



Towards A Stable And  
Peaceful European  
Security Order:  
The Essential Role Of  
The Transatlantic Bond

*by Mircea Geoană*



Mircea Geoană is NATO  
Deputy Secretary General.

**E**urope faces the most complex and unpredictable strategic environment in decades. Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine has brought full-scale conventional war back to Europe and undermined the post-Cold War European security order. Its aggressive actions have increased insecurity in the Euro-Atlantic area and negatively affected both global stability and the rules-based international order. More broadly, we are currently witnessing the transformation of the international security environment: the global balance of power is shifting; strategic competition is on the rise; and phenomena like climate change mean that we will face more frequent shocks and instability.

*In light of these monumental changes, it is especially important for us, as European and North American Allies, to articulate a positive vision for the future. NATO Leaders set the parameters for this vision at the NATO Summit in June 2022, when they adopted the new Strategic Concept. Next only to our founding Treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty, the Strategic Concept is NATO's most important guiding document. In the 2022 Strategic Concept, NATO Leaders clearly affirmed that "we want to live in a world where sovereignty, territorial integrity, human rights and international law are respected and where each country can choose its own path, free from aggression, coercion or subversion."*

*Ensuring that these crucial principles are reaffirmed and respected in the Euro-Atlantic area is essential to guarantee our collective security and freedom and to contribute to a more peaceful world. To do*

---

*that, we must preserve and strengthen the transatlantic bond between Europe and North America, which remains essential to our individual and collective security.*

*We particularly need to work together to understand the changing strategic landscape: and to prepare for this more contested world by investing in our individual and collective resilience and by preserving, harnessing, and investing in our unique collective strength as a transatlantic Alliance.*

## **Understanding the Changing Strategic Landscape**

Russia's full-fledged invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 shattered peace in Europe and ruptured the European security order by fundamentally violating the principles that at the heart of this order: territorial integrity, self-determination, and the right of states to choose their own security arrangements. The way in which Russia has fought this war has featured systematic violations of international law, indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as reckless nuclear sabre-rattling and cynical attempts to disrupt global energy and food supply chains. In 2022, the Allies concluded in the Strategic Concept, that Russia poses the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Its actions also threaten the broader rules-based international order and undermine global stability.

Indeed, Putin's regime unprovoked and unjustifiable war against Ukraine is the latest, most egregious, example of over a decade of growing Russian destabilising behaviour against its neighbours and the broader post-Cold War European security order. For years, Putin's regime has acted to advance its ambitions to upend that order and bring us back to a world of spheres of influence and a zero-sum understanding of security. For over a decade, we have seen from Russia deliberate efforts to use military and non-military means to undermine its neighbours' sovereignty and territorial integrity, along with attempts to destabilise countries in our broader neighbourhoods – not only to our East but also to our South. Russia has also engaged in provocative actions against NATO Allies, including through cyber and hybrid-attacks, disinformation campaigns, as well as by carrying out chemical attacks and assassinations on Allied territory.

---

This deterioration in the European security order has also led many states to rethink their traditional security policy. Finland and Sweden have decided to apply to join NATO. At the Madrid Summit, Allied Heads of State and Government invited them to join the Alliance. Their accession will make NATO stronger, and Finland and Sweden safer. Other European states are seeing new debates about their security policy and posture.

Russia's aggressive actions are part of a broader trend. The global geopolitical and geo-economic distribution of power is changing, fuelling the rise of strategic competition. Authoritarian powers, such as Russia and China, are actively seeking to challenge the rules-based international order. They are seeking to promote alternative models of global authoritarian governance. They do this to advance standards and rules that benefit authoritarian technologies, policies, and interests. China's growing influence and increased assertiveness on the world stage is a key driver behind the return of power politics and great power competition. This is why our Strategic Concept recognises that "China's stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values" and posits the need to address the systemic challenges it poses to Euro-Atlantic security.

So we need to adapt to this rising strategic competition. This means recognising that competitors increasingly use military and non-military tools in an integrated way. They do this in order to contest the rules-based international order and undermine global and Euro-Atlantic security. They seek to exploit the growing interconnectedness and digitalisation of our societies, economies and militaries to achieve their strategic objectives.

