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DEFENDING EUROPE

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE THROUGH CIVIL PREPAREDNESS

ABSTRACT   A sustained period of relative peace in Europe has nurtured a culture of stability among societies and countries. However, recent events have suggested that the world is teetering on the precipice of conflict. Russia's actions have blatantly disregarded the norms and principles that have long served as bedrocks of the European security architecture. The war in Ukraine and the expansion of Russian military capabilities, such as integration with Belarus and cooperation with Iran and North Korea, carry the risk of prolonged conflict and potential escalation. How is Europe preparing for these security threats? What does resilience mean in NATO and EU policy, doctrine and practice? In the face of evolving security threats, Europe is employing a comprehensive approach to resilience, encompassing national and societal measures. The aim of this article is to analyse the concept of strengthening resilience to security threats in NATO and the EU with reference to civil preparedness.

Keywords: resilience, civil preparedness, strategy, the EU, NATO

The Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace.
NATO Strategic Concept 2022

INTRODUCTION

This article explores how to strengthen resilience to modern threats to peace and international order through civil preparedness, with a focus on NATO and EU efforts.

The Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace. Euro-Atlantic security is undermined by strategic competition and pervasive instability.[1] The events of recent years show that the world is on the edge of a global war, and every effort must be made to prevent this. Since 2014, the Russian Federation has sought to restore the former borders and influence of the USSR. Russia has violated the norms and principles that formed the basis for guaranteeing the stability of the European security order. It has long used a combination of disinformation, cyber-attacks and other forms of covert influence against its adversaries, both in peacetime and during conflicts. In 2022, Russia launched a full-scale war in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine, along with the expansion of Russian military capabilities and cooperation with Iran and North Korea, increases the risk of prolonged conflict and potential escalation.

How should Europe prepare for and deter war? What does resilience through civil preparedness mean in the Alliance and EU strategies, policies and practice? In what areas are NATO and the EU cooperating on resilience?

The study argues that the EU, NATO and their members must individually and collectively bolster the resilience of their infrastructures, services, governance and defences, including cyber and disinformation capabilities, to deter and defend Europe against potential adversaries and malicious actors whilst ensuring its stability in the face of evolving threats.

Because modern conflicts target all aspects of state and society, the EU and NATO are pursuing a national and societal resiliency agenda. The EU defines resilience as: *the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks.*[2] Resilience, in a NATO context, refers to the capacity – at national and collective levels – to prepare for, resist, respond to and quickly recover from strategic shocks and disruptions across the full spectrum of threats, ensuring the continuity of the Alliance's activities. It requires both civil preparedness and military capacity.[3]

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[1] "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept," *NATO*, 29 June 2022, para. 6, at https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/, 24 February 2025.

[2] "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council the EU Approach to Resilience: Learning from Food Security Crises," *European Union*, p. 5, at https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52012DC0586, 24 February 2025.

[3] "Resilience, Civil Preparedness and Article 3," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 13 November 2024, at https://www.nato.int/cps/bu/natohq/topics_132722.htm, 24 February 2025.

The article is divided into three sections. The first background section explores the need for strengthening resilience against modern threats, focusing on the perspectives of NATO and the EU. The next section analyses NATO's concept of resilience and civil preparedness, including its roles, structures, tools (e.g., civil wartime agencies) and how it adapts to the evolving security environment. It concludes by examining how NATO leverages civil preparedness to support operations and fulfil population needs during crises and wars. The last section synthesises EU policies and measures for building resilience, particularly against hybrid threats, cyber-attacks and disinformation. It excludes the economic and environmental aspects of the EU's broader resilience concept.

In today's security landscape, strategic information, cyber resilience and critical infrastructure protection have become paramount. The paper delves into concepts of building resilience through civil preparedness, exploring both the potential benefits and challenges.

While studies have explored the application of resilience to security domains,[4] the literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of NATO and EU efforts regarding resilience and civil preparedness, including arrangements from the Cold War era.

The article underscores the importance of resilience as an initiative-taking strategy in response to modern threats by NATO and the EU. Qualitative methods informed the research, including analysis of public records, policy documents, legislative acts, EU and NATO online archives and the application of inductive, synthetic and abstracting techniques, all informed by the author's work experience.

1. BACKGROUND

NATO is a political and military alliance of countries from Europe and North America. Its core tasks include deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, as well as cooperative security.[5] The EU is a political and economic union of European states. Relations between NATO and the EU were formalised[6] in the early 2000s, building on steps taken during the 1990s to promote greater European responsibility in defence matters.[7] Since then, the two organisations have worked on a wide range of issues, including crisis management, counter-terrorism and cyber security. In 2016, 2018

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4   A. Gruszczak, "Resilience and Mitigation in Security Management: Concepts and Concerns," *Forum Scientiae Oeconomia*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2016), pp. 7-23, pp. 7-23; P. Frankowski, A. Gruszczak, (eds), *Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Regional and Global Security*, Cham 2018, p. 243; B. Scharte, "Resilience Misunderstood? Commenting on Germany's National Security Strategy," *European Journal for Security Research*, vol. 8 (2023), pp. 63-71.

5   "NATO 2022 Strategic...", para. 4.

