

# NATO Present and Future Role in the South

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### Open Publications (2021) NATO Present and Future Role in the South

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## NATO's Present and Future Role in the South

### 1. Executive Summary

This report is focused on Africa as a continent and on Africa's attitudes towards - and demands of - NATO, disregarding regional differences, albeit with caveats. Africa is not "a country" - a perception that infuriates many Africans. Instead, it is a continent consisting of 55 different countries with a population of almost one billion. For clarity, NATO describes "the South" as both Africa and the Middle East: but in this report, "South" is limited to the North Africa, the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

The principal research question in this report is what "the South" expects and, to some extent, demands from NATO, with the component objectives of describing the present and future role of NATO in there.

As for the methodology, the Delphi Technique has been used, enabling exploration of what Africa experts think about the role of NATO in the region through the mechanism of a two-round survey. In the first round a structured, open-ended essay-style survey was distributed to the selected experts drawn from throughout the South and, after analysis of the first round, a second survey was prepared and distributed to the first-round responders based on the answers given during the first round.

As for the findings and recommendations, in general, there are a few clear perceptions of NATO on African continent, although knowledge of NATO is not widespread amongst the continent's public. For many, NATO means firstly the USA. Secondly, it is an organization that still represents the old global Cold War rivalry. There is also a very negative perception of the impact of the NATO response to the UN Security Council's authorization of a no-fly zone in Libya in 2011. However, NATO's support to the African Union does evoke some positive perceptions on the continent, especially, in support of peacekeeping missions. In addition to the limited NATO presence in Africa, the activities of member states operating out-with the NATO umbrella also generates positive - and negative - perceptions of NATO.

This research leads to the conclusion that NATO should avoid interfering in the internal affairs of the African states. Moreover, NATO is seen as having a potential for acting as a reliable partner for Africa, if it implements a well-determined African policy based on fair and "win-win" relationships. Regarding NATO's core competency as a security-focused organization, it seems to be the commonly held belief that NATO should support peacekeeping operations through relationships similar to the Partnership for Peace-style engagement with the African Union. Moreover, NATO can become a strategic partner for developing nations' security forces through training, mentoring and exchanges, by also focusing on anti-corruption and by strengthening partnerships with African countries to ensure human security through moving beyond traditional perceptions of security as a concept.

For NATO to gain trust and confidence in Africa, several considerations need to be born in mind. Historically speaking, the legacy of colonialism still plays a role, as many, although not all, western states engaged in activities characterized by economic exploitation of the resources of the continent over a period of many centuries. Secondly, NATO is not the only actor seeking to engage at a deeper level in the region; NATO's rivals, Russia and China, have also recently become active players on the

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continent. The African population and/or governments would accept NATO's increasing role in providing soft power on the continent, as long as NATO does it in its own way: it will largely depend on how NATO involvement is delivered and perceived. Admittedly, there are lessons to be learned from the Chinese way of engagement in Africa - how to and how not to. NATO should also understand how member states' activities on the continent could be seen as a positive for the perception of NATO - or a negative one.

Academics, security scholars, think tank staff and journalists from each side could be focal points to develop mutual understanding between NATO and Africa. This collaborative action might take the form of publications, academic events, training etc. as well as creating a snowball effect to establish a capacity for advocacy. As for military activities, which were proposed mainly by African Union respondents, NATO should engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities with a major focus on building partnerships with local authorities, police forces and the military.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic may also offer a specific opportunity to build trust and confidence through a possible disaster relief operation or by providing similar support in times of crisis in the future. NATO could support the continent to help manage such catastrophes through the capacity it has already established over the decades of its existence.

The main pillars of the NATO-Africa relationship should ideally cover peace, security and military cooperation. The main pillars of NATO and Africa relations, respondents suggest, should be based on the most effective activities in terms of efficiency and sustainability. It should feature assistance to post-conflict societies to build disciplined militaries and institutionalize civilian control over those militaries. Enhanced cooperation in countering terrorism through such measures as sharing real-time information on terrorism and other international security issues could create a more secure environment on the African continent. There should be an emphasis on training/education opportunities for young scholars of security related subjects. Moreover, NATO could provide education and military training to the African Union's peacekeeping forces. Establishing military-to-military relations between NATO members and African Union governments would also be productive.

What Africa does not expect from NATO is clear: greater NATO involvement in continental issues in the future. Greater involvement, in African perceptions, means imperialism or neo-colonialism. African experts also expect greater clarity on NATO's strategic aims in the continent. NATO Could begin by recognizing that each region and/or country in Africa requires a different approach which must take into account both the country and NATO as well as the particular NATO members that are engaged. The African Union has significant potential in establishing better relations and to create a more acceptable future role for NATO on the continent.

Overall, the findings of this research should be treated as an educated assessment on the future of NATO-Africa relations. The security problems of Africa are a source of concern for the continent, whereas NATO is concerned with the wider repercussions of such security problems, such as border control, migration, or piracy, as opposed to 'internal' issues such as ethnic conflicts, corruption and poverty.

## 2. Introduction and Methodology

### a. Introduction

The principal research question in this report is what "the South" expects and, to some extent, demands from NATO, with the component objectives of describing the present and future role of NATO in there. For clarity, NATO describes "the South" as both Africa and the Middle East: but in this report, "South" is limited to the North Africa, the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The Middle East is deliberately excluded from this research project and the main reason for this exclusion is the differences in the security environment of the Middle East and the rest of "the South", being the African continent. What should also be noted, however, is how North Africa compares differs from the rest of the continent, especially in the political connection between North Africa and Europe and the manner in which the Middle East is linked to North Africa, viewing it as culturally, religiously and historically intertwined with the Middle East. This does not necessarily mean that the North Africa is immune to the continental issues of Africa but North Africa, for some specific issues, should be viewed differently. But in the broader sense this report is focused on research on Africa as a continent and on Africa's attitudes towards and demands of NATO, disregarding regional differences, albeit with those caveats.