They are also creating and using one-sided dependencies and economic vulnerabilities to increase their leverage, constrain our policy choices, and thus undermine our security. Russia's energy blackmail in the context of its war against Ukraine is a powerful example: it shows how one-sided dependencies and over-reliance on the import of key commodities, such as fossil fuels, can be used to gain political influence.

Going forward, economic resilience, including by diversifying investment and supply chains, needs to be part of our business model.

---

The search for economic resilience can also further strengthen transatlantic trade and investment. The US is emerging as a major supplier of Europe's energy; while North American and European companies are stepping up to provide their expertise as part of the energy transition.

Looking to the future, we should expect the use of political, economic, energy, cyber, information and other hybrid tactics to continue to grow in sophistication, scope and reach. The difficulty is that these security threats and challenges are diffuse. They are often not bound by geography the way conventional security and military challenges are. Such tactics – even if they are planned and carried out on the other side of the world – can and will have implications for Euro-Atlantic security.

At the same time, pre-existing threats and challenges to our security have not disappeared. Terrorism remains the most important asymmetric threat to NATO. The past decade has taught us that we need to pay close attention to how this threat evolves and endures. In particular, we will need to keep a close watch to the tactics and technologies of terrorist actors. Ongoing instability, conflict and fragility in our broader neighbourhood continues to fuel terrorism, violent extremism as well as transnational criminal activities.

In addition, climate change will affect Euro-Atlantic and global security in complex ways. It will fundamentally alter our political, economic, and security environment, creating new dilemmas for those seeking to maintain the security of our citizens in Europe and beyond.

Responding to this more complex security environment requires us to look at security through a broader lens, including by focusing on how to better use all instruments of power, both military and non-military, to protect and defend our security, freedom and democracies. Just as importantly, we must continue to enhance our own resilience against malign interference and hostile hybrid actions.

---

## **Building our Individual and Collective Resilience in a Competitive World**

In a world characterised by fragility and strategic competition, we need to step up our resilience.

Through Article 3 of the Washington Treaty, resilience is in NATO's DNA. And in recent years, NATO has substantially stepped up its work on resilience. Since 2016, NATO supports Allies' efforts to meet seven baseline requirements for national resilience, which address critical functions such as the continuity of government as well as the provision of health care and critical infrastructure services related to transport, communications, energy, food and water. In 2021, Allies agreed to build on that work. They pledged to develop resilience objectives to inform nationally tailored resilience goals and implementation plans, based on clear and measurable Alliance-wide resilience objectives. Concretely, this means NATO will be able to provide better advice to Allies on their national resilience efforts, including on how they support NATO's collective defence. We are also increasing political consultations and coordination on these topics. In this vein, NATO is stepping up consultations between Allied National Security Advisers and national Senior Resilience Officials, to address issues such as strategic dependencies and resilience. Addressing these risks and vulnerabilities means being ready to work across our governments. That is why we recognise how important it is to have a whole-of-government approach.

The Strategic Concept also highlights that we must work more together when it comes to ensuring our energy security and invest in "a stable and reliable energy supply, suppliers and sources." Even though traditionally we have not examined energy policies through the lens of national or collective defence and security, it is clear that, to prepare for growing strategic competition, we need to better understand the potential impact of key economic policies on our security, including in the energy realm, and take active steps to prevent and mitigate risks.

Here too, we build on a solid basis: NATO has been working on energy security since 2008, facilitating the sharing of intelligence, best practices as well as consultations between Allies to enhance our shared awareness of energy developments with security implications. We also work to support the protection of critical energy

---

infrastructure and to ensure reliable energy supplies to the military. At the same time, we are also taking a deliberate approach towards increasing our ability to understand, prepare for and mitigate the impact of climate change on our security. There are clear links between our work on energy security and climate security: improving energy efficiency, investing in the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy sources and leveraging green technologies can help us enhance our resilience, mitigate strategic vulnerabilities and contribute to combat climate change.

Finally, we need to continue to deepen our broaden our understanding of resilience--- because we know we need to protect not only against malign interference and disruptions of our critical physical and digital infrastructure, but also against similar attempts against our democratic institutions, free societies, independent media and citizens. This underscores the importance of working together with other like-minded partners and international organizations, particularly the European Union, to seek synergies and maximise our respective competencies and toolboxes.

