



NATO Parliamentary Assembly

DEFENCE AND SECURITY COMMITTEE

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**HYBRID WARFARE: NATO'S NEW  
STRATEGIC CHALLENGE?**

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DRAFT GENERAL REPORT\*

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\* Until this document has been approved by the Defence and Security Committee, it only represents the views of the General Rapporteur.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. New strategic challenges by Russia and, to a degree, Daesh<sup>1</sup> over the past year have NATO scrambling to respond. Both forces are revisionist, one seeking to alter the status quo of the European security order, the other to undo the Middle Eastern state structure established after WWI. These dual-pronged threats to NATO's eastern and southern flanks are forcing the Alliance to adopt new strategic postures in response.

2. Russia's use of myriad tactics to push forward its agenda of diminishing US influence in Europe and splinter Europe's ability for collective action at the security, political, or economic levels has been dubbed hybrid warfare. Hybrid warfare exploits domestic weaknesses via non-military means (such as political, informational, and economic intimidation and manipulation), but is backed by the threat of conventional military means. While the concept of hybrid warfare is not new, its application by Russia, and to a lesser extent by Daesh, against NATO member states' interests present new challenges to the Alliance.

3. In response to this new era of strategic competition with Russia, NATO finds itself at a transformative juncture in its existence once again. Post-2014 NATO is adopting the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) as a means of responding rapidly to new threats as they may present themselves along the eastern and southern flanks. The question remains, however, about the degree to which NATO, primarily a military organization, can respond to the challenges of hybrid warfare that often fall outside of the classically defined military arena. Hybrid warfare requires the response of the national power of all 28-member states – which, when combined, makes the most formidable security, political, and economic force in the world.

4. This report will look into the unique situation NATO finds itself vis-à-vis hybrid warfare tactics. It will briefly review some of the events of 2014 demonstrating the central vision of both Russia and Daesh vis-à-vis the established international order they seek to disrupt. The report will then take a closer look into the tactics of hybrid warfare and the available means of response. Finally, it will highlight several factors that NATO member state parliamentarians should consider for local, national, and international action to prepare, and defend their populations in light of the post-2014 security environment.

## II. 2014: A CRITICAL JUNCTURE FOR THE NATO ALLIANCE?

### A. HYBRID CHALLENGES FROM THE EAST AND THE SOUTH

5. **East:** 2014 forced NATO member states to reconsider the international security environment in which they are operating. In the East, established international behavioural norms were fundamentally challenged by Russia's annexation of Crimea. The use of force to alter Ukraine's established border called into question assumptions about the sovereign territorial integrity of European states – injecting doubt into the post-Cold War dividend of a Europe increasingly whole, at peace, and free. Rhetoric evoking spheres of influence and protection of "Russians everywhere" provoked fears that Russian President Vladimir Putin was even challenging the very notion of the pluralistic nation state – the reality of the vast majority of the nation states in existence today. Despite all of this, the grand strategic vision driving Russia's actions remains unclear.

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<sup>1</sup> Daesh, also known as the so-called Islamic State, will be the term used for the armed group operating in Syria and Iraq against which the United States and many other allies are currently leading an air operation to degrade their hold on territory and ability to exploit the resources in the areas they do control. Daesh is the Arabic acronym for the armed group.

6. What is perfectly clear in the wake of 2014 is that President Putin is seeking to alter a status quo he perceives to be counter to Russian interests. By doing so, he is reintroducing revisionist geopolitical competition to Europe. President Putin's vision for post-2014 Europe appears to be one wherein closer European political and economic union stalls, and the role of the United States declines to a point where the Euro-Atlantic security community splinters. Russia's new military doctrine, published at the end of 2014, stated that it considered NATO and US efforts in Central and Eastern Europe to be a direct threat – a far cry from the days when NATO and Russia sought to forge a partnership after the fall of the Soviet Union (Hille, 2014).

