

# NATO TAKES THE FIFTH

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*Map of NATO membership. Source: Wikimedia Commons.*

**T**he purpose of the North Atlantic Treaty is “to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area” and “to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization” of its signatories.

Toward that end, Article II of the treaty that gave birth to NATO commits members of the alliance to “encourage economic collaboration.” Article III calls on members to “maintain and develop their...capacity to resist armed attack.” Article IX creates a political council and a military committee to shape the common defense. Article X allows for expansion of the alliance, which was once a club of 12 nations clustered around the Atlantic Ocean but now encompasses a wide swath of the northern hemisphere—enfolded three continents, 29 nations, 50 percent of global GDP, and 898 million people. However, the heart of the treaty and the NATO alliance is Article V, which declares: “An armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all.”

As the Cold War and the Soviet Empire melted away, Article V diminished in importance, and NATO reinvented itself

into something of a global gendarme: Between 1995 and 2011, NATO stamped out ethnic-cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo, deployed peacekeepers to those Balkan battlegrounds, marched into Afghanistan to fight al Qaeda and the Taliban, formed the basis of multinational armadas to intercept weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) on the high seas and to combat piracy, airlifted African Union peacekeepers, trained Iraqi soldiers, and prevented a Bosnia-style bloodletting in Libya. Some observers saw in these post-Cold War missions the outlines of “an expeditionary alliance” on call to intervene anywhere. Yet new threats and old enemies emerged in NATO’s backyard, forcing the alliance to return to its traditional role of deterrence.

## RUSSIA’S RECORD

The 2014 invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea may have been what finally awoke

NATO to the dangers posed by Moscow, but Vladimir Putin’s Russia had been threatening NATO interests and NATO members for more than a decade.

In 2001, for example, Russia laid claim to half the Arctic Circle, disregarding the interests of the United States, Canada, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland—NATO members all—and underlining its claims in a brazen military context: In 2008, a Russian general revealed plans to train “troops that could be engaged in Arctic combat,” adding, “Wars these days are won and lost well before they are launched.” By 2016, Russia had stood up six new bases above the Arctic Circle, opened 16 ports and 13 airfields in the region, and deployed sophisticated surface-to-air missile batteries in the Arctic.

In 2003, Russia promulgated its “escalate to de-escalate” doctrine, which rationalizes the use of nuclear weapons to

(somehow) de-escalate a conventional conflict.

In 2007, Putin called NATO expansion “a serious provocation.” Within months, Russia launched a series of cyberattacks against NATO member Estonia, after Estonia relocated a Soviet-era war memorial. Dubbed “Web War I,” the attacks crippled Estonia’s communications infrastructure; targeted the mobile-phone network, 9-1-1 equivalent, and largest bank; knocked out government websites; and raised the possibility of an Article V response.

In 2008, Russia invaded and dismembered NATO aspirant Georgia. By 2015, Russia signed a treaty of integration with South Ossetia, effectively annexing the region away from Georgia.

In 2009, in the dead of winter, Russia began using energy supplies as a weapon against

Central Europe, shutting off natural-gas flows bound for Ukraine, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Greece.

That same year, Russia’s military practiced an invasion of NATO member Poland, complete with mock nuclear strikes.

In 2010, Putin unveiled a military doctrine that identified NATO’s role outside Europe, NATO expansion, the presence of NATO military infrastructure “closer to the borders of the Russian Federation,” deployment of NATO troops “on the territories of states contiguous with the Russian Federation,” and deployment of NATO missile-defense systems as the “main external military dangers” facing Russia.

In 2014, Moscow began violating the INF Treaty, which prohibits deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles. The treaty was a building block

for East-West trust at the end of the Cold War and a cornerstone of post-Cold War stability.

That same year, Putin ordered military forces to be scrubbed of insignia and move into Ukraine, annexing Crimea in the process. Putin’s anonymous, ambiguous, asymmetrical war against Ukraine violates the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in which Moscow pledged to “respect the independence and sovereignty and existing borders of Ukraine” and “refrain from the threat or use of force,” in exchange for Ukraine surrendering its nuclear arsenal. No matter. It was “just a piece of paper,” as other dictators have said of other treaties. Some 10,000 have died in Putin’s war on Ukraine.