6   "Relations with the European Union," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 3 December 2023, at https://www.nato.int/cps/in/natohq/topics_49217.htm, 24 February 2025.

7   At that time, the Western European Union (WEU) was acting for the European Union in security and defence (1992 Maastricht Treaty). In 1999, the WEU's crisis-management role was transferred to the European Union.

and 2023, NATO and the EU signed joint declarations that set out a vision for their future cooperation.[8]

Shared security threats and risks drive the synergistic cooperation between NATO and the EU. This cooperation saw considerable progress in 2014 and has intensified further since February 2022. Recent documents, such as the NATO Strategic Concept 2022,[9] the EU Strategic Compass 2022,[10] the Third Joint Declaration and two previous declarations from 2016 and 2018 on EU-NATO Cooperation, as well as the NATO 2023 Summit, further strengthen and expand the strategic partnership between NATO and the EU.

The 2023 NATO Summit emphasised that NATO and the EU would continue to strengthen their cooperation on strategic communication, including the fight against disinformation, countering hybrid and cyber threats, cooperation on resilience and the protection of critical infrastructure.[11] This is a critical undertaking given the increasingly complex and interconnected security environment.

NATO and the EU share a common interest in maintaining peace and security in Europe. The current security environment has heightened the need for societies to be prepared for and resilient to disruptions. Modern societies are complex and interdependent, meaning that a disruption in one part of the system can trigger cascading effects throughout. For example, a cyber-attack on a power grid could result in widespread power outages. In response, NATO and the EU have taken measures to address these vulnerabilities and enhance resilience.[12]

The concept of resilience is becoming increasingly important in the context of security. As the world becomes more interconnected and complex, the ability of countries and alliances to withstand and recover from attacks is essential. Strengthening resilience through civil preparedness forms the basis of both NATO and EU strategies to counter security threats.[13] Their resilience strategies are key to ensuring the security of their members.

What does resilience through civil preparedness mean in Alliance and EU strategies and policies?

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[8]   "EU-NATO Joint Declaration," *European Council*, 8 July 2016, at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/07/08/eu-nato-joint-declaration/, 24 February 2025; "Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation," *European Council*, 10 July 2018, at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/07/10/eu-nato-joint-declaration/, 24 February 2025; "Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation," *European Council*, 10 January 2023, at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/01/10/eu-nato-joint-declaration-10-january-2023/, 24 February 2025.

[9]   "NATO 2022 Strategic…", para. 43.

[10]   European External Action Service, *Strategic Compass for Security and Defence*, Brussels 2022.

[11]   "Vilnius Summit Communiqué," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 11 July 2023, paras 73-74, at https://www.nato.int/cps/ge/natohq/official_texts_217320.htm, 24 February 2025.

[12]   "Relations with the European…".

[13]   A. Jacuch, "Countering Hybrid Threats: Resilience in the EU and NATO's Strategies," *The Copernicus Journal of Political Studies*, vol. 1 (2020), pp. 5-26.

2. TRACING NATO'S RESILIENCE AND CIVIL PREPAREDNESS TRANSFORMATION

While publications explore NATO's military structure and capabilities, research addressing the evolution of its civil preparedness over the past 75 years remains scarce. This section aims to fill this gap by examining NATO's civil structures and capabilities, including its civil preparedness efforts that contribute to strengthening resilience against security threats.

Notably, building resilience is not a new mission for NATO. Article 3 of the Washington Treaty[14] clearly states that all Allies have an obligation to develop and maintain the capacity to resist armed attack, which goes beyond military forces. Resilience, understood as the ability to withstand and recover from disruptions, goes beyond military forces and requires robust civil preparedness. This commitment dates back to the 1950s, when NATO actively developed policies and plans for civil preparedness. They established eight civil wartime agencies, each tasked with coordinating specific aspects of a crisis or war, ranging from industrial resource allocation and oil supplies to food production, civil transportation, workforce management and refugee management. These structures demonstrate NATO's longstanding understanding that national security requires not only strong militaries, but also resilient societies.

Early NATO boasted a robust civil preparedness network, staffed by over 1,400 experts and resources in each member capital. However, the post-Cold War era led to its partial dismantling as a 'peace dividend'. By the time of the Crimea annexation in 2014, funding and legal mandates for civil preparedness had dried up in most Allied nations.[15]

Because of new threats, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO decided at their summits to respond to these threats and to enhance the Alliance's resilience while maintaining and further developing individual and collective capacity to resist any form of armed attack. NATO is committed to civil preparedness as a central pillar of Allies' resilience and a critical enabler for the Alliance's collective defence.[16]

Civil preparedness at NATO refers to the Alliance's efforts to ensure that member countries are adequately prepared to respond to a wide range of emergencies, including natural disasters, cyber-attacks, hybrid threats, kinetic threats and terrorist threats. It is part of NATO's broader approach to collective defence, which seeks to ensure that member states can protect their citizens and support military operations while responding to crises both individually and collectively. NATO's civil preparedness activities are guided by the principle of 'total defence', which means that all elements of

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[14] „The North Atlantic Treaty," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 4 April 1949, Article 3, at https://www.nato.int/cps/cn/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm, 24 February 2025.