7. The pendulum shift from *co-operation* to *competition* leaves NATO with the task of reassuring its internal audience and deterring Russia from further actions that may threaten the territorial integrity of any alliance member – particularly Allies in the East from the Baltics down to Southeast Europe. The ability to do both, however, in the era of hybrid warfare will require a heightened degree of strategic awareness and closer co-operation between Brussels and the individual member states. Sustaining a new reality of enhanced readiness and strategic awareness will clearly require a new era of collective credible political will to do so.

8. **South:** To the south, NATO faces a new era of protracted instability from the Middle East to North Africa to the Sahel. Powerful non-state armed groups continue to grind away at state structures and leave a host of problems in their wake from resource deprivation to mass migrations to intense localized conflict. The most immediate new threat is the rise of Daesh with its base of operations in Syria and Iraq. Daesh's rapid advances in Iraq in the summer of 2014 gave it control over extensive areas of both Syria and Iraq. The capacity for the group to attract pledges of allegiance from other groups in North Africa and the Sahel, most recently in Libya, illustrates the appeal of the group's message of forming a new caliphate in the place of the state structures in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region since the WWI.

9. The group's ability to hold territory, use a mix of terrorist and conventional tactics, and recruit thousands of fighters from all corners of the globe makes it a particularly new challenge in the domain of non-state armed groups. Daesh also was able to seize important stocks of powerful weaponry and significant cash when it overran Iraqi forces in Mosul; this, combined with its ability to maintain control over oil fields in its territory, allows for it to be relatively self-financing. Daesh's violent campaigns have disrupted local populations and broken down state authority through a vast area causing the two-fold effect of increased outflows of mass migration and arms, drug, and human trafficking within its areas.

## **B. HYBRID WARFARE: DEFINITIONS AND ARENAS**

10. Today's dual-challenge in the East and the South puts NATO in a position of facing two distinct strategic threats requiring different strategies. A revisionist Russia poses a state to state challenge, while a powerful Daesh is a non-state disruptive armed group. The first will require not only an increased capacity to bring sustainable and sufficient firepower to any threatened area of the Alliance, but also significantly enhanced strategic awareness – meaning a better ability to identify and track the evolution of ambiguous threats. The second, however, will require the Alliance to increase its crisis response capabilities and maintain its capacity to contain a conflict from spreading across its borders. Both challenges will require better strategic communications and messaging, as well as enhanced shared intelligence between Allies but also with Brussels. Generally speaking, this equates to better co-operative security.

11. A key element to the tactics of both competitors on the eastern and southern flanks is their ability to use hybrid warfare tactics. The expression 'hybrid warfare' first emerged as a

buzzword in modern policy and military circles following the second Lebanon war in 2006, when the conventionally superior Israel struggled to deal with Hizballah's tactical dynamism – from terrorist to conventional. The war is noteworthy because although Israel largely prevailed, it was unable to achieve its strategic objectives. The 2006 Hizballah-Israel war demonstrates the ability of non-state actors to exploit the vulnerabilities of conventionally stronger militaries and devise appropriate countermeasures. The deployment of hybrid tactics is inherently destabilizing for the stronger opponent. An inherent weakness to hybrid warfare, however, is that it is often a range of tactics lacking a strategy causing its adherents problems in the long-term.

12. In the post-2014 international security environment, there is no uniform definition of Hybrid Warfare, as there is no uniformity in the way that it is and can be used. This committee is defining it as the use of asymmetrical tactics to probe for and exploit domestic weaknesses via non-military means, backed by the threat of conventional military means. The tactics can be scaled and tailor fit to the particular situation.

13. Hybrid tactics as used by Russia are not inherently anything new for the Alliance. The Soviet Union often sought to manipulate domestic issues inside of NATO member states creating *grey zones* of ambiguity surrounding the degree of its involvement. Today Russia seeks to create a *grey zone* of ambiguity along NATO's eastern flank – attempts at domestic political and economic destabilization and manipulation of states along the eastern border regions of NATO from the Baltics to the Black Sea have driven many political leaders to claim that they fall within this *grey zone* already, and that it will only expand. A key difference, however, between Soviet and today's Russia's use of hybrid tactics is that; while the Soviets used them primarily to soften their opponents, President Putin seems to be using them as a means of achieving his objectives of a politically restructured Europe.