But before dealing with demands of Africa, first the demands of NATO need to be defined, and these are explicitly stated in a number of official NATO documents. Soon after the end of the Cold War, NATO began engaging with partners around the world through the programs such as the Partnership for Peace<sup>2</sup>, the Mediterranean Dialogue<sup>3</sup>, the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative<sup>4</sup> and Global Partners<sup>5</sup>. The latest stage of this engagement moved focus to the whole African continent as well as to the Middle East with the establishment of the South Hub during the Brussels Summit in 2018.<sup>6</sup> The engagements of NATO in the South are stated as having in three main objectives:

1. *to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defense against threats emanating from the South;*
2. *to contribute to international crisis management efforts in the region; and*
3. *to help our regional partners build resilience against security threats, including in the fight against terrorism.*

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<sup>2</sup> NATO Partnership for Peace Programme, accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics\\_50349.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_50349.htm)

<sup>3</sup> NATO Mediterranean Dialogue, accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics\\_52927.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_52927.htm)

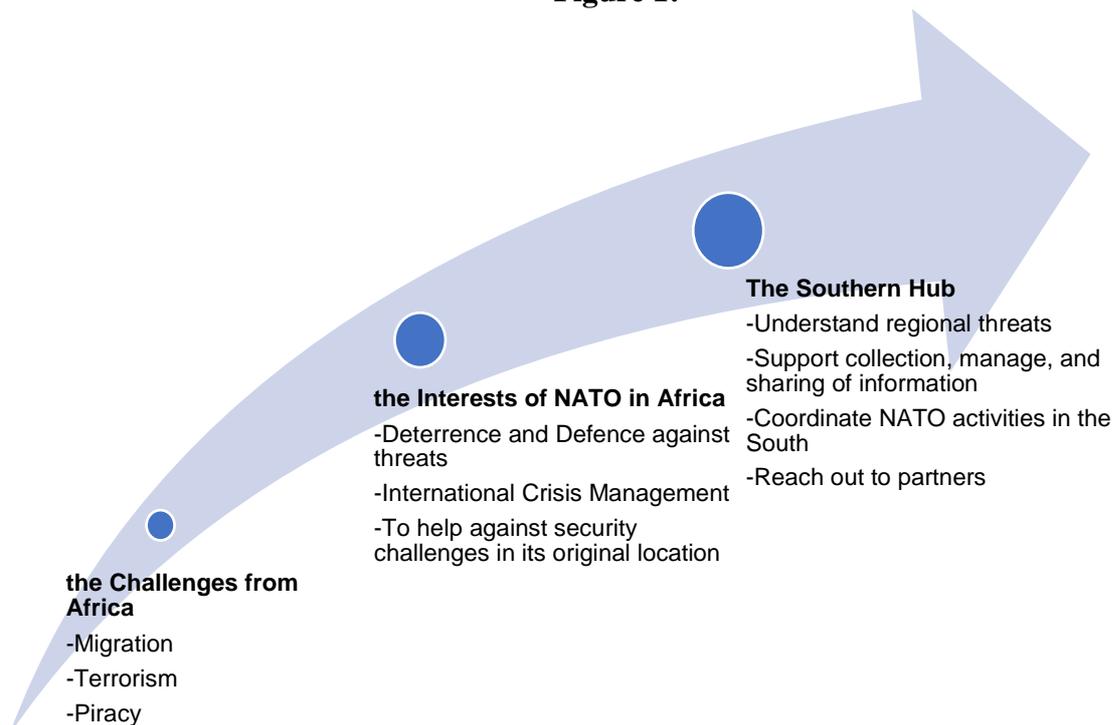
<sup>4</sup> NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics\\_52956.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/ie/natohq/topics_52956.htm)

<sup>5</sup> NATO Relations with Partners Across the Globe, accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49188.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49188.htm)

<sup>6</sup> NATO Brussels Summit Declaration 11-12 July 2018, accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156624.htm#27](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm#27)

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Figure 1:



Based on these stated objectives, the challenges as defined by NATO are migration, terrorism, and piracy, which are, to some extent, interconnected. Having stated its interests and challenges, NATO, in the Brussels summit in 2018, decided to engage with the countries in which these issues originated.

*“The Hub [will] contribute to our situational awareness and understanding of regional challenges, threats, and opportunities; support the collection, management, and sharing of information; coordinate NATO’s activities in the south; and reach out to partners.”*

The activities that the summit suggested be provided were training, advising, and mentoring.<sup>7</sup>

From 2018 onwards, NATO has regularly declared its commitment to its Framework for the South and in 2021 Brussels Summit the heads of states made a similar declaration.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in the NATO 2030 concept, it has been stated that in order to *uphold the rules-based international order*,

*“Allies agreed to strengthen NATO’s relationships with like-minded partners and international organizations and forge new engagements including in Africa, Asia and Latin America.”<sup>9</sup>*

Based on this background, the Southern Hub states its mission as:

<sup>7</sup> Colin Wall, “NATO’s new Window to the south,” *New Atlanticist*, August 15, 2018, Atlantic Council, accessed 30 August 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nato-s-new-window-to-the-south/>

<sup>8</sup> NATO Brussels Summit Communiqué, 14 June 2021, accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm?selectedLocale=en)

<sup>9</sup> NATO 2030, *Factsheet*, June 2021, accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/6/pdf/2106-factsheet-nato2030-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/6/pdf/2106-factsheet-nato2030-en.pdf)

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- *“To monitor and assess the dynamics of NATO's operating environment by being **a forum for engagement and information sharing**.*
- *To **inform** operational and strategic leaders by enhancing our collective understanding and proactively shape NATO's decision-making.*
- *Provide NATO **a strategic-level lens** to better anticipate, preempt, limit, and overcome challenges.*
- *Be a positive force through confidence-building measures with **non-military entities** dedicated to long-term stability and prosperity for local populations in NATO's South.”<sup>10</sup>*

Essentially, all these documents and directions give indications of NATO's understanding of security in the South over the last two decades, and thereby the areas of interest for NATO in Africa. At this point, though, it is also a good time to look at what Africa demands from NATO, so that it will be possible to identify the areas that overlap in each side's considerations. Potentially the demands of Africa would help us identify the most viable areas that could be implemented as part of the NATO 2030 agenda.