[15] L. Meyer-Minnemann, "Resilience and Alliance Security: The Warsaw Commitment to Enhance Resilience," in *Forward Resilience: Protecting Society in an Interconnected World Working Paper Series*, Baltimore 2016.

[16] "Warsaw Summit Communiqué," North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 9 July 2016, para. 73.e, at https://www.nato.int/cps/cn/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm, 24 February 2025.

a country's society, including its civilian population, must be involved in the effort to prepare for and respond to emergencies and war. NATO works closely with national governments, as well as with international organisations, to develop and implement civil preparedness plans and exercises.

How has NATO's civil preparedness and resilience evolved since its inception, throughout the Cold War and beyond? What does civil preparedness entail today? Are there parallels to past solutions or deficiencies in the current approach? Examining the past provides key insights for navigating these crucial questions.

Beginning

In 1949, the term 'civil preparedness' was used to denote the plans and *preparations that must be made by governments in time of peace in order to ensure that the home fronts will stand the strain of war.*[17] NATO understood the need for preparedness for war in the civilian field, particularly regarding arrangements indispensable for implementing plans to reinforce Europe with forces from America, for their movement within Europe and for wartime requirements. For strategic deployments and the movement of forces, the Alliance had to have a resilient transport system, access to and control of civilian means of transport and infrastructure, as well as ocean shipping, air/inland transport and petroleum.

The early NATO structure reflected these operational requirements. It consisted of its Military Committee, Standing Group, Defence Committee and five regional planning groups, including the North Atlantic Ocean Regional Planning Group.[18] It is important to note that NATO has always regarded the reinforcement of Europe by American forces as a critical capability. In the event of a war or major NATO operation, shipping and other transport means would be in short supply.

In May 1950, in London, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) established the Planning Board for Ocean Shipping (PBOS), which was tasked with preparing plans for the mobilisation and control of merchant shipping in times of war. The PBOS controlled two wartime agencies: the Defence Shipping Authority (DSA) and the Intra-Allied Insurance Organisation (IIO).[19]

In June 1952, the Council established the Planning Board for European Inland Surface Transport (PBEIST) and the Petroleum Planning Committee. Both the PBOS and PBEIST reported to the Council and cooperated with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe and member governments. In 1955, the Civil Aviation Planning Committee was created.

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[17] "NATO – APRIL 1952 – APRIL 1957: Text of Lord Ismay's Report to the Ministerial Meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bonn May 1957," *NATO Archives*, 17 April 2001, p. 8, para. 65, at https://www.nato.int/archives/ismayrep/index.htm, 24 February 2025.

[18] "Note by the Secretary to the North Atlantic Defence Committee on Directive to the Military Committee, D.C. 1/2," *NATO Archives*, 25 October 1949, at https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/9/9/99044/DC_001_2_ENG_PDP.pdf, 24 February 2025.

[19] DES(94)2-VI: Civil Emergency Planning Documents 1952-1958," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, at https://www.nato.int/archives/tools/6.pdf, 24 February 2025.

During the Cold War, to ensure that civil resources were provided to support the Alliance, NATO agreed on the concept of eight NATO Civil Wartime Agencies (NCWAs) that would be established during a war. Two Ocean Shipping Wartime Agencies, the DSA and the IIO, were necessary to facilitate and control sealift for the deployment of allied forces. The DSA was to organise and control the ocean-going merchant ships in the NATO pool. The DSA would allocate these ships as required for military and civil support of Allies. The IIO was to insure ships against loss or damage due to war risks. During that era, both ships and ports were primarily under government control. In the event of a crisis or war, dedicated structures like the DSA and IIO were in place to facilitate the control and use of these assets. The rapid deployability of NATO forces, whether from the United States or other European members, was crucial for deterring potential threats. These plans allowed for pre-emptive reinforcement movements to Europe if the situation deemed it necessary.

Two Inland Transport War Time Agencies were the Agency for the Coordination of Inland Surface Transport in Central Europe and the Southern Europe Transport Organisation. One civil aviation-related agency was the NATO Civil Aviation Agency. Other NCWAs included the Central Supplies Agency, NATO Wartime Oil Organisation and NATO Refugee Agency. NATO developed civil preparedness further, particularly in civil defence, but also to address the needs of refugees and evacuees. In June 1952, the Committee on Civil Organisation in Time of War was established, which was responsible for coordinating and guiding the Civil Defence Committee, the Committee on Refugees and Evacuees and for addressing other matters connected with civil organisation in time of war. The Committee on Refugees and Evacuees was responsible for controlling and managing the movement of persons in wartime.[20] The Committee on Wartime Commodity Problems was responsible for estimating the requirements and availabilities of the more important commodities during wartime and for making recommendations and plans as appropriate.[21] In 1952, the Food and Agriculture Planning Committee, the Coal and Steel Planning Committee, the Industrial Raw Materials Planning Committee and the Expert Working Group on Manpower were also set up. In 1954, the Defence Production Committee and the Medical Committee were established.[22] Those robust civil structures were developing resilience through civil preparedness, closely cooperating with one another.

The transport committees were the first three areas of civil preparedness studied by NATO allies. These three transport and other NATO committees still exist today; however, their naming, tasks and structures have been adapted to meet ever-changing security challenges.