### **C. HYBRID WARFARE VERSUS NATO'S STRUCTURE**

14. NATO is geared to be a collective security alliance able to deter threats and defend its populations in the event of conflict. The collective use of force requires authorization of the North Atlantic Council (NAC) – which requires the identification of an armed attack against a member as understood by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Only unanimous votes in the NAC authorize collective action by the Alliance. Hybrid warfare tactics, however, present key difficulties vis-à-vis NAC-authorized collective action as their ambiguity makes them difficult to detect and define accurately.

15. A key strength of hybrid tactics, therefore, is that they can progress incrementally towards a threatening situation while remaining under the Article 5 threshold. It is evident that avoiding clear Article 5 violations is in Russia's interests, as NATO's military superiority has effectively removed conventional warfare from the suite of practical options. As a result, a form of strategic competition targeting the political, economic, and societal vulnerabilities in the West, while remaining concealed and below the threshold of conventional response, is the only viable option for Russia today to achieve its goals.

16. As such, the new arena for the strategic competition between Russia and NATO is actually more likely to be played out at the Article 4 level. Article 4 of the Washington Treaty states: "The parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened." The challenge to Article 4 however, is coming to a unified and coherent understanding of the threat is difficult when perceptions can and will vary across the 28 member states. As such, as we will see below, it is instructive to understand some of the tactics used in Russia's annexation of Crimea, as well as highlight some of the failures that continue to plague Russian intervention in Ukraine.

### **III. THE ANNEXATION OF CRIMEA AND THE CIVIL WAR IN EASTERN UKRAINE**

#### **A. RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE: PROBING FOR SOFT SPOTS TO FURTHER ITS OBJECTIVES**

17. Russia's actions from early 2014 rattled the Euro-Atlantic community's perception of their security environment. As suggested by its attempted diplomatic thwarting of Ukraine signing an Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the European Union in late 2013, Russia determined that blocking Ukrainian integration into the European economic and political spheres was a vital interest. The Maidan revolt that erupted out of President Yanukovich's 29 November refusal to sign the AA and the DCFTA, under Russian duress, complicated Vladimir Putin's plans to bring Ukraine back into its fold without significant effort.

18. As the pro and anti-Maidan demonstrations competed with each other in the early months of 2014, Brussels, Moscow, and Washington showed their solidarity with their respective sides. After the ousting of President Yanukovich on 22 February, Russia began to interfere more directly in Eastern Ukraine. After several days of pro-Russian demonstrations in Sevastopol, on the 26<sup>th</sup> February, Russia's Armed Forces began a major readiness exercise in the country's Western and Central Military Districts (MD). The stated size of the exercise, 150 000 personnel, was big enough to be a plausible invading force and a threat to the new Ukrainian government. It also proved to be both an effective military diversion, with Kyiv distracted from the events in Crimea, and therefore dissuaded from opting for a large-scale military response (Popescu, 2015). Unidentified Russian Special Forces seized the Crimean Parliament on 27 February and installed the Aksyonov government.

19. On 1<sup>st</sup> March, Putin won parliamentary approval to use force in Ukraine to "protect the Crimean population from lawlessness and violence." As a result Russian forces were able to tighten their grip on Crimea. After the commando units took control of key objects the territory was secured by regular infantry units. Meanwhile, the Russian Black Sea Fleet and neighboring Southern Military District could provide air defense for the operation. Within a couple of weeks, the Crimean Status Referendum sanctioned Russia's formal annexation of Crimea.

20. Prior to the March referendum Russian leaders consistently denied launching a military offensive in Crimea, only to later recognize and even boast of the ruse they played on the West (Sutyagin, 2014). Of particular concern was Russia's use of non-insignia bearing commando units to seize and control key government institutions in Crimea – subsequently referred to as "little green men". Throughout 2014, Spetsnaz groups undertook special operational tasks in several eastern Ukrainian districts (*oblasts*); establishing and operating insurgent teams, manned by locals but reinforced and guided by Spetsnaz personnel and "voluntary" militants from as far away as Chechnya (Freedman, 2014-2015).