## **Preserving and Investing in our Competitive Advantages**

Another critical line of effort to ensure we are able to deal with growing strategic competition. First and foremost, this means continuing to strengthen our own unity, cohesion and solidarity as a transatlantic community. Europe and North America form a unique community bound together by common values and interest. We represent nearly one billion people and half of the world's GDP and military strength. So, when we act together, we are in a better position to shape the international environment and stand up for the rules-based international order and the democratic values we share. The joint efforts which the transatlantic community and its closest partners have made to support Ukraine's right to self-defence and impose costs on Russia in response to its brutal war and profound violations of the principles set in UN Charter is a case in point. As our world grows in complexity and instability, strengthening our transatlantic bond will be even more important: a source of stability and peace.

---

NATO—as the manifestation of that bond—continues to play an essential role. It provides an indispensable platform for Europe, North America to exchange information and intelligence, build shared situational awareness, as well as consult, coordinate, and act together to tackle all matters related to individual and collective security. This is why investing in NATO and strengthening its political role is an important way to future-proof the transatlantic bond.

Second, we need to cultivate, deepen and expand our partnerships. We live in a complex and interconnected world, where many of the threats and challenges we face are global in scope and reach. This means that ensuring a stable and peaceful European security order requires us to work closely with partners in our immediate neighbourhood. In particular, we will need to support their efforts to enhance their resilience to malign interference and attempts at coercion and destabilisation. Sustained political dialogue and practical cooperation with the European Union on these issues can be particularly crucial. It will contribute to enhancing security and stability in our broader neighbourhood. At the same time, in a more competitive world, we also need to look further afield. We will need to strengthen our cooperation with like-minded partners across the globe to address shared security challenges, in particular those stemming from growing strategic competition. NATO's increased dialogue and cooperation with our partners in the Indo-Pacific—Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea, whose leaders took part in our Madrid Summit in June—is very important in this respect.

As security issues are increasingly non-traditional, it is also crucial to engage and partner with our civil society, private sector and expert communities. They are key stakeholders on issues such as promoting societal resilience. Another key area of engagement and cooperation is technological innovation and the work to preserve and strengthen our technological edge. This is particularly important as, in a context of growing strategic competition, we should expect our technological advantage to be more aggressively and continuously challenged. In this sense, retaining our technological edge and ensuring the ability to set norms, principles and standards for the use of emerging and disruptive technologies will play an essential role in both ensuring our defence and security and preserving a democratic rules-based international order.

---

To remain ahead of potential competitors, we must build stronger synergies between what some call the “triple helix”: governments, the private sector and academia. We must support innovation eco-systems across our countries to foster collaboration on developing and adopting emerging and disruptive technologies. This is exactly why we have decided to establish the NATO Innovation Fund and the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA). The NATO Innovation Fund, launched at the 2022 Madrid Summit, will invest 1 billion euros over the next 15 years in innovative start-ups and funds developing dual-use emerging technologies that can be utilised to enhance our security and defence. It aims to concretely harness civilian innovation to meet our security needs. DIANA will work with a network of innovation sites across the Alliance. It will work with start-ups, industry, and universities to foster transatlantic cooperation and help us to better identify and adopt most cutting-edge technological solutions to meet our security and defence requirements.

Ultimately, we need to remain confident in the strength of our democratic values and open societies. Strong democracies and free societies remain a key competitive advantage. They are a unique source of dynamism, resilience, innovation and creativity—all essential in successfully tackling a more complex and unpredictable world. Our values are not only at the heart of who we are; they are also an enduring source of strength.

## **Looking to the Future**

Our current security environment is both volatile and dangerous. The norms and principles that underwrote the post-Cold War European security order have been systematically violated by Russia and tested by rising strategic competition. Yet, we should not resign ourselves to a “new normal” of conflict, predatory behaviour and instability.

Looking to the future, we need to work towards bolstering the European security order that ensures our collective freedom, security and stability. This should continue to be based on our shared democratic values and on the principles of territorial integrity, peaceful cooperation, and respect for the sovereignty of nations. It should also be inherently resilient to the growing risks posed by rising strategic competition.

---

This will require investing in our collective and individual resilience and harnessing and building on our collective strengths. We need to preserve and strengthen our transatlantic bond, as an anchor of solidarity and stability in a complex world, with NATO at its core. We also need to step up our partnerships in our neighbourhood and beyond, including with the European Union, while reaching out more to our scientists, technologists, entrepreneurs, civil society and academics.