Admittedly, it is hard to identify what the whole African continent demands from NATO. Ideally, it would be explored through significant research activity, such as a public opinion poll across the continent. One should also recognize that Africa is not "a country" - a perceived view that infuriates many Africans - but, instead, a continent with 55 different countries and with a population of almost one billion. However, there are some research techniques available which will help us benefit from already existing expertise, knowledge and wisdom. As a result, the methodology chosen for this research activity is the Delphi Technique.

The Delphi Technique is also known as an “interactive survey” or, a “virtual panel of experts.”<sup>11</sup> Through the use of this technique, the research project has been able to explore what Africa experts think about the role of NATO currently and in the future.

The research questions are as shown below.

- What does NATO mean in Africa?
- What should NATO mean in the future for Africa?
- What should NATO do to gain trust and confidence in Africa?
- What are the security challenges and opportunities in Africa?
- What must be the main pillars of the NATO-Africa relationship?
- What are the key drivers of the perceptions about the NATO-Africa relations?
- What would be the expectations of Africa from NATO?

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<sup>10</sup> NATO The South Hub Official Web Site, accessed 30 August 2021, <https://thesouthernhub.org/>

<sup>11</sup> Chitu Okoli, Suzanne D. Pawlowski, “The Delphi Method as a Research Tool: An Example, Design Considerations and Applications,” *Information & Management*, Vol 42, 2004, p.19 (pp 15-29)

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- What would be the priorities for African countries in its relations with NATO?

### b. Methodology

The Delphi technique has primarily been utilized to analyze current issues and their potential solutions in the future. The method was developed by Olof Helmer, Nicholas Rescher, Norman Delkoy and others in 1959<sup>12</sup> and the first paper using Delphi Research was published in 1964, entitled "Report on a Long-range Forecast."<sup>13</sup> Essentially, the Delphi Method allows researchers to analyze and forecast with high levels of accountability and reliability.

The technique first identifies the experts to be included into the research; later it implements at least two rounds of survey, and if needed it is possible to execute subsequent rounds. In the first round, which uses open ended questions, experts articulate themselves independently on a specific subject and reflect their expertise on a specific issue without any reservations. At the conclusion of first round, the researcher should then develop a second round of surveys, or interviews, based on the first-round responses. In the second round, a multiple-choice questionnaire is deemed to be preferable. The rounds can be in person or online but should not take the form of an open discussion amongst the experts, who instead remain separate.

The reasoning behind the decision to keep the experts isolated from one another in their responses is the asserted belief that open discussion between experts would potentially mean that the researcher loses her/his control of the process and the responses, so instead the method aims to prevent such biases. The key for success of the method is based on the initial expert selection. The Delphi technique is not a statistical method to produce a universal, fully representative sample. Instead, it is about the expertise of the limited group of responders. If it were a statistical method, the researcher would have needed a proper representative sample of those who are engaged in the subject or area. However, in Delphi technique, this is not necessary, because the technique allows the researcher to benefit from the experts' knowledge on the specific subject. As a result, the selection of experts, the degree of their expertise for the research, the amount of the responders as well as their acceptance rate matters. Generally speaking, 15 to 35 people as respondents is desirable, with the invitation acceptance rate of between 40 and 75 per cent being considered satisfactory.<sup>14</sup>

The disadvantage of this method is that it takes time to implement regarding the aforementioned multiple rounds of surveys with experts. One should recognize that the Delphi technique is not presenting an accurate forecast, yet it has a capacity to present instead an educated assessment on the future of a specific subject.

Essentially, in the case of this research activity the Delphi technique has been applied in two rounds. In the first round a structured, open-ended essay-style survey was distributed to the selected experts drawn from throughout the South and, after analysis of the first round, a second survey was prepared

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<sup>12</sup> Helmer, Olaf and Rescher, Nicholas, "On the Epistemology of the Inexact Sciences," *Management Sciences*, Vol. 6, No.1, 1959.