#### **B. HYBRID WARFARE: A RESOUNDING SUCCESS?**

21. Russia's successful seizure of territory and continued disruption of Ukrainian civil order has prompted many to suggest that its use of hybrid tactics represents a new, highly effective form of warfare. Russia has employed and co-ordinated a wide range of tactics to achieve its objectives: from political and economic coercion, cyber-attacks, disinformation and propaganda, to covert and overt military action. These instruments were used interchangeably to foment unrest in Eastern Ukraine throughout the year, but have not brought the success of the initial operations in Crimea.

22. The successful use of modern technologies has allowed Russia to exploit the informational dimension of the civil war in Ukraine. By spreading propaganda and distorting

facts Russia is able to construct alternative narratives and realities in cyber space and on the ground. This has served as a force multiplier in the conflict. The chosen narrative portrays Russia as the guarantor and defender of the rights of Russian-speaking people and that the use of force is a legitimate way to defend its compatriots from the atrocities being committed against them in the Ukraine. Domestically, its efficacy was reflected in a surge in Putin's popularity (Freedman, 2014-2015). Internationally, the propaganda likely had a dual effect: first, it projected a more menacing image than Russia's actual strength merited (Freedman, 2014-2015); and, second it deterred the West from supporting Ukraine at the levels it might have otherwise considered (i.e. lethal military aid).

23. Though Russia initially tried to foment unrest in the eastern districts of Kharkiv, Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and even as far west as Odessa, the pro-Russian separatist movements only stuck in Luhansk and Donetsk – both of which share a border with Russia. The ebb and flow of the fighting in these provinces has largely depended upon the degree of direct Russian intervention. It has also become clear that Russia's ability to control its rebel proxy groups from a distance is questionable; the downing of the MH-17 civilian airliner by a likely Russian-supplied BUK surface-to-air missile being the most tragic example.

24. After the initial failure of the Minsk Protocol, the fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk intensified sharply throughout the rest of 2014. As the civil war in Ukraine flared again in the 2014-2015 winter, Russia upped the ante with the international community, particularly NATO and the United States, as its new military doctrine underwrote the Russian perception that NATO and US security, political, and even economic interference in Eastern (and even Central) Europe was a direct threat to Russia. Particularly stressed in the new Doctrine was Western political interference to destabilize the regions in its immediate vicinity – a clear signal to not intervene militarily in Ukraine. The debate regarding increased lethal military support of the Ukrainian forces continues over concerns about the escalation of the conflict.

25. While Russia certainly used soft probing to seek its objective of bringing Ukraine back into its sphere of influence, it has clearly failed to do so as Kyiv is now more firmly convinced of closer integration with the Euro-Atlantic community than ever. At the very best it has achieved a hot war that will devolve into a frozen conflict, at worst it has helped spur a protracted civil war.

### **C. POWERFUL NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS IN THE ARC OF CRISIS: THE RISE OF DAESH**

26. There are many in the Alliance who point to the threat posed by the general instability throughout the MENA and Sahel by powerful non-state armed groups, particularly Daesh, as another dimension of the hybrid threat posed to NATO member states. A brief overview of the rise of Daesh is instructive.

27. The rise of Daesh is the product of ideological and social polarization and mobilization in Iraq and Syria, which many argue has been decades in the making. The group's success in the region can largely be attributed to its successful exploitation of existing grievances. It has framed itself as the vanguard of marginalized and persecuted Sunni Arabs seeking to replace sectarian-based regimes with an Islamic Caliphate. Daesh's ability to mobilise a base to facilitate its goals was demonstrated in June 2014, when it raced across the Syrian Desert to capture large swathes of territory in Iraq. This would not have been possible, if *Daesh* chief, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi had not had the support of the disaffected Sunni tribes based in this area – the group is in fact the outcropping of al-Qaeda in Iraq which fought the bloody insurgency against US forces after its 2003 invasion.