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[20]　"Working Group on Civil Organisation in Time of War, Progress Report by the Chairman, C-M(52)101, 1952," *NATO Archives*, at https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/2/2/227756/AC_98-D_10_ENG.pdf, 24 February 2025.

[21]　"History of the Study of International Organisation of Supply in Time of War, AC/98-D/10," 1956, *NATO Archives Online*, at https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/2/2/227756/AC_98-D_10_ENG.pdf, 24 February 2025.

[22]　"DES(94)2-VI: Civil Emergency...".

Until 2016

NATO regarded civil preparedness as a foundation for civil support in planning and conducting NATO operations and a catalyst for enhancing national resilience against all hazards, including the protection of populations and critical infrastructure, as a platform for cooperation with partner nations and a forum for engaging with other international organisations.

The Civil War Time Agencies were put in dormant status and finally disbanded in early 2000.[23] In 2000, the NAC defined five roles for civil preparedness, which are: (1) civil support for Alliance military operations under Article 5; (2) support for non-Article 5 crisis response operations; (3) support for national authorities in civil emergencies; (4) support for national authorities in the protection of the population against the effects of weapons of mass destruction; and (5) cooperation with partner nations.[24] These five roles continue to be valid today. However, alongside the decisions made at the recent NATO summits, NATO's focus has shifted towards renewed enhanced resilience through civil preparedness.

Today, the security environment has become even more demanding because of globalisation. Most infrastructure, assets and services are privately owned. The outsourcing of non-combatant military tasks has become the norm and, as a result, the dependence of the armed forces on the availability of civilian resources has increased.

In 2000, the NATO civil preparedness structures included the Civil Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC) and four planning groups: (1) the Transport Group with Ocean Shipping, Inland Surface Transport and Aviation; (2) the Joint Health, Agriculture and Food Group; (3) the Industrial Resources and Communications Services Group; and (4) the Civil Protection Group.

The planning groups have established and maintained their pools of international experts from different industries, academia and administration. The experts advise at any stage of crisis management on the civilian aspects of crises and the effective use of civilian capabilities, support civil-military planning and the development of programmes and concepts, training and exercise.

At the Warsaw Summit, along with military enforcement, NATO called for improving civil preparedness, especially in building resilience in areas that are critical for NATO's collective defence. NATO has agreed baseline requirements for resilience in strategic sectors such as continuity of government, energy, population movements, food and water resources, mass casualties, civilian communications and transport.[25]

NATO's civil experts contribute to the development of resilience requirements, evaluation criteria, guidelines and analyses. Civil preparedness/resilience-related questions

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[23]   A. Jacuch, "Countering Hybrid Threats…", p. 13.

[24]   "Backgrounder: NATO's Role in Civil Emergency Planning," *NATO Public Diplomacy Division*, Brussels 2006, at https://www.strateskealternative.rs/wp-content/uploads/NATOs-Role-in-Civil-Emergency-Planning.pdf, 24 February 2025.

[25]   Ibid., pp. 14-15.

based on the guidelines were incorporated into the Defence Planning Capability Survey. This highlights the importance of concerted civil and military planning for NATO and its members.[26]

Another mechanism is the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC), which is NATO's principal response mechanism in the event of a natural or human-made disaster and CBRN incident. It acts as a focal point for disaster relief coordination among Alliance members and partner countries, as well as in countries where NATO participates in military operations and missions.[27]

Until 2022, NATO's structure responsible for civil preparedness included the CEPC and planning groups covering eight functional areas: transport (including ocean shipping, inland surface transport and civil aviation), health, agriculture and food, industrial resources, communication services and civil protection.

NATO resilience today

The actions of a potential aggressor – such as cyber-attacks, disinformation, hybrid attacks, kinetic attacks, conventional warfare or the use of weapons of mass destruction – could disrupt the functioning of government bodies, incite public unrest and interrupt essential services for the population. These actions could also hinder civil support for military operations. To mitigate these risks, it is essential to have a plan in place to ensure the continuity of government, critical infrastructure and services.

In 2022, the CEPC's functions and roles were absorbed by the Resilience Committee (RC).[28] Now, NATO's advisory body for resilience and civil preparedness (the RC) provides strategic and policy direction, planning guidance and oversees the coordination of NATO's resilience activities, aligning with the 2021 Enhanced Resilience Commitment,[29] NATO Agenda 2030 and the Strategic Concept 2022. These initiatives underscore the critical role of individual and collective defence against the full spectrum of conventional, non-conventional and hybrid threats. Each NATO member country needs to be resilient against security threats. *Resilience is both a national responsibility and a collective commitment rooted in Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty.*[30]

The RC guides NATO's resilience efforts and oversees a cyclical process that establishes, assesses and monitors resilience objectives, ensuring alignment with national goals and implementation plans. The Committee offers a unified perspective, encompassing both governmental and societal aspects of resilience. It collaborates with military authorities and other relevant NATO committees, providing crucial political-military

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[26]   Ibid., p. 15.

[27]   A. Jacuch, "Disaster Response Mechanisms in EU and NATO," *Przegląd Europejski*, vol. 3 (2019), pp. 67-81.

[28]   "Resilience Committee," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 7 October 2022, at 24 February 2025.