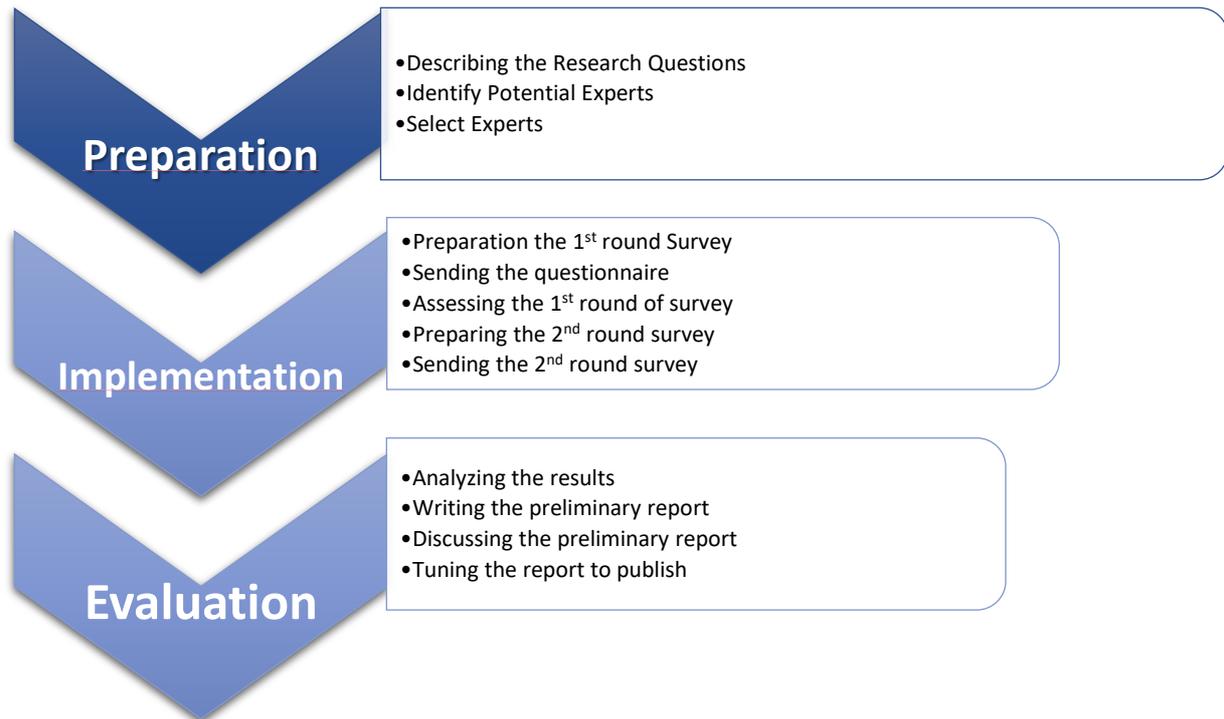
<sup>13</sup> Gordon, T.J., and Helmer, Olaf, *Report on a Long-Range Forecasting Study*, RAND Corp., R-2982, 1964.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon, T.J., "The Delphi Method," *Futures Research Methodology*, Vol.2, Issue.3, 1994, p. 7 (pp.1-30)

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and distributed to the first-round responders based on the answers given during the first round. The two-round-approach allowed the researcher to share different perspectives and propositions with all the experts. During the second round of analysis, which was multiple choice, it was possible to reach an educated opinion on the expectations and demands of NATO from the African side. (Figure 2)

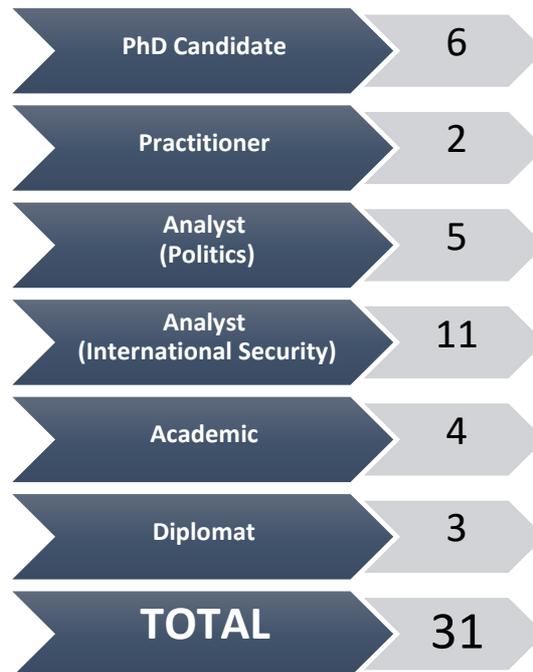
**Figure 2: The Processes of the Delphi Method for the Africa Research**



After developing the research questions, the qualifications of the likely experts were confirmed. The criteria for the selection of the experts were based on their professional background, such as PhD. candidate in security studies, security experts, academics, senior practitioners, diplomats and military/security sector employees. Essentially, the goal was to reach out to experts whose area of expertise was focused on all or as much as possible of the African continent. The main goal was to reach at least 25 responders. In order to reach experts, personal networks, LinkedIn.com, Academia.edu, Google Scholar and the related web sites of academic and international institutions were used. 66 invitations were sent on the first round and 31 experts responded. In the second round, 27 out of 31 experts responded. (Figure 3 and Figure 4)

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**Figure 3: The Distribution of professions of the Experts**



The first round of the open-ended survey was sent in July 2021 and the second round, the multiple choice survey, was sent to the first-round responders in mid-August of the same year. In September the responses for the second-round survey were collected. Regarding the scope of the experts, their level of expertise and their responses, the implementation of the Delphi technique proved to be accountable and reliable to a high degree. However, as a stated limitation of the research, the assumption that North Africa, as a distinctly different region, would differ from the rest of the continent proved correct.

**Figure 4: Distribution Map for Coverage of the Experts' expertise in the research**



### 3. Analysis of What Africa Demands from NATO

#### a. What does NATO mean in Africa?

There are a few clear perceptions of NATO on African continent, even though knowledge of NATO is not widespread amongst the continent's public. Firstly, for many, NATO means primarily the United States of America (USA). Secondly, NATO is viewed as an organization that still represents the old global Cold War rivalries, just repackaged in a slightly different format for the post-Cold War world. Thirdly, a very negative perception was generated by the impact of the NATO response to the UN Security Council's authorization a no-flight zone in Libya in 2011. It reminded many of historical international interventions on the continent with limited local consent, which resulted in not only in a specific humanitarian crisis, but also in regime change in Libya. Regarding the recent security role of NATO in Africa during the second decade of this century, Libya still plays an important role in influencing perceptions of NATO. Fourthly, however, NATO's support to the African Union does evoke some positive perceptions on the continent, especially in support for peacekeeping missions. This is viewed as a good example of a constructive type of relationship, one which may have possible reflections in other fields such as disaster relief and so on.