With Ukraine as a backdrop, Putin warned in 2014, “This country will continue to actively defend the rights of Russians, our compatriots abroad, using



*The NATO compass in front of Headquarters Allied Land Command (LANDCOM) on General Vecihi Akin Garrison in Izmir, Turkey, on March 24, 2017. Tech. Sgt. Joshua T. Jasper. Source: U.S. Air Force.*



*The greater coat of arms of Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe. The motto translates: The price of freedom is vigilance. Source: Wikimedia Commons.*

the entire range of available means.” Given that there are millions of ethnic Russians in Ukraine and the Baltics—and that Putin has reserved for himself the right to determine when, where, and whether they need to be defended—this is a recipe for something far more complicated than a new cold war.

In 2015, Putin provided diplomatic and military cover for Assad’s beastly war in Syria. Russian military forces have “bolstered the Bashar al-Assad regime, targeted moderate opposition elements, compounded human suffering, and complicated U.S. and coalition operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria,” reported U.S. Army Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, military commander of NATO.

In 2016, Putin reactivated the 1st Guards Tank Army, a large armored force based in western Russia equipped with 500 main battle tanks—the latest evidence of Russia’s rearmament under Putin. Between 2004 and 2013, Moscow increased military spending 108 percent. Russia’s 2015 military outlays

were 26-percent larger than in 2014, and 5.9 percent higher in 2016. To be sure, Putin’s military is a shell of the Red Army. But it pays to recall that his military-spending binge occurred as NATO slashed military spending. As the Brookings Institution’s Robert Kagan writes early during Russia’s rearmament, “NATO has become more benign just as Russia has become more aggressive.” Also in 2016, Russia hacked into the U.S. political system in an attempt to sway the outcome of the presidential election. Russia has conducted similar operations against the Netherlands, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Montenegro, and Britain.

Also in 2016, NATO concluded that “Russia’s aggressive actions” and “willingness to attain political goals by the threat and use of force...fundamentally challenge the alliance” and “undermine peace, security and stability across the region.”

Finally, in 2017, we learned that Russia is arming the Taliban in Afghanistan and supplying North Korea with jet fuel

(filling the void created after China cooled relations with Pyongyang).

Putin rationalizes his belligerence by arguing that NATO started it—that NATO’s eastward expansion violated agreements at the end of the Cold War. The problem with Putin’s version of history is that it doesn’t correspond with reality. As Mikhail Gorbachev himself conceded, “The topic of NATO expansion was not discussed at all.” So, the alliance didn’t double-cross its way to the Russian border. In fact, NATO grew through a transparent process that allowed East European states to pursue membership on their own volition—a process that encouraged political, institutional, and economic reforms that actually diminished tensions with post-Soviet Russia. Intent on changing the settled outcomes (and borders) of the Cold War, Putin won’t be confused by the facts.

All of this underscores why Article V is so important today.

## FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

“We put ourselves, by our own will and by necessity, into defensive alliances with countries all around the globe,” President John Kennedy reminded the American people in 1963. Regrettably, two successive administrations have failed to recognize this truth. Candidate Donald Trump called NATO “obsolete...because of the fact they don’t focus on terrorism.” He even suggested he would come to the defense of NATO members under attack—an ironclad requirement of the North Atlantic Treaty—only if they had “fulfilled their obligations to us.”

As the above litany of Russian mischief and aggression underscores, NATO is anything but obsolete. NATO’s Article V commitment



is more important today than at any time since 1991. While it's fair to ask hard questions about Europe's contribution to the common defense, those who ask such questions must also *answer* a question: Would they rather the United States face a revisionist Russia and a virulent jihadist assault on the West alone? "If we didn't have NATO today, we'd need to create it," Defense Secretary James Mattis concluded. "NATO is vital to our interests."

As to NATO and the war on terror, the only time NATO has invoked Article V was in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Ever since, the alliance has devoted military resources, diplomatic energy, economic treasure, and human life to fighting terrorism. For anyone who cared to look, NATO documents in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 affirm NATO's commitment to fighting terrorism. European and Canadian members of NATO have lost 1,046 personnel fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, and NATO members form the core of the anti-ISIS campaign.

