

## NATO'S POLICY ON CIVIL RESILIENCE: ADDED VALUE FOR SMALL STATES?

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National resilience and civil defence have re-entered NATO vernacular and have become NATO policy following the annexation of Crimea in 2014. As the Alliance moves away from out of area missions and towards territorial defence, member states will have to adjust their domestic civil defence planning and national resilience in line with NATO requirements.

### Key findings

- The altered European security environment has made national resilience, and by extension civil defence, part of NATO policy.
- As the foremost European security organization NATO is placed to become a regional standard setter in protection and resilience of civilian infrastructure.
- Smaller NATO members are at a disadvantage compared to larger states in implementing NATO policy on resilience, but they can draw on external strength from NATO mechanisms.

### Executive summary

Following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 NATO and its partner nations have been compelled to revise its thinking and defence planning vis-à-vis the altered European security environment. NATO has returned to its core function of safeguarding the territorial integrity of its member states through credible deterrence and defence and to do so effectively NATO has identified the protection and resilience of civilian infrastructure of its member states as a key goal.

An integral part of that policy is to achieve agreed Alliance wide requirements for national resilience by improving civil preparedness in fields such as continuity of government and the security of critical civilian infrastructure. While civil preparedness is a national responsibility NATO has an important role to play as the forum of national decision making on what a NATO policy on civil preparedness should look like; what criteria should be used and what support NATO can provide in assessing and facilitating national progress towards increased civilian resilience.

### Analysis

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As Russia asserts itself as a regional hegemon within the post-Soviet space its NATO Baltic neighbours in the west have every reason to be concerned. The 2008 Georgia war and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 have shown that Russia is not above redrawing European borders to meet its political objectives.

The commitment of Alliance members to collective defence is enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, and while instrumental in the Alliance future existence that commitment is worthless without credible deterrence and means to counter aggression if deterrence fails. Therefore, equally important, Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty commits NATO members to maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack through self-help and mutual aid. It is important to note that capacity does not only refer to military hardware and boots on the ground but also the resilience of a society to withstand the shocks of conflict. After all, society is what the military is there to protect, while at the same time relying on its support to function properly.

In NATO terminology resilience is the combination of civil preparedness and military capacity and the effectiveness of society to recover after a major shock. Following the Warsaw summit of 2016, NATO heads of state issued a joint commitment to enhance resilience, noting its fundamental importance for credible deterrence and defence against both military and non-military security challenges, such as natural disasters and failure of critical infrastructure.

The communiqué requires NATO to participate, when appropriate, with partner states and other international bodies, in particular the European Union, but in line with Article 3 the primary responsibility for enhancing societal resilience Alliance-wide rests with the individual members. They are encouraged to apply a whole of government approach and to work with the private sector in order to protect and maintain critical civilian capabilities. Going further than simply setting up a division of labour between NATO the organization and its members, the communiqué states that civil preparedness is above all a national responsibility and that it is up to individual member states to ensure adequate support of civilian resources to national and NATO military forces.

Already in February that year a NATO Defence Minister Meeting approved baseline requirements as benchmarks against which to assess the state of civil preparedness among member states. These baselines are 1) assured continuity of government and critical government services, 2) resilient energy supplies, 3) ability to deal effectively with uncontrolled movement of people, 4) resilient food and water resources, 5) ability to deal with mass casualties, 6) resilient civil communication system, and 7) resilient civil transportation system. It follows that although not legally binding the members have made a political pledge to meet certain measurable standards and make needed improvements if needed.

### The implication for small NATO member states

Small states within NATO constitute a varied group that differ in population size, economic output and geographical location. As a consequence, small states within the Alliance – as the larger states – have different security priorities at heart. Small states, however, rely to a higher degree than larger states on international organizations as a gateway for information, forum for best practice



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learning, relationship building and coordination with other states.<sup>1</sup> For smaller states mechanisms exist within the Alliance to draw on to improve civil preparedness and societal resilience.

The Civil Emergency Planning Committee (CEPC), supported by NATO international staff, is the main decision body within NATO on matters of civil defence. Already in 2017 CEPC sent all member states resilience guidelines and an initial evaluation criterion, in the form of a questionnaire, for the individual member to assess its own strengths and weaknesses across the 7 baseline requirements. The CEPC approach is pedagogical and draws on measurable metrics. Answers to the evaluation criteria are compiled in a data bank of best practice which member states can access. However, members are also encouraged to share with CEPC the problems and obstacles that arose while implementing the baseline requirements. In addition, CEPC has a pool of experts able to provide assistance and advice to governments about how to improve their performance within particular baseline requirements.<sup>2</sup>

As for the initial criterion, by the end of 2017 all 29-member states had completed their self-evaluation and handed in the results to relevant NATO bodies for the compilation of a data bank of best practices and refinement of the criterion for 2018.<sup>3</sup> For small states that have limited resources and a small pool of experts NATO's work on resilience and civil preparedness provides a valuable external source of strength which they can draw on to make up for their own internal weaknesses.

### The way ahead

NATO is fast becoming a regional norm setter in resilience and civil defence planning with CEPC at the apex of decision making. Implementation of the baseline requirements and their complementary role vis-à-vis domestic civil defence mechanisms should have high priority within public administration of small NATO members. To further that work small states should:

- Ensure adequate representation and full participation in the work of CEPC.
- Apply a government wide approach to the implementation of the baseline requirements. This includes relevant stakeholders within different government ministries and agencies.
- Participate in NATO exercises to test stress points in the national civil defence system.
- Include civil defence in national defence planning and training.

### Conclusion

In face of the changing security environment in Europe resilience of society, and by extension civil defence, has become part of NATO policy and fundamental in credible Alliance deterrence. However, maintaining and strengthening resilience remains national responsibility which puts comparatively higher costs on smaller Alliance members. Despite this, NATO mechanisms can be used to reduce the incurred cost as much as possible while at the same time providing smaller states with an outlet to share its own best practices with other nations.

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<sup>1</sup> Baldur Þórhallsson and Sverrir Steinsson, "The Small-State Survival Guide to Foreign Policy Success," The National Interest, Foreign Policy Experts Roundtable, 28 September 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-small-state-survival-guide-foreign-policy-success-22526?page=show>.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with NATO official 22 November 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



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