In addition to the limited NATO presence in Africa, the activities of the Allies out-with the NATO umbrella also generates positive - and negative - perceptions of NATO. Essentially, the military operations of member states are not received so positively, whereas civilian or supporting activities are very welcome. In that context, majority of the experts agree that if NATO had not intervened in Libya in 2011, the acceptance of NATO in Africa would be broadly positive.

According to the research, the African population is, to a large extent, very much unaware of the role of NATO in the world. While many African scholars and policy analysts are aware of NATO's activities and its contribution to global peace and security, most Africans do not understand NATO's role in promoting global peace and security. Foremost, this is because of the concentration, or geographical limitation, of NATO activities within the Sahel region. Secondly, NATO members such as France have continued to operate on a bilateral basis with countries in the region, such as Chad, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. The troops and military operations are bundled or categorized in the popular consciousness by their respective nationalities and rarely as NATO forces. Simultaneously, many Africans are aware of the work being done in a positive way by individual NATO members in Africa. For example, throughout the continent, most citizens are aware of the work being carried out by the governments and NGOs of various NATO countries (e.g., Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK, the United States, and Turkey) to address those issues such as: extreme poverty; endemic diseases; illiteracy, especially among girls and women; climate change; and religious and ethnic extremism, all of which threaten peace and security. Thirdly, the majority of NATO activities are perceived as being conducted at an "elite" level, in direct cooperation with either the African Union or African governments. As a result of these factors, the public perception of NATO is relatively low amongst the African population.

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### **b. What should NATO mean in the future for Africa?**

Future engagement by NATO on the African continent should be closely connected to the answers to the next question in the survey, how NATO views Africa, and if Africa is a partner for peace, or a continent in need of support and assistance? The main driver behind these questions is identifying whether NATO's presence in Africa should work in partnership - and perhaps not in competition with Russia and China - with African states to build security and stabilize countries dealing with crises. The Cold War history of NATO appears to be a major factor in making Africans think in that way. There is also a political aspect to this approach: NATO should avoid interfering in the internal affairs of the African states. On balance, NATO is seen as having a potential for acting as a reliable partner for Africa if it implements a well-determined African policy in general, based on mutually beneficial, "win-win" relationships.

The African Union is seen as having the potential to establish better relations in support of a locally acceptable future for NATO engagements on the continent. The ability of the African Union and individual African countries to develop the capacity and the political will to deal with their own security issues is seen as an important issue. However, it is believed that it will still be necessary for NATO to cooperate with the African Union on issues of peace and security in Africa and other parts of the developing world. Regarding NATO's core competency as a security-focused organization, it seems to be the commonly held belief that NATO should support peacekeeping operations through relationships similar to the Partnership for Peace-style engagement with the African Union.

According to African experts, NATO should maintain a position of strategic partnership and cooperate with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)<sup>15</sup> in addressing continental and external threats to security. NATO can become a strategic partner for developing nations' security forces through training, mentoring and exchanges, and should also focus on 'building integrity' (anti-corruption). NATO should also focus on strengthening partnerships with African countries to ensure human security by moving beyond traditional conceptualizations of security.

### **c. What should NATO do to gain trust and confidence in Africa?**

For NATO to gain trust and confidence in Africa, several considerations need to be borne in mind. First and foremost, historically speaking, the legacy of colonialism still plays a significant role, as many western states engaged in activities characterized by economic exploitation of the resources of the continent, often over centuries. This legacy naturally creates deeply negative "baggage" that needs to

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<sup>15</sup> "The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) is built around structures, objectives, principles and values, as well as decision-making processes relating to the prevention, management and resolution of crises and conflicts, post-conflict reconstruction and development in the continent... The APSA embraces a comprehensive agenda for peace and security in Africa that includes: Early warning and conflict prevention; Peace-making, peace support operations, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and development; Promotion of democratic practices, good governance and respect for human rights; and Humanitarian action and disaster management." The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), *African Union Official web site*, accessed 30 August 2021, <https://www.peaceau.org/en/topic/the-african-peace-and-security-architecture-apsa>

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be overcome. Secondly, NATO is not the only actor seeking to engage at a deeper level in Africa; NATO's rivals, Russia and China, have also recently become active players on the continent.

On the issue of trust and confidence, it is worthwhile assessing the position of those rivals of NATO, China and Russia. China's presence and position in Africa appears to be viewed as more robust and positive than that of Russia. The main disadvantage facing Russia is its historical and ideological Cold War heritage, which is not seen as a viable economic development model by African governments, whereas China, on the other hand, is viewed in that way. While Russia has some military bases on the continent and has made some inroads in individual states, overall, it does not have much capacity to spread its influence across the whole of the African continent. At the same time, China has been investing in the continent in a significant way. Chinese infrastructure investments in particular afford it a leading place in perceptions. It is also worth noting that neither China nor Russia prioritise concerns about democracy and human rights which, ironically, creates a positive attitude among some African governments.

In this area NATO is in a position of both strength and weakness. NATO should enjoy a slightly higher acceptance in Africa partly because Russia's image is largely dominated by the historic image of the communist Soviet Union with which the majority of the modern African states do not now identify in terms of being a viable economic model or ideology. The political presence of Russia and its cultural influence is also relatively limited: thus, majority of African countries continue to remain skeptical about engagements by Russia.