[29]   "Strengthened Resilience Commitment," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 14 June 2021, at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_185340.htm, 24 February 2025.

[30]   "Resilience Committee"...

advice and integrating resilience considerations into defence planning, operations and activities. Additionally, it oversees the EADRCC. The Committee fosters connections with partner nations, international organisations, industry partners and other stakeholders, creating a robust international network for collective resilience. The work of the RC is supported by six dedicated planning groups: (1) the Civil Communications Planning Group (CCPG); (2) the Civil Protection Group (CPG); (3) the Energy Planning Group (EPG); (4) the Food and Agriculture Planning Group (FAPG); (5) the Joint Health Group (JHG); and (6) the Transport Group (TG). These groups continue to maintain their pools of subject matter experts from government, industry and academia.

At the 2016 Warsaw Summit,[31] NATO agreed on the seven baseline requirements for national resilience against which Allies can measure and strengthen their level of preparedness: (1) assured continuity of government and critical government services; (2) resilient energy supplies; (3) the ability to deal effectively with the uncontrolled movement of people and to de-conflict these movements from NATO's military deployments; (4) resilient food and water resources; (5) the ability to deal with mass casualties and disruptive health crises; (6) resilient civil communications systems; and (7) resilient transport systems.[32] The baseline requirements function as both guidelines and evaluation tools, aligning with the broader NATO Defence Planning Process.

Evaluating a country's resilience requires considering diverse scenarios and effectively allocating resources, capabilities, continuity plans, delegated authority, succession protocols and prioritised access to critical infrastructure and services.

Strong civil preparedness is key to NATO's resilience. It requires effective resource management, adequate budgets and efficient allocation of personnel, equipment and supplies. Collaboration mechanisms between the public and private sectors are crucial. Maintaining accurate situational awareness through regular risk assessments and actively sharing threat information is essential. Coordinating national civil and military defence plans, deconflicting potential competing demands for civilian resources and establishing logistical and material support mechanisms for national and allied militaries are vital. Regular joint operations, training and exercises involving government bodies, the military, private sectors and service providers further enhance preparedness.

Additionally, essential legal provisions allowing national authorities to take control of critical functions, capabilities and services in emergencies are crucial. These provisions should enable requisitioning, prioritising and deconflicting resources like infrastructure, transportation, telecommunications, energy, medical services, water and food. Member states need to conduct regular risk assessments and implement corresponding measures to protect critical infrastructure and assets from destruction, sabotage or unauthorised use.

The RC and its six planning groups' responsibilities correspond to the seven NATO resilience baseline requirements: the CCPG oversees resilience in the communications

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[31]   "Commitment to Enhance Resilience," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 8 July 2016, at https://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/official_texts_133180.htm, 24 February 2025.

[32]   "Resilience, Civil Preparedness…".

sector; the CPG focuses on continuity of government and the ability to deal effectively with uncontrolled movement of people; the EPG covers resilient energy supplies; the FAPG addresses resilience issues in the food and water sector; the JHG deals with mass casualties and health crises; and the TG, operating in three modal groups – inland surface transport, ocean shipping and civil aviation – supports the resilience of civil transport systems.

Resilience, a property of a system that enables it to withstand shocks and disruptions and recover quickly, is crucial for NATO in the face of growing threats. In this context, resilience refers to the Alliance's ability to maintain its essential functions and protect its members from a wide range of threats, including armed attacks, hybrid warfare and cyber-attacks. Critical infrastructure, such as energy, transportation and communication networks, along with existing contingency plans, are important contributors. Moreover, these factors must be continually updated to ensure NATO's readiness for any threat. By strengthening its resilience, NATO can better deter aggression and protect its members.

3. EU POLICY AND MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE

State and non-state actors continually refine their tactics, techniques and procedures, aiming to exploit vulnerabilities through means like irregular migration, lawfare and economic/energy coercion. In response, the EU strengthens its resilience and countermeasures against hybrid threats, cyber-attacks and foreign information manipulation.

Resilience

The European Commission's Strategic Foresight Report declares resilience as *the new compass for EU policies.* It defines resilience as the *ability not only to withstand and cope with challenges, but also to undergo transitions in a sustainable, fair, and democratic manner.*[33] Resilience has become a central pillar of EU initiatives, exemplified by the recovery plan and the Council Recommendation on coordinated critical infrastructure resilience.[34] It is further bolstered by updates to directives like the Critical Entities Resilience Directive (CER),[35] which covers 11 sectors (including energy, digital, space, health, transport and water), in addition to the NIS2 Directive. These directives emphasise the ongoing need for member states to develop individual measures

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[33]   European Commission, *2020 Strategic Foresight Report: Charting the Course towards a More Resilient Europe*, Brussels 2020, p. 2.

[34]   "Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on a Union-Wide Coordinated Approach to Strengthen the Resilience of Critical Infrastructure," *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 20/1 (2023), p. 1.

[35]   "Directive (EU) 2022/2557 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on the Resilience of Critical Entities and Repealing Council Directive 2008/114/EC," *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 333/164 (2022).

and strategies for enhancing resilience against evolving threats. The CER puts forward a clear set of obligations for member states and critical entities, as well as mechanisms for cooperation and support at EU level.