After the election, President Donald Trump began to soften his rhetoric. "We strongly support NATO, an alliance forged through the bonds of two world wars that dethroned fascism, and a Cold War that defeated communism," he declared, adding that NATO is "no longer obsolete." However, his continued cageyness about Article V and brusque treatment of allies leaves room for doubt inside the alliance and miscalculation inside the Kremlin.

For instance, after a summit with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, Trump used his preferred medium—a tweet—to announce: "Germany owes

vast sums of money to NATO... the United States must be paid more for the powerful, and very expensive, defense it provides to Germany."

Worse, rather than an unequivocal endorsement of NATO's all-for-one clause, he cryptically noted during the 2017 NATO summit, "We will never forsake the friends who stood by our side." Doubly worse, he deleted a sentence from his NATO speech reaffirming Washington's commitment to Article V. A week later, he declared, "Absolutely, I'd be committed to Article V." Yet because his NATO summit speech was silent on Article V, that statement came across as an afterthought.

Trump's zig-zagging rhetoric suggests undependability, which is not what NATO needs.

Regrettably, less-than-fulsome support for NATO in Washington predates the Trump presidency. In 2009, President Barack Obama unilaterally pulled the plug on missile-defense plans for Europe—plans endorsed by NATO—in hopes of mollifying Moscow. Instead of planting permanent ground-based defenses in Poland and support radars in the Czech Republic, Obama chose to deploy an impermanent variant of a sea-based missile-defense system. Worse, he did so "without even informing the Polish prime minister in a timely manner," as historian George Weigel recalls. Poland's Defense Ministry called Obama's reversal "catastrophic." The Czechs angrily rejected Obama's plans as "a consolation prize."

In 2011, Obama put a time limit on America's commitment to NATO's intervention in Libya. In fact, when Washington agreed to extend operations after an urgent request from

the alliance, a NATO official emphasized that the extension of U.S. air power "expires on Monday"—a bruising metaphor for American leadership during the Obama presidency.

In 2013, after the French military requested U.S. air support in its fight against jihadists in Mali, the Obama administration sent Paris an invoice.

That same year, when Obama erased his "red line" in Syria, the French military was forced to stand down and shelve plans for punitive action against Assad.

Also in 2013, the Obama administration—ever committed to a Russian "reset," regardless of Russian behavior—withdrew the last remaining American tanks from Europe. It was the first time since 1944 that Europe was left unprotected by American tanks. That decision sent precisely the wrong message; it has since been corrected.

In 2014, when Ukraine asked Washington for arms to defend itself, Obama sent **nonlethal aid**. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's response spoke volumes: "One cannot win the war with blankets."

In 2016, Obama publicly criticized Britain and France for their handling of Libya and Syria, noting that "[f]ree riders aggravate me" and then boasting how he lectured Britain's prime minister, "You have to pay your fair share."

While the average American might not know it from Trump's words (spoken and unspoken) or Obama's actions, NATO plays an important role for its most important member: the United States.



An F-22 Raptor from the 1st Fighter Wing, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, takes off at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, on October 12, 2017. The U.S. Air Force has deployed F-22 Raptors, Airmen, and associated equipment to RAF Lakenheath for a flying training deployment to conduct air training with other Europe-based U.S. aircraft and NATO allies. Senior Airman Malcolm Mayfield. Source: U.S. Air Force.

NATO represents a foundation stone in the liberal international order, an insurance policy against great-power war, a readymade structure for building coalitions of the willing, a vital bridge to global hotspots, a force-multiplier for U.S. power. As several former NATO commanders conclude, “There is no hope for the U.S. to sustain its role as the world’s sole superpower without the Europeans as allies.” The generals know what the politicians ignore: Protecting our interests and our civilization, ensuring the free flow of goods and resources, preserving the postwar order, defending the global commons, responding to natural disasters and manmade chaos—these missions depend on NATO infrastructure in places like Lakenheath, Ramstein, Morón, Aviano, and Incirlik.

## FAILURE OF FOLLOWERSHIP

Trump may have put it in- delicately, but his call for the rest of the alliance to do more was not unprecedented. In 2010, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates, pointing to the

chronic “underfunding of NATO,” warned of the “demilitarization of Europe.” What was “a blessing in the 20th century,” he observed, had become “an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st.”

