

Defence Preparedness & Transatlantic Competencies: The Health of the US & NATO alliance

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Main Takeaways

In Context – Alliance Strengths and Weaknesses:

- NATO's defense preparedness is heavily tied to the United States' (US) engagement with the alliance. The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine underscores the critical need for the alliance, but also reveals strengths and weaknesses in its current framework. The alliance must be proactive and maintain vigilance over member states to ensure cohesive action.
- Innovations in AI, quantum technologies, and biotechnology remain key drivers of American dominance, but the credibility of US forces relies on their ability to innovate and adapt quickly to new threats. US political dynamics remain polarized, impacting foreign policy decisions, especially regarding Ukraine. Concerns about the limits of the US's awareness of stakeholders and regional players highlight a need for greater collaboration within the alliance and between private and public sectors to enhance defense capabilities.
- Against a backdrop of growing anti-American sentiment, which some attribute to the far-right, European Union (EU) member states have become more significant security actors since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, despite challenges in achieving consensus.

Defense and Innovation:

- The NATO defense planning process involves political guidance, gap assessments, and scaling capacity for weapons building, emphasizing the importance of coordinated surveys within the industry.
- The US excels at investing in critical defense technologies, yet there are fears of it lacking awareness of adversaries' misinformation tactics. Russia is much more proficient at misinformation than previously realized.
- European countries' dependency on external players for raw materials is a concern, necessitating a step-up in production and long-term commitments to ensure resilience.
- The digitized battlefield in Ukraine offers valuable lessons for US and NATO defense strategies, emphasizing the importance of rapid adaptation and technological advancement. It reinforces the need for greater collaboration channels between private and public sectors to enhance defense capabilities.

The Transatlantic Alliance and Ukraine:

- The Alliance must act more decisively to support Ukraine. There is a call for more robust and timely support to avoid delays that could affect outcomes on the battlefield.
- Ongoing discussions around utilizing EU legal frameworks to free frozen Russian assets to help finance Ukraine's war effort and its reconstruction remain on the table.
- European dependency on external raw materials and the production asynchronies compared to Russia (specifically with bullet production) highlight the need for increased

industrial capacity and resilience. The alliance needs to scale up manufacturing capabilities, particularly in weapon production and drone units, to ensure readiness and resilience in the face of ongoing threats.

Policy Recommendations

1. Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Alliance:

- Ensure the US remains proactive and vigilant about maintaining strong alliances, particularly within NATO, and tighten relationships with NATO countries to ensure they do not overly rely on the US. Strengthen NATO through its original framework: Partnership for Peace.
- Improve intelligence and awareness of adversaries' tactics, enhancing the ability to deter and respond to misinformation and cyber threats.
- Strengthen public-private partnerships to incentivize innovation and address defense needs effectively.
- Encourage member states to meet their defense spending commitments.

2. Boosting Innovation and Industrial Capacity:

- Foster closer relationships between private and public sectors to drive innovation in defense technologies.
- Invest in domestic manufacturing to reduce dependency on external sources (such as China) and enhance resilience in critical sectors.
- Invest in manufacturing capabilities and scale production as needed, focusing on emerging technologies like drones and cyber defense. This will enable the EU to develop its own defense industry, separate but cooperative with the US.

3. Supporting Ukraine and Addressing Blind Spots:

- Increase and expedite support for Ukraine, using frozen Russian assets and interest generated from these assets to provide financial assistance for both military and reconstruction efforts.
- Address the blind spots in NATO defense production and supply chains, ensuring a robust domestic manufacturing base for critical needs and ongoing support to Ukraine.