The EU takes steps to bolster its resilience against internal and external threats through various initiatives, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP),[36] Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)[37] and the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence.[38]

The CSDP, established in 1999, serves as the foundation for security and defence cooperation. It empowers the EU to prevent and manage conflicts, contribute to international peace and deploy military and civilian missions for humanitarian assistance and crisis management.

PESCO, launched in 2017, deepens defence cooperation through collaborative projects such as developing new military capabilities and enhancing interoperability between EU forces. Since the Ukraine war, the number of approved PESCO projects has surged to 68, reflecting a renewed focus on bolstering armed forces, acquiring advanced weaponry and enhancing cyber and hybrid warfare capabilities.

The Strategic Compass, adopted in 2022, charts the EU's security and defence strategy for the next decade. Focused on four key areas – crisis management, resilience, defence capabilities and partnerships – it advocates adapting military forces and civilian capacities to act swiftly, safeguard European values and protect the Union and its citizens by strengthening societal and economic resilience, safeguarding critical infrastructure and upholding democratic processes.

These initiatives play a crucial role in strengthening the EU's resilience in multiple ways. The CSDP provides a framework for developing and deploying EU-specific military capabilities. PESCO fosters deeper cooperation in specific areas, while the EU Strategic Compass outlines a roadmap for building the necessary capabilities to address existing and emerging threats.

The Compass emphasises bolstering societies, protecting critical infrastructure and safeguarding democratic processes. Additionally, the EU Strategic Foresight Report highlights the importance of anticipating future developments and tailoring policies to enhance resilience across social, economic, geopolitical, green and digital dimensions.

By drawing lessons from past challenges and anticipating future developments, the EU strives to strike a balance between current and future needs. These initiatives, which are constantly evaluated and adapted, play a vital role in building a more resilient Europe.

To strengthen resilience, the EU develops a comprehensive 'Hybrid Toolbox' that offers a coordinated response to hybrid campaigns, encompassing preventive, cooperative

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[36] "Implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy — Annual Report 2022," *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 214/54 (2023).

[37] *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (PESCO), at https://www.pesco.europa.eu/, 24 February 2025.

[38] European External Action Service, *Strategic Compass...*

and recovery measures. The EU Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) and Hybrid Fusion Cell provide vital foresight and situational awareness.

The 2020 EU Security Union Strategy[39] underlines the crucial role of resilience in preventing and protecting against hybrid threats. Recognising the need for tracking and measuring progress, the EU has developed sectoral hybrid resilience baselines for member states and institutions. This process began by identifying existing and proposed EU legislation and policy documents containing such baselines. So far, considerable progress has been made, with 53 baseline elements identified to enhance resilience and counter hybrid threats.[40]

The EU Commission developed a conceptual framework for resilience and a corresponding dashboard with indicators for four key dimensions: social and economic, green, digital and geopolitical. This tool, informed by strategic foresight, helps measure progress towards EU goals and identify areas for improvement. It serves as a self--assessment guide for member states and supports the evaluation of the EU's recovery and resilience strategy. The dashboard uses quantitative indicators aligned with other monitoring tools. These indicators highlight vulnerabilities (weaknesses) and capacities (strengths) to manage crises and transitions. Member states can self-assess and guide policy actions using this relative assessment tool, which is regularly updated and complemented by synthesised resilience indices. These indices should be considered alongside the full set of detailed indicators in the dashboards.[41]

Cybersecurity

Digital technologies and innovations across various sectors – from the economy and government to society as a whole – rely heavily on both cybersecurity and cyber resilience to operate securely. These measures protect against cyber-attacks and ensure business continuity, even if attacks occur. Cyber resilience goes beyond mere prevention; it encompasses the ability to detect, respond to and recover from cyber-attacks swiftly and effectively.

The EU takes an active role in promoting cybersecurity and cyber resilience through several initiatives: the Network and Information Security Directive (NIS Directive)[42], adopted in 2016, which establishes baseline cybersecurity requirements for critical sectors; the EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade (2020),[43]

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[39]   European Commission, *Communication from the Commission on the EU Security Union Strategy*, Brussels 2020.

[40]   European Commission, "Hybrid Threats – A Comprehensive Resilience Ecosystem," *Publications Office of the European Union*, Luxemburg 2023.

[41]   European Commission, *Resilience Dashboards for the Social and Economic, Green, Digital, and Geopolitical Dimensions*, Brussels 2021.

[42]   "Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 Concerning Measures for a High Common Level of Security of Network and Information Systems across the Union," *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 194/1 (2016).

[43]   European Commission, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade*, Brussels 2020.

outlining a long-term vision for strengthening cybersecurity across the EU; and the NIS 2 Directive (2023),[44] expanding the scope and requirements of the original NIS Directive.