28. Although its swift seizure of Iraq's second largest city, Mosul, saw Daesh garner international attention, its aims are principally regional, and generally comprise of changing

the existing political and territorial structure on its terms. On the 29th June 2014 Daesh announced the formation of a Islamic Caliphate, and changed its English name from the "Islamic State of the Sham" to the "Islamic State", its principle objective being the expansion of the Caliphate, by continuing capture and hold territory.

29. The self-titled Islamic State can be termed a hybrid threat due to its effective ability to employ a range of tactics from terrorist to conventional and its global recruitment networks to rally thousands of fighters to its cause. US President Barack Obama underscored this notion when he said that Daesh represented, "a sort of a hybrid of not just the terrorist network, but one with territorial ambitions, and some of the strategy and tactics of an army." The Islamic State has the ability to form, deploy, and sustain conventional forces, and simultaneously maximize the use of irregular tactics, adapting the mix to exploit its opponent's weakness.

30. This capacity has been demonstrated in Iraq, where initial incursions were characterised by robust conventional firepower and agility allowing Daesh to control strategically important urban centres, roads, and terrain rapidly. IS also employs a variety of advanced weaponry, mostly acquired after overrunning military bases and arsenals in Iraq. This includes, the use of tactical drones for aerial reconnaissance, US Humvees, artillery, small arms, mines, and improvised explosive devices, as well as the use of shoulder-fired surface to air missiles to challenge coalition airstrikes. Militants have already shot down at least one Iraqi Mi-35M attack helicopter. While US-led coalition airstrikes forced the group take advantage of the dense urban landscape, operating at night, and distributing forces into smaller tactical units, while limiting unsecure cell phone and radio communications, it continues to hold substantial territory and mount offensive assaults (Malas, 2014).

31. The group has been touted as the richest non-state armed group in the world. The main sources of income are oil production facilities in Syria and Iraq, extortion/taxation of owners and producers in occupied areas (NBC News, 2014), and kidnap-for-ransom. In mid-2014 Daesh's estimated income was in the range of \$3 million per day (Dilanian, 2014), and its assets between \$1.3 and \$2 billion (Chulov, 2014). Further sources of income include demanding tolls on highways or robbing passing traffic at checkpoints, and donations from the Gulf countries, or more generous donors in Iraq (Jung, Shapiro, Wallace and Ryan, 2014).

32. Out of this income Daesh finances its military arm, by supplying and maintaining equipment, administrators, operational expenses, and salaries to its fighters and benefits to the dependents of deceased combatants. In addition it maintains the civilian infrastructure of the towns and villages it has captured, pays bribes and inducements to tribal leaders. It must also pay for its comprehensive propaganda campaign.

33. Daesh demonstrates an almost unparalleled ability for a non-state actor to employ information warfare effectively. Professionally developed propaganda films illustrate their objectives, aggrandize their fighters, and serve as powerful recruiting tools. Daesh is particularly adept at using social media networks (particularly YouTube, Twitter, and blog posts) for plotting, recruitment, fundraising, and marketing, benefitting from the networks' decentralized nature and the ability of its supporters to create and operate his/her own public relations department. The unprecedented number of foreign fighters joining their cause demonstrates the success of this campaign.

34. While Daesh and other non-state armed groups do not pose the same kind of threat that Russia does, they will continue to cause significant disruption along NATO member state borders. The intense regional disruption that they will cause will likely lead to continued war that must be contained outside of NATO's borders, and the effects of these wars will continue to bring humanitarian crises in the region and beyond in the form of food security and resource and population disruption. These spillover effects do and will continue to test



the crisis response of member states. Further, the difficulties of jihadi foreign fighters returning to Europe and North America will test the intelligence and policing institutions of all member states and the Alliance as a whole.

#### IV. A WHOLE OF ALLIANCE APPROACH

35. As noted above, the ambiguity of hybrid tactics by Russia poses a clear challenge to the Alliance and the regional disruption of non-state armed groups will continue to affect Alliance security at its borders and from within in the form of terrorism. The Defence and Security Committee committed to the study of this changing strategic security environment for 2015. A fitting motto for NATO in the face of these dual challenges should in fact be – ***adopt, adapt, adept***. As the Alliance adopts new strategies to deal with the new state and non-state challenges to the east and south, it will need to adapt its structure and readiness to become adept at handling the new challenges it faces.

