

*Call for Papers:*

Defence Alliances and Partnerships  
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**Title:**

“Alliance Cohesion Between War and Peace: Ways Forward for NATO”

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**Abstract:**

While united in initial responses to Putin’s military aggression in Ukraine, NATO members face challenges as the Alliance moves forward with adapting to a significantly worsened security environment in Europe in the long term. Although Russia’s invasion of Ukraine provided NATO members with a priority in terms of a security threat, this paper argues that external factors are not sufficient to maintain alliance cohesion. It needs to be cultivated on the inside as well.

This paper maps out challenges to NATO’s cohesion resulting from the war in Ukraine. This paper adopts a behavioral definition of alliance cohesion that combines both political and military dimensions. This understanding of alliance cohesion allows for measuring not only effectiveness with which Allies coordinate their political objectives, but also the strategies necessary to achieve those objectives. To examine the strength of alliance cohesion, the paper further identifies four factors that influence cohesion: security threats, norms, institutions, and leadership. It proceeds with three scenarios based on the developments in Ukraine (Ukraine wins, loses, or war enters a stalemate) to observe variations in key cohesion factors and determine the quality of cohesion at NATO.

This paper argues that alliance cohesion suffers the most during security crises. At the time of major war at NATO’s doorstep, current tensions already hint at the future problems posed by consensual decision-making, a variable intensity of the Russian threat across the alliance, and the economic costs of transitioning to higher military expenditures and armaments industry production.

In emphasizing coordination processes, this paper focuses on the interplay between internal and external alliance cohesion factors. This is illustrated by the heightened risks associated with balancing national and collective defense interests, frictions between transatlantic leadership and European continental powers regarding Russia’s post-war role, and the tendency of political elites to use NATO as a scapegoat for domestic gains. Coupled with China’s geopolitical interests to

split the United States and European countries, since the decline of American-led alliances can give way to a China-dominated global order and its spheres of influence, these tensions can interfere with NATO countries' shared understanding of Article 5 – the main source of alliance cohesion. Yet cultivating NATO's cohesion will remain crucial to signal credible deterrence to Russia.

TABLE: Three scenarios, three cohesions

	<b>Scenario I: Ukraine wins</b>	<b>Scenario II: Ukraine loses</b>	<b>Scenario III: Stalemate</b>
<b>THREATS</b> a. Russia b. MENA c. China	+	–	=/–
<b>INSTITUTIONS</b> a. Political adaptation b. Military adaptation c. Burden-sharing d. NATO-EU relations	=	+	=/+
<b>NORMS</b> a. National populism/political extremism b. Turkey, United States	+	=/+	–
<b>LEADERSHIP</b> a. Alliance-wide (next Secretary General) b. National (United States, CEE and Baltic countries, France, Germany)	+	=/–	–
<b>NATO COHESION</b>	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Fragmented</b>	<b>Weak</b>

Indication of preferred working group:

- War Studies
- Military History
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