Significant steps in bolstering cyber resilience across Europe include the European Cyber Resilience Act (CRA)[45] and the Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA)[46]. The CRA sets cybersecurity requirements for hardware and software products, aiming to build security from the ground up. In July 2023, the EU Council amended provisions of the CRA and agreed on a common position ('negotiating mandate') to the presidency to enter negotiations with the European Parliament ('trilogues') on the final version of the proposed legislation.[47] The DORA creates a regulatory framework for financial entities and ICT service providers to manage digital operational risks, including cyber threats. These requirements are consistent across all EU member states. The regulation will be enforced from January 17, 2025, for relevant financial entities and ICT third-party service providers.[48]

The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA)[49] is instrumental in implementing these initiatives. They support EU member states and the private sector in achieving higher levels of cybersecurity and cyber resilience. Alongside the Computer Emergency Response Team CERT-EU,[50] ENISA develops best practices that enhance overall attack resilience.[51]

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[44]   "Measures for a High Common Level of Cybersecurity across the Union, Amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 and Directive (EU) 2018/1972, and Repealing Directive (EU) 2016/1148 (NIS 2 Directive), DIRECTIVE (EU) 2022/2555," 14 December 2022.

[45]   European Commission, *Proposal for a Regulation of The European Parliament and of the Council on Horizontal Cybersecurity Requirements for Products with Digital Elements and Amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020*, Brussels 2022.

[46]   "Regulation (EU) 2022/2554 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 December 2022 on Digital Operational Resilience for the Financial Sector and Amending Regulations (EC) No 1060/2009, (EU) No 648/2012, (EU) No 600/2014, (EU) No 909/2014 and (EU) 2016/1011," *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 333/1 (2022).

[47]   "Cyber Resilience Act: Member States Agree Common Position on Security Requirements for Digital Products," *Council of the European Union*, 19 July 2023, at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/07/19/cyber-resilience-act-member-states-agree-common-position-on-security-requirements-for-digital-products/, 24 February 2025.

[48]   *DORA*, please see at: *Digital Operational Resilience Act (DORA)*, at https://www.dora-info.eu/, 24 February 2025.

[49]   Please read more about ENISA at *European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA)*, at https://www.enisa.europa.eu/, 24 February 2025.

[50]   Please read more about CERT-EU on *Computer Emergency Response Team European Union (CERT-EU)*, at https://cert.europa.eu/about-us, 24 February 2025.

[51]   „Boosting your Organisation's Cyber Resilience: Joint Publication 22-01," *European Union Agency for Cybersecurity*, 14 February 2022, at https://www.enisa.europa.eu/publications/boosting-your-organisations-cyber-resilience, 24 February 2025.

Resilience to Disinformation

The EU defines disinformation as any verifiably false or misleading information created, presented and disseminated deliberately to cause harm, deceive the public and undermine trust in political leadership. Disinformation is meant to deceive. It is politically motivated messaging that serves to take power over the state, society and the economy. Disinformation is purposeful and not necessarily composed of outright lies or fabrications. It can consist of mostly facts stripped of context or blended with falsehoods to support the intended message. It is always part of a larger plan or agenda.[52] The author of the presented article earlier substantiated that: *the thesis that the EU, NATO, and their members countries must not only strengthen the resilience of their infrastructures and services, governance, and defence, but – first and foremost – must build their collective and individual disinformation resilience that the reach and impact of disinformation are reduced to a minimum.*[53]

The EU has adopted a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to counter disinformation, focusing on both reactive measures like sanctions and initiatives such as promoting media literacy and information sharing. The EU focuses on combating Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI), especially in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.[54] To limit the spread of FIMI, the EU has adopted measures such as sanctioning Russia's war propaganda instruments, *Russia Today* and *Sputnik*. This involves exposing Russia's use of FIMI and analysing narratives related to the war. In February 2023, the EU established a FIMI Information Sharing and Analysis Centre (FIMI-ISAC) to facilitate information exchange and collaboration with partners.[55] The EU develops tools to prevent, deter and respond to FIMI, including imposing costs on perpetrators. These tools include the EU Code of Practice on Disinformation, which was updated in 2022 with stronger commitments and monitoring systems. Signatories include online platforms, advertisers, researchers and civil society organisations.[56] The EU Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online, an agreement with IT companies, focuses on tackling online hate speech and

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[52] D. Jackson, "Issue Brief: Distinguishing Disinformation from Propaganda, Misinformation, and 'Fake News,'" *National Endowment for Democracy*, 17 October 2017, at https://www.ned.org/issue-brief-distinguishing-disinformation-from-propaganda-misinformation-and-fake-news/, 24 February 2025.

[53] A. Jacuch, "The Blurred Lines of Peace and War – An Analysis of Information Operations Used by the Russian Federation in CEE," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2022), pp. 157-180.

[54] "1ˢᵗ EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats," *European Union External Action*, 7 February 2023, at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/1st-eeas-report-foreign-information-manipulation-and-interference-threats_en, 24 February 2025.

[55] *FIMI-ISAC*, please see at *Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference – Information Sharing and Analysis Centre (FIMI-ISAC)*, at https://fimi-isac.org/index.html, 24 February 2025.

[56] "The 2022 Code of Practice on Disinformation," *European Commission*, 16 June 2022, at https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/code-practice-disinformation, 24 February 2025.

disinformation.[57] The European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO), which supports fact-checkers and researchers, created dedicated task forces for the Ukraine war and the 2024 elections.[58] There are additional measures on electoral resilience and guidelines for educators to help them tackle disinformation and promote digital literacy.