36. As noted in the DSCFC draft report on the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) [052 DSCFC 15 E], NATO is already doing much to adapt a new degree of readiness to shorten the time necessary to bring significant firepower via the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) to any corner of the Alliance to deter and defend any member state. Outside of the military response, however, a whole of alliance mobilization of the diplomatic, informational, military, economic, finance, and legal powers of the 28 member states is needed to continue to ensure member state security in the face of hybrid warfare.

37. There are many issues that NATO parliamentarians must continue to debate and provide key enabling mechanisms for such a high level of Alliance attention co-operation.

##### A. INCREASED STRATEGIC AWARENESS

38. The ambiguity of Russia's use of hybrid warfare tactics cause great confusion and stalled alliance member states' ability to come to a unanimous assessment of events on the ground in the Ukraine. This lack of strategic awareness needs to be addressed, and NATO member state parliamentarians have the ability to bring this issue to the forefront of national security debates.

39. *Intelligence Sharing* – Intelligence sharing among Allies has long been an issue of debate – the RAP brings this back to the forefront as clear mechanisms for intelligence sharing are necessary for clear situational awareness assessment. While there are existing links between member states' external intelligence services, there are too many hurdles at present to domestic intelligence. NATO needs a point of access into each member state's discrete domestic intelligence agencies, as it does not currently have this privilege of this level of intelligence. The ambiguity of Russian tactics employed in the Ukraine underscore the vital nature of this point.

40. Reinforcing links between domestic agencies, including law enforcement, will allow member states to better address a range of transnational security threats and shared issues. Types of data to be exchanged could include, imagery, biometrics, border information, visa applications, flight manifests, known ties to hostile organizations, phone or email traffic, conversations with known persons of interest, efforts to obtain restricted materials, and information on domestic public sentiment/population opinion polls.

41. Both law enforcement and intelligence organisations have long recognized the need to collaborate, share, and exchange information, and have indeed networked in the past to address mutual problems. These networks enable a reach and capability far beyond that permitted by the budgets and resources of each individual agency (Johnson, 1996). Issues

such as terrorism, and the trafficking of weapons, drugs and persons have consistently demanded regular contact among law enforcement agents (Anderson, 1989). As a result, police, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies have typically depended on close and enduring connections to their counterpart agencies to counter transnational threats (Heyman, 1990). One proposed solution for streamlining intelligence across the Alliance would be the creation of regional centres, along the lines of centres of excellence, enabling intelligence .sharing between relevant member states.

42. *Increased Role of NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ)* – NATO member states have some of the best Special Operations Forces (SOF) units in the world. While NATO member states' SOFs will certainly have a role to play in the VJTF, there is perhaps too much focus on the *direct action* capabilities of SOF and not enough on the NSHQ's ability to co-ordinate *military assistance* to both member states and NATO partners. Well-trained, local Special Forces have the ability to add to situational awareness via their reconnaissance capacities. NSHQ has a point of presence in every member country and this interlinked network of training, advising, and assisting each other must be enhanced. One way to do this would be to make NSHQ a NATO strategic command. NATO parliamentarians can advocate for such a structural change to the organization.

## **B. SUSTAINMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION**

43. *Political Will and Investment* – The RAP is largely a conventional, military response to a hybrid threat. It is only effective if there is the political will to use it. Because of how the threat is likely to be presented, not as an invasion or obvious Article V incursion, the RAP will be most effective when politicians pre-determine the conditions for its use. Since the costs for the RAP lie with the participating nation, successful implementation cannot be directed solely by executives – member state Parliamentarians will determine the funding necessary to build and sustain it.

44. *Force Mobilization* – A key question that remains to be clarified regarding the RAP, particularly the VJTF, is facilitating the necessary parliamentary approval needed for force deployment. This is an issue that the NATO PA must debate to understand what steps individual member state parliaments are taking to address this issue.