Neither was Trump’s admonition unwarranted. “We still do not have fair burden sharing within our alliance,” NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg conceded. During the Cold War, the U.S. accounted for 50 percent of NATO military spending; today it is 72 percent.

To rectify this problem, NATO in 2006 called on members “to commit a minimum of 2 percent of their GDP to spending on defense.” A decade-plus later, only five members meet that standard.

European members invest an average of 1.4 percent on defense today. Turkey invested 5 percent of GDP on defense in 2000, 1.5 percent today; France 2.5 percent in 2000, 1.7 percent today; Italy 2 percent in 2000, 1.1 percent today; Germany 1.5 percent in 2000, 1.1 percent today. Canada spends just 0.9 percent

of GDP on defense, down from 1.2 percent in 2000. Britain is using accounting tricks to stay above the 2-percent standard, shifting monies from the Foreign Office to defense.

“The situation may be worse,” Mark Thomson of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute observes. “Pensions account for 33 percent of Belgium’s defense spending, 24 percent of France’s and 17 percent of Germany’s.” Pensions don’t deter enemies.

What’s most frustrating about these figures—and the lack of will reflected in them—is that NATO allies have proven their capacity to make adequate investments in defense. In 1980, European members devoted an average of 3.7 percent of GDP to defense. In 1990, European members devoted an average of 3 percent of GDP to defense; Britain 4 percent, Turkey 4.9 percent, Germany 2.8 percent, France 3.6 percent, Italy 2.1 percent.



Years of underfunding have led to “alarming deficiencies in the state of NATO preparedness,” according to the British government:

The Royal Navy has been reduced from 89 ships to 65. Britain had two aircraft carriers in 2008 but none in service today. Britain’s combat-aircraft fleet has shrunk from 189 warplanes to 149; the Joint Helicopter Command had 257 aircraft in 2008 but just 164 by 2016.

Only 42 of Germany’s 109 top-of-the-line Eurofighters are in flying condition. At the height of the Cold War, West Germany had 2,125 tanks. Today, Germany has 225. Just 70 of Germany’s 180 armored vehicles are capable of deployment. German troops used black-painted broomsticks to simulate machine guns during a 2014 NATO exercise.

France eliminated 8,000 personnel in 2014, mothballed 19 warships between 2009 and 2012, and slashed 30 percent of its air fleet between 2008 and 2013.

The U.S. Army has 26,000 troops in Europe today, down from 40,000 in 2012, down from 213,000 in 1989. Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, commander of U.S. Army-Europe, said he is trying “to make 30,000 [troops] look and feel like 300,000.”

Equally troubling, as NATO’s capabilities have declined, so has its will. There was a time when Europe’s spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak. Today, not only is the flesh atrophied, but the spirit seems unwilling to fight the disease.

For example, there isn’t majority support in Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, or Poland for defending a fellow NATO ally from Russian attack.

Turkey is drifting away from NATO, Europe, and the West.

In response to the 2-percent target, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said, “I don’t know any German politician who would claim that is reachable nor desirable. One has to ask whether it would really calm Germany’s neighbors if we turned into a big military

power in Europe.” This is sophistry. Germany deployed 585,000 troops as recently as 1990–91. Today, it fields 185,000. Moreover, how is it fair for the rest of NATO to come up to 2 percent, while Germany—the geographic center of the alliance and the richest, most populous European member of the alliance—refuses?

The way some allies approached NATO’s first Article V operation did more to tarnish Article V than burnish it: Italy wouldn’t permit its fighter-bombers to carry bombs. German troops were required to shout warnings to hostiles—in three languages—before opening fire. Denmark refused requests for additional fighter-bombers. Germany, Italy, and Spain avoided Afghanistan’s restive south. Thus, the U.S. contributed 71 percent of all forces, while non-NATO members Australia, Georgia, and Sweden deployed more troops than many founding members of the alliance. The take-away from Afghanistan: Actions speak louder than words.

