark Commander Transformation of NATO; Political Advisor to the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, Ambassador Karen B. Stewart. The distinguished panel gave each group feedback regarding their ideas and made suggestions for improvement.

In the weeks immediately after the event concluded, the Atlantic Council worked with the delegates to trans-
form their posters and the panel’s feedback into this report, which also highlights key takeaways from the event. The following portion of the report covers the strategic priorities and objectives produced by each group, as well as their top ideas for achieving those objectives.

Lieutenant General Mark O. Schissler, Ambassador Karen B. Stewart, and Brigadier General Matthew L. Brand provide feedback to presenting delegates.
NATO’s Strategic Perspective: Rising Challenges in the East

Poster from NATO’s East Group recommending to spend NATO’s money more effectively.

Poster from NATO’s East Group recommending that the Alliance focuses on deterrence and reassurance.

Poster from NATO’s East Group recommending that NATO focuses on common interests with Russia.
NATO’s Strategic Perspective: Rising Challenges in NATO’s South–North Africa and the Middle East

Poster from NATO’s Ambitions Group recommending an increased focus on NATO’s nonmilitary capabilities.

Poster from NATO’s Ambitions Group recommending an overhaul of defense spending and capabilities.

Poster from NATO’s Ambitions Group recommending that the Alliance focuses on its public-diplomacy concerns.
Preparing NATO to Meet Its Ambitions

Poster from NATO’s South Group recommending a new outreach strategy.

Poster from NATO’s South Group recommending a strategic vision for a more connected NATO community.

Poster from NATO’s South Group recommending a new and reformed NATO military structure.
Innovation as a Game Changer for the Alliance

Poster from NATO’s Innovation Group recommending a new innovative program for the Alliance.

Poster from NATO’s Innovation Group recommending a structural rejuvenation and reinvigoration of NATO leadership and hierarchy.

Poster from NATO’s Innovation Group recommending the creation of a new innovation platform.
Hybrid Warfare and its Implications for NATO

Poster from Hybrid Warfare Group recommending an increased focus on member consensus and solidarity.

Poster from Hybrid Warfare Group recommending an increased focus on the Alliance’s Strategic Communications.

Poster from Hybrid Warfare Group recommending increased development of NATO’s cyber capabilities.
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