45. *Political Authority* – A reasoned debate about divesting a modicum of authority to SACEUR in the event of a crisis is necessary. In an era wherein immediate and effective mobilization is required, the ability to at least prepare and stage forces prior to mobilization is not such significant divestment of political authority as to undermine the NAC's ability to make the ultimate decision about NATO military action.

## **C. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

46. Countering Russia's propaganda operations will require a renewed attention to strategic communications. NATO does not have a robust capacity for strategic communications at this point. Strategic communication must go far beyond just pronouncements by the Secretary General from time to time. Brussels must work to co-ordinate with every member state mechanisms for better strategic communications at the Alliance, regional, and individual member state level. The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence is a good start, but much more can and needs to be done.

47. *Public Outreach* – Another area for parliamentarians is their essential role for public outreach and education within their particularly constituencies as this will help building up public awareness and resilience in the face of Russian attempts at subversion via propaganda. Working to strengthen the role of an informed civil society in every member

state will help marginalized ethnic and religious groups that are vulnerable to hybrid tactics of message manipulation

#### **D. DEFENSIBLE NETWORKS AND ECONOMIES**

48. *Robust Cyber Defences* – It is important that heightened concern over traditional threats to NATO's security does not eclipse attention to modern threats, such as cyber warfare. In 2013 NATO dealt with over 2,500 significant of cyberattacks, while the March 2014 Crimea crisis was accompanied by attacks from pro-Russian *hacktivists* that brought down several Alliance websites. Nevertheless the Alliance has made significant progress since the first major cyber-attack in 1999, both in terms of understanding the nature of the threat and augmenting its preparedness to respond. However there is still a vast deficit between many nations' capabilities and that of the organization.

49. To ensure the cyber threat is effectively addressed, NATO should persevere in its stated cyber mission: to defend its own network, and to enhance capacities of its member states. This can be achieved by continuing to implement the current NATO Policy on Cyber Defence, adopted in 2011, and the consequent Action Plan. The September 2014 Wales Summit Declaration confirmed that cyber security can be part of collective defense. It stated that an attack "can reach a threshold that threatens national and Euro-Atlantic prosperity, security, and stability." Though it specified that any decision to invoke Article 5 would be made by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) on a case-by-case basis, the scope, duration, and intensity/scale of an attack, as well as the initiator's identity, are likely to be taken in to account. Cyber threats are multi-layered and as a result future cyber defence efforts should take a whole of alliance, comprehensive approach.

50. This should include, first, an enduring focus on exploring and implementing options to share and pool cyber capabilities amongst member states. Second, optimise synergy between the EU-NATO partnership by drawing on the EU's advances in the cyber arena. Similarly NATO is well placed to co-ordinate national military efforts and enhance trans-Atlantic involvement, including the United States. Third, develop an agenda for greater collaboration with the private sector, to move beyond information sharing to more substantive engagement, such as co-operating to fight cybercrime and respond collaboratively to individual incidents, and support overall preparedness.

51. The private sector is a largely untapped resource that can play a vital role, as it controls most of the contact that civil society has with cyber and thus can generate awareness and action by domestic level actors within member states. Almost every cyber conflict in recent memory has been decisively resolved by the private sector not the government (Healey and Tothova, 2014). Network and marketplace resilience is a vital interest of both governments and private sector; there are better ways to increase collaboration on this front.

52. *Economic Solidarity* – Russia's prominent use of economic and financial strategies in its offensive against Ukraine brings the economic element of hybrid warfare to the fore as well. It is alleged that Russia is leveraging its state-owned enterprises to limit the policy options available to Kyiv and NATO, and win the support of Crimean population through development, investment and by providing higher living standards. Russian state enterprises are also entrenched abroad, particularly in its immediate neighbourhood, which has caused concern in some circles. However gaining economic dominance and dependencies is not a fast process; it was facilitated by the reality that there is no authority with a view towards economic threats, or co-ordinating efforts to address them. NATO has limited offensive economic tools; however individual member states and partner organisations, such as the EU, have the ability to apply sanctions, and have indeed done so to penalise Russia for its stance on the Ukraine crisis. Increased attention to this arena is also needed.

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