In Libya in 2011, with the U.S. “leading from behind”



*Soldiers from the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, and the United States participate in a ceremony hosted by the Estonian Defense Force which was intended to officially welcome NATO’s Enhanced Forward Presence Battle Group to Estonia. The ceremony was held at the TAPA Army Base, Estonia, on April 20, 2017. Visual Information Specialist Jason Johnston. Source: U.S. Army.*



Romanian troops in Cincu, Romania, as they prepare to take part in integration training with NATO troops from Poland and Spain on Exercise Noble Jump 17 on June 9, 2017. Warrant Officer Dan Harmer (GBR Army). Source: NATO.

and conducting a “time-limited” war, a hamstrung NATO was found woefully lacking in precision munitions, targeting and jamming capabilities, mid-air refuelers, reconnaissance platforms, drones, command-and-control assets—everything needed to conduct a 21st-century air war. The takeaway from Libya: You get what you pay for.

## THE UPSIDE

What does NATO need to do going forward? The short answer: more and less.

By less, it may be necessary for NATO to rethink out-of-area missions in order to focus on its primary mission. That doesn't mean those missions should end—just that NATO shouldn't shoulder them. NATO may have been helpful as a global gendarme in the post-Cold War era, but its core mission is deterring

aggression—and keeping the peace—in Europe. NATO should devote its combined resources to that task, while ad hoc partnerships take on security challenges beyond the North Atlantic area.

By more, it's necessary for NATO to spend more on defense, devote more attention to Eastern Europe, and talk more about the problems Putin has created.

### *Build Up*

“In more peaceful times, it was right to reduce defense spending,” Stoltenberg soberly observed. “But we do not live in peaceful times.”

Until Russia is fully and truly liberalized—something that won't occur until Putin is gone, at best—building up the common defense is the best way to ensure Article V is never invoked on the European continent. What Churchill said of his

Russian counterparts is true of Putin and his generals: “There is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than weakness.”

Devoting 2 percent of GDP to the common defense sends a signal of seriousness and solidarity, and it will prevent NATO's devolution from an all-for-one alliance into a one-for-all public good.

The good news is that many allies are getting serious about defense. Sixteen allies increased defense spending in 2015; 22 did so last year.

Not surprisingly, allies closest in proximity to Russia are moving the most rapidly. Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia will triple military spending by 2024. Latvia and Lithuania will reach the 2-percent mark next year. Romania will reach 2 percent



this year. Estonia and Poland are already at the 2-percent standard.

France is on track to reach the 2-percent threshold by 2022. Norway increased defense spending 9.8 percent in 2016. The Czech Republic will increase the size of its military 63 percent by 2025. Britain is deploying two new aircraft carriers bristling with dozens of F-35B fighter-bombers. Germany plans to add 20,000 troops by 2024. And after years of waning commitment, Washington quadrupled military spending for Europe in 2016 (from \$789 million to \$3.4 billion); added another \$1.4 billion in 2017; and is permanently basing three brigades in Europe.

### *Stand Up*

NATO must demonstrate that its security guarantee is as valid for the newest members of the alliance as it is for the oldest. Regrettably, it has not always succeeded at this.

NATO didn't begin developing contingency plans for defending the Baltics (which joined the alliance in 2004) until after Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia. Some members worried that such planning would provoke Moscow. The very opposite is true. Putin's assaults on non-NATO members Ukraine and Georgia—and non-intervention in the Baltics—suggest that he takes Article V seriously, at least for now.

Recently, NATO defense ministers approved a plan to create new commands within the alliance “to improve the movement of troops across the Atlantic and within Europe.” In 2016, NATO authorized forward deployments in the Baltics and Poland “to unambiguously demonstrate” determination

to defend the easternmost members of the alliance. U.S. troops are spearheading the effort, alongside Canadian, German, and British units.

Thoughtful critics of NATO's decision to stand up a more tangible deterrent presence and thus reassure NATO's most-at-risk members worry about their remote location and strategic-depth issues.

There are two answers to this line of concern. First, few places were less defensible than West Berlin during the Cold War, which was literally surrounded by Soviet bloc armies. Yet NATO maintained forces in that remote outpost of freedom to face down the Red Army.

Second, strategic-depth and resupply issues were a concern for NATO even when NATO's footprint was smaller and capabilities greater. Because of its size and geographic position, Russia will always have the ability to throw its weight around in Europe in ways America cannot, which is why a credible military deterrent is so important. It is a matter of will.

Since NATO's founding, the deterrent represented by Article V has been an insurance policy against worst-case scenarios. For the United States, NATO diminishes the likelihood of another European conflict triggering another great-power war. For NATO's other members, NATO is a security guarantee backed by the United States. Without that guarantee, there is no security, as history has a way of reminding those on the outside looking in, from Cold War Hungary to post-Cold War Ukraine.