CONCLUSIONS

NATO and the EU are facing the greatest security challenges since the end of the Cold War. Allies are implementing the most significant strengthening of their common defence capabilities. At the July 2016 Alliance meeting in Warsaw, NATO leaders agreed on an unprecedented 'commitment to greater resilience', including civil preparedness.

Civil preparedness is a central pillar of Allies' resilience and a critical enabler for Alliance collective defence. While this remains a national responsibility, NATO can support Allies in assessing and, upon request, enhancing their civil preparedness.[59]

During the war, NATO forces will be dependent on trained personnel, infrastructure, bases, facilities, material and supplies that are in being and accessible to them in the early stages. Europe will heavily rely on overseas military resources for its support. Such support requires prepared plans and an advanced level of civil preparedness.

Resilience is an important concept in both EU and NATO policy. It refers to the ability of an individual, community or organisation to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses. In the context of security, resilience denotes the capacity of a country or alliance to endure and recover from attacks, whether physical or cyber.

NATO's resilience strategy is based on the following principles: prevention, preparedness and recovery. NATO seeks to prevent attacks by deterring potential adversaries and by strengthening the resilience of its members. Members are prepared to respond to attacks, both through military means and through civil preparedness measures, and they are committed to recovering from attacks as quickly as possible. NATO has consistently planned for civil preparedness measures to protect civilian populations and support military operations across diverse scenarios.

The EU's resilience strategy is similar to NATO's, but it is based on the following pillars: physical resilience, cyber resilience, social resilience and economic resilience, which refers to the ability of economies to withstand attacks.

The NATO Vilnius Summit agreed to the 2023 Alliance Resilience Objectives, aiming to strengthen NATO and Allied preparedness against strategic shocks and

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[57]   "Commission Advances towards an Enhanced Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online," *European Commission*, 12 October 2023, at https://malta.representation.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-advances-towards-enhanced-code-conduct-countering-illegal-hate-speech-online-2023-10-12_en, 24 February 2025.

[58]   *EDMO*, please see at: *European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)*, at https://edmo.eu/, 24 February 2025.

[59]   "Warsaw Summit…", para. 73.

disruptions. In pursuit of this objective, NATO collaborates with the EU.[60] In the frame of NATO-EU cooperation on resilience, the EU and NATO have established a structured dialogue designed to improve information sharing and coordination. In 2023, they launched a joint task force on the resilience of critical infrastructure.[61] This task force is working to identify and mitigate risks to critical infrastructure, such as energy, transport and digital infrastructure, as well asor to promote societal resilience. This includes supporting efforts to improve disaster preparedness and response and to build resilience to cyber-attacks.[62] The third EU-NATO Joint Declaration refers to strengthening cooperation in existing areas and expanding and deepening cooperation to address, inter alia, resilience issues, the protection of critical infrastructures, as well as foreign information manipulation and interference.[63]

Both NATO and the EU prioritise ensuring the continuity of essential infrastructure and services for their populations and support military operations. To achieve this, they collaborate on strengthening resilience and civil preparedness, focusing on critical sectors such as energy, transport, digital infrastructure and space. Both organisations establish annual resilience targets for member states and conduct audits to assess progress.

Recognising the growing importance of civil preparedness, they share information and best practices in areas such as emergency planning, disaster response and risk management. This cooperation includes joint exercises and training, exemplified by the EU's participation in NATO's Cyber Coalition 22 exercise.[64]

The EU-NATO Task Force's June 2023 final assessment identified key recommendations for further enhancing critical infrastructure resilience. These include **leveraging existing frameworks** like NATO's seven baseline requirements and the EU's resilience measures, alongside **sharing best practices and fostering synergies.** The EU--NATO Structured Dialogue on Resilience will oversee the implementation of these recommendations.[65]

The above findings reinforce the theoretical argument that exploring how NATO and EU policies work to enhance resilience through civilian preparedness can yield benefits. The two organisations can significantly strengthen European security in the face of both current and emerging threats. Despite the annual definition of resilience targets for member states by both NATO and the EU, the question remains: how effectively do

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[60] "Vilnius Summit...", para. 61.

[61] "Launch of the EU-NATO Task Force: Strengthening Our Resilience and Protection of Critical Infrastructure," *European Commission*, 16 March 2023, at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/et/statement_23_1705, 24 February 2025.

[62] "EU-NATO Task Force: Final Assessment Report on Strengthening Our Resilience and Protection of Critical Infrastructure," *European Commission*, 29 June 2023, at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3564, 24 February 2025.

[63] "Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation," *European Council*, 10 January 2023, para. 12.

[64] "NATO's Flagship Cyber Defence Exercise Kicks Off in Estonia," Allied Command Transformation, 28 November 2022, at https://www.act.nato.int/article/natos-flagship-cyber-defence-exercise-kicks-off-in-estonia/, 24 February 2025.

[65] "EU-NATO Task Force...".

these assessment processes measure the levels of resilience achieved? Exploring this question is crucial to ensuring the effectiveness of these efforts and the security of Europe.

Shared European values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, combined with strong economic and political ties between member states, create fertile ground for a unified NATO-EU resilience strategy. This is further emphasised by the pressing security challenges facing Europe – from Russia to the ever-present threats of terrorism, disinformation, cyber-attacks and migration. These common threats and challenges necessitate a collaborative approach.

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