China, on the other hand, has seen its presence on the African continent increase significantly in the last two decades, thanks to its massive investments. However, after two decades of fuelling the debt levels of African governments, many nations are now facing debt stress. Increasingly many individuals are even beginning to protest about African governments' debt to China. Equally, most Chinese investments have not created jobs for local people--Chinese projects usually bring workers from China and fail to engage local communities in any meaningful way. Furthermore, these projects often produce significant negative externalities (e.g., environmental degradation) for the communities where they operate. At the same time, investments from individual NATO Allies (e.g., Turkey, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands) have usually been perceived as being delivered with more transparency and have been fully participatory.

The African population and/or governments would accept NATO's increasing role in providing soft power on the continent, if NATO does it in its own way: this will largely depend on how NATO involvement is delivered and perceived. Admittedly, there are lessons to be learned from the Chinese way of engagement in Africa - both how to and how not to. NATO should also understand the member states' activities in the continent could be seen as a positive indicator for the broader perception of NATO - or as a negative one. Respondents suggest that NATO should not be in an ideological battle with Russia and China on the continent; rather, cooperation with Africa can be achieved on a win-win basis. Principally, NATO should adopt a participatory approach to deal with Africa's problems: instead of dictating solutions to Africa, it should determine what Africa's priorities are and how to support the resolution of the continent's multifarious problems.

Based on other international support efforts dating back decades, the failure of commitments is not rare and it has decreased the credibility of international efforts. In that respect, NATO should deliver whatever it commits to, so, from the start, expectations are managed in a proper way. The rule in

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Africa appears to be that “if it is unlikely to be achieved, do not even discuss it.” Admittedly, the behavior of other international organizations and of NGOs undermines perceptions because they often over-promise and under-deliver. Promises without delivery results in a lack of trust and confidence.

Academics, security scholars, think tank staff and journalists could be a focal point to develop mutual understanding between NATO and Africa. This collaborative action might manifest itself in publications, academic events, training etc. ultimately creating a snowball effect and establishing a capacity for advocacy.

As for military activities, which were proposed mainly by African Union respondents, NATO should engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities with a major focus on building partnerships with the local authorities, the police and the military. In fact, all these activities could be implemented using similar mechanisms to Partnership for Peace on the continent. The accumulated experience of the African Union should be seen as an opportunity for NATO to develop a better engagement with the African continent, especially in terms of promoting human security,<sup>16</sup> rather than focusing on traditional conceptualizations of security. To begin with, supporting the African Union’s Pan-African Agenda could be a good starting point. Later, NATO, through partnership programs, could cooperate with local armies and it might, in the process, leave its interventionist image behind.

Ironically, the COVID-19 pandemic may also offer a specific opportunity to build trust and confidence through a possible disaster relief operation or similar support in a time of crisis in the future. NATO could support the continent to help manage such catastrophes, through the capacity it has already established over the decades of its existence.

### **d. What are the Security Challenges and Opportunities in Africa?**

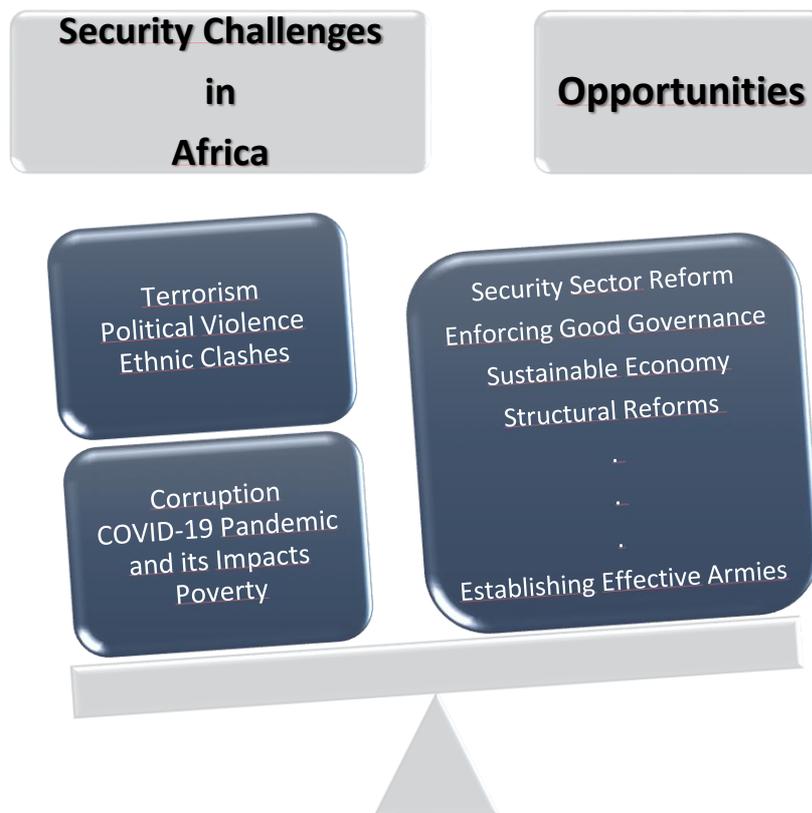
The research also sought to identify the security challenges and opportunities in Africa based on the experts’ regional competencies. According to the experts, terrorism is consistently highlighted as the number one security challenge in Africa, while corruption is the second greatest challenge, followed by political violence, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact, ethnic clashes and poverty.

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<sup>16</sup>“ The right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential...” the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 66/290, 25 October 2012, accessed 30 August 2021, [https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/290](https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/290)

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Figure 5: Security Challenges and Opportunities in Africa



These security challenges are spread across the continent. Regionally speaking, terrorist groups might differ from one region to another or change their characteristics. Zimbabwe, Libya, the Gulf of Guinea, Somalia, DRC, Mozambique and Ethiopia are regions or individual nations which have significant security challenges.