Indeed, the reason Poland and the Baltics want U.S. troops on

their soil is the same reason U.S. troops were based in West Berlin during the Cold War and have been based along the 38th Parallel since 1953: The presence of American troops sends a message that crossing this line means you are going to war against the United States—no ambiguity or question marks. That certainty of response—the promise that the costs of aggression will be greater than any potential benefits—is the essence of deterrence.

Within easy range of Putin's unmarked armies and clever brand of anonymous warfare, Eastern Europe's leaders understand that if Putin follows his Ukraine playbook and covertly violates the sovereignty of the Baltics, he will force NATO to blink or fire back. Neither alternative leads to a happy outcome. The former means NATO is neutralized. The latter means war. The best way to prevent those dire scenarios is through deterrent military strength, clarity of intent, certainty of cause and effect, and dialogue with Moscow. That's how NATO prevented the Cold War from turning hot, and it's the best roadmap for navigating Cold War 2.0.

### *Speak Up*

NATO's political leaders should highlight how Czar Vladimir has engineered his way from prime minister to president to prime minister to president the past 17 years; point out the vast freedom gap between Russia and its neighbors; and expose Putin's assault on human rights by offering a platform to Putin's enemies—journalists, religious minorities, NGOs, and political dissidents. “A little less détente,” as President Ronald Reagan counseled, “and more encouragement to the dissenters might be worth a lot of armored divisions.”



Even as today's NATO leaders challenge Putin in the arena of ideas, they should leave open the opportunity to talk with Moscow, as past NATO leaders did during the Cold War. But they must see Russia as it is, not as they hope it to be. The implication of Obama's "reset," for instance, was that Putin wanted a partner, if only Washington would change its tone. That hypothesis has been obliterated. Putin's Russia invaded Georgia during the "with us or against us" Bush administration, dismembered Ukraine during the "lead from behind" Obama administration, and armed the Taliban during the "wouldn't it be nice if we actually got along with Russia?" Trump administration. Putin—not Washington's tone or NATO's membership roster—is the problem.

Putin is not Hitler, but as long-time Pentagon official Dov Zakheim observed, "The West is full of Chamberlains." To extend the parallel, the world thirsts for a Churchill—someone to rally the demoralized democracies and draw a line between Putinism and the principles NATO defends. Trump is badly miscast for that role; however, at the very least he needs to make unequivocal America's commitment to Article V. His Warsaw address affirming "that we stand firmly behind Article V" and calling on Russia "to cease its destabilizing activities in Ukraine and elsewhere, and its support for hostile regimes, including Syria and Iran" was a step in the right direction. But more must be done—and more consistently—to reassure NATO and remind Moscow that Article V is alive and well. If there's uncertainty about America's commitment to Article V—if it is conditional—the North Atlantic Treaty is worthless. If that's

the case, there's no security for Europe. And if there's no security for Europe, there's no security for America.

## PRAYERS & PREPAREDNESS

The purpose of this back-to-basics NATO is not to wage war but quite the opposite: to prevent what Churchill called "temptations to a trial of strength"—and thus to prevent war. In a broken world, military deterrence is the surest way to do that, and NATO is a trusted tool of deterrence.

Discussing deterrence, defense budgets, and armored divisions in a journal devoted to Christianity may seem incongruent to some. But it's not incongruent if we understand deterrence as a way to prevent the kind of war that kills by the millions, erases nations, and destroys continents, the kind humanity has not endured for seven decades. We will not know the biblical notion of peace—of shalom, peace with harmony and justice—until Christ returns to make all things new. In the interim, the alternatives to peace through preparedness leave much to be desired.

As people of faith, we know that government exists to protect innocents and preserve order. NATO contributes to both of these legitimate functions of government. "For the first time in history, there exists in peace an integrated international force whose object is to maintain peace through strength," President Harry Truman observed on NATO's second birthday. "We devoutly pray that our present course of action will succeed and maintain peace without war."

As Putin probes the West for weaknesses, as NATO ponders its future, as Trump tweets and deletes

his way to a diluted Article V, that prayer seems especially apt today. P

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