The opportunities for NATO resulting from these security challenges begins with cooperation in security sector reform and encouraging good governance. Creating employment opportunities for the youth population and pursuing sustainable economic goals are other areas of potential cooperation. It is significant that the experts were almost in consensus about solving the security problems on the African continent through measures in the area of economics and infrastructure. Alternative policy options involving military collaboration with international organizations and military partnership to establish effective armies did not receive as much support from the experts participating in the research.

### e. What must be the main Pillars of the NATO-Africa relationship?

Since NATO has been structured primarily as a military institution, fruitful and trustworthy relations can best occur initially within the realm of military dialogue. This is because there continues to be a debate regarding the presence of external actors in the continent with one school of thought framing it through the lens of neo-imperialism. As a consequence, expanding the NATO-Africa cooperation into

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deeper engagements in the economic, diplomatic, and social realms would likely attract greater intellectual resistance from some elements on the continent. Secondly, the presence of organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union in these other domains obviates the necessity for the engagement of NATO in realms outside military cooperation. This would instead constitute an unnecessary duplication of activities and programming. So, the main pillars of the NATO-Africa relationship should ideally cover peace, security and therefore, military cooperation. Undoubtedly peace is the ultimate goal, and security would be taken into account amongst the broader elements of the political, the economic, the societal and the environmental to name but four.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 6: Main Pillars of the NATO-Africa Relationship**



The main pillars of NATO and Africa relations, (Figure 6) respondents suggest, should be based on the most effective activities in terms of efficiency and sustainability. It should feature assistance to post-conflict societies to rebuild disciplined militaries - and institutionalize civilian control over those said militaries. Undoubtedly, the member states of NATO have accumulated great knowledge and wisdom on rebuilding militaries and building their relationship with the civilian authorities. Drawing on that capability might be a good starting point for future NATO activities in Africa. Secondly, enhanced cooperation in countering terrorism through such measures as sharing real-time information on terrorism and other international security issues could create a broadly more secure environment.

Amongst the experts, Africa's demands then continue with supporting the professionalization and building the capacity of militaries in select, democratic African countries, training local militaries and sharing knowledge and technology. Moreover, there should be an emphasis on training/education opportunities for young scholars of security related subjects. NATO could provide education and

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<sup>17</sup> Barry Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-first Century" *International Affairs*, 67.3 (1991), pp. 432-433.

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military training to the African Union's peacekeeping forces, for example. Establishing military-military relations between NATO members and African Union governments could also be productive. Creating military exchange programs for officers may be a good place to start. It could be followed by improving disaster relief capacity, beginning with supporting the COVID-19 vaccination roll out. Certainly, the most "doable" suggested lines of engagement, such as establishing better public relations, training militaries and diplomats, and cooperation with academics and universities should be high on the list of activities designed to empower the pillars.

### **f. What are the key drivers of perceptions for NATO-Africa relations?**

So far, the demands of the South from NATO have been analyzed in detail but the perceptions of "the South" also play an important role in shaping the demands made of Africa by NATO. Deeper analysis will help us to identify what the key drivers or causes of these perceptions are.

Not surprisingly, the recent NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 plays an important role. One might speculate what the perceptions of NATO would have been if it had not happened, but it is not the place of this piece of research to answer hypothetical questions.

The following paragraphs explain why there is little awareness of NATO on the continent and thereby a lack of clarity about NATO's Southern Strategy. While it is not correct to approach the continent with a "one-size-fits-all" approach, it is still possible to understand and learn about broad perceptions across the continent. Better understanding the African Union and the pan-African agenda might be significant steps towards increasing awareness of NATO.

A crisis, for instance, could present opportunities which could lead to cooperation on shared security challenges. The number one challenge in the perceptions of both NATO and the respondents is undoubtedly terrorism and cooperation on countering terrorism may present a huge opportunity to drive perceptions of NATO in a positive direction. Moreover, counter-piracy, to some extent, could be another shared security challenge. However, the piracy problem does not create much of a problem for Africans, so much as it does for the members of NATO.

Admittedly, a colonial past and/or post-colonial ambitions plays a role in shaping perceptions. Currently, concepts of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism create a hugely negative impact around the activities of the Chinese. At this stage as well, the foreign policies of member states and their effects on NATO are amongst the key drivers of how the NATO is perceived on the continent. NATO and its connection to the USA is also taken as a given on the continent, which places a huge responsibility on the United States. There are clearly many elements driving perceptions of NATO, each of which needs careful consideration.

### **g. What would be the expectations of Africa from NATO?**

Foremost, though, is what Africa, however generally, demands of NATO. What Africa does not expect from NATO is clear: greater NATO involvement in continental issues in the future. Greater involvement, in African perceptions, means imperialism or neo-colonialism. Therefore, it would be legitimate to argue that the first demand of NATO is to extend support in every possible way: but not in a dominating

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manner, or by interfering in the internal affairs of Africa. As one can imagine, there is a significant sensitivity to outside intervention in the internal affairs of the African continent.

**Figure 7: Expectations of Africa**



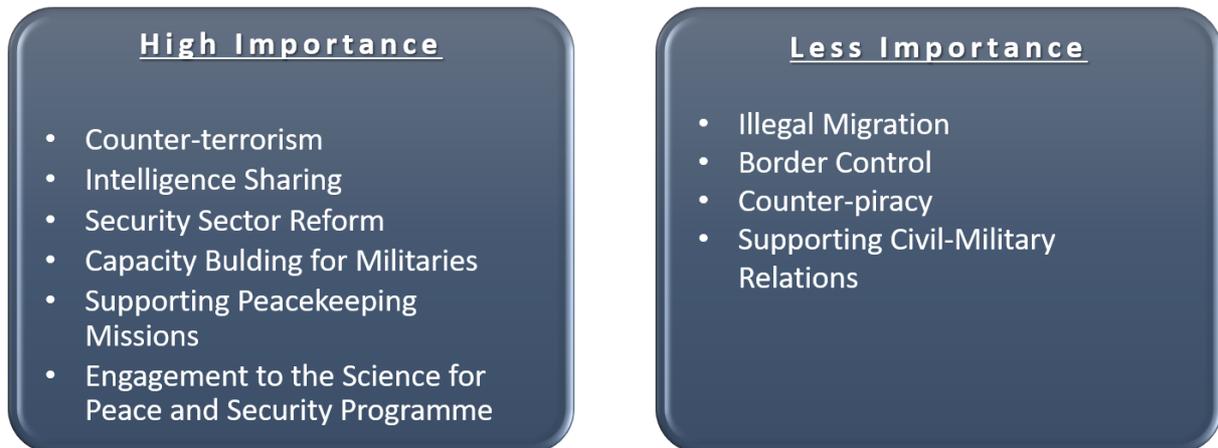
The second demand of NATO that was identified by African experts is greater clarity on NATO's strategic aims in the continent. The third lies in the areas of peacebuilding, conflict resolution and capacity building for national security forces. Regarding past, current and "frozen" conflicts as well as unsecured geographies on the African continent, NATO has much to potentially deliver - but without breaching individual national sovereignty. Fourth is a request for structured and regular political dialogue between NATO and the African Union/African governments that would create a stable platform in support of possible future activities. The overall demand, therefore, is continued practical cooperation in key areas such as counter terrorism and increased use of security forces in humanitarian missions, i.e., disaster relief/pandemic management, which are, effectively, encouraging of and supportive to 'soft power' approaches.

### **h. What would be the priorities for African countries in their relations with NATO?**

Respondents stated that NATO should begin by recognizing that each region and/or country in Africa requires a different approach which must take into account both the country and NATO, as well as the particular NATO members that are engaged. It would be particularly wise to avoid former colonial powers in the nations they once ruled, it was suggested. However, it could be vice versa in some cases where the colonial experience is not perceived so negatively.

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Figure 8: African Priorities



In a tangible way, based on African experts' views garnered through the Delphi technique, the priorities for African countries in their relations with NATO should encompass counterterrorism, intelligence sharing, security sector reform, capacity building for militaries, supporting peace support operations/peacekeeping missions, and engagement with the Science for Peace and Security Program. Interestingly, illegal migration, border control, counter-piracy and supporting civil-military relations are not on the list of priorities for African government. (Figure 8)

#### 4. Key Results / Conclusion

As a starting point, this research sought to explore NATO's present and possible future role in the South through gaining the trust and confidence of African countries. The research has examined what the South's demands are of NATO. The research is limited to African continent, and excluded the Middle East for analytical purposes, it should be remembered. The second starting point for the research was an awareness that the regions of Africa, as well as individual countries of those regions in Africa, naturally might have different foreign policy priorities; and third, that the Delphi technique, even with its limitations, allowed the researcher to benefit from the knowledge and experience of experts in Africa on African affairs. The findings of this research, therefore, should be treated as an educated assessment on the future of NATO-Africa relations.

In conclusion, NATO has the potential to be accepted as a reliable partner for Africa, if it implements a well-determined Africa policy which is, in general, based on a win-win relationship. However, for the time being, NATO is not well known amongst the African population, and the base-line of perceptions features many challenges and flawed perceptions.

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**Figure 9: Threat Perceptions of NATO and Africa on the continent**



NATO's search for ways to deal with the South is legitimate, and the efforts in that respect so far are understandable. To understand the foundations of relations between NATO and Africa it would be good to compare their threat assessments. Clearly, they do not match each other. NATO's main threat perceptions with regard to Africa are migration, terrorism, and piracy, which are often loosely connected to each other. At the same time, the threats in African perceptions are terrorism, corruption, political violence, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts, ethnic clashes, and poverty. (Figure 9) It is obvious that, apart from terrorism, the primary challenges in African perceptions to are not the same as the primary NATO challenges: but their possible second and third order effects, namely migration and piracy, are prime threats for NATO. Conversely, migration and piracy are not present as major challenges in the perceptions of Africa experts. NATO should prioritize African threat perceptions and should seek to address its own primary challenges using indirect approaches because of the fact that the elimination of African threats may well indirectly solve NATO's perceived primary challenges.

The respondents noted that Africa is uncomfortable with dictated priorities and solutions. African nations would definitely prefer to determine their own priorities to resolve the continent's multifarious problems. In addition to existing bilateral relations between African states and NATO member states, the African Union has significant potential for establishing better relations and to create a more acceptable future role for NATO on the continent. The African Union could be a productive interlocutor in determining the priorities across the continent and the regions of the continent.

It is no surprise that, apart from counterterrorism, the main priorities for the Africans do not match NATO's priorities. At the same time, though, the areas that are viewed as being less urgent on the list of Africa's priorities are NATO's high priorities, which helps understand why Africa demands straight away that it determine its own priorities, albeit in partnership with NATO.

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**Figure 10: Interests of NATO in Africa and Opportunities for Africa**



Comparing NATO interests in Africa with African expectations, and in particular those opportunities related to security threats helps us identify what NATO might wish to do in the future. The interests of NATO in Africa are described as deterrence, defense, crisis management and dealing with challenges at the root causes. This approach would be theoretically defined as a "classical" understanding of security which is centered on the military, whereas African threat perceptions are centered on security sector reform, good governance, pursuing sustainable economic goals, economic and structural reforms, and military collaborations: a very different conception of security.

The other findings of this research suggest that the main pillars of NATO and Africa relations should encompass peace, security and thereby the military aspect. Undoubtedly peace is the ultimate goal for all concerned. However, the African approach to security is different to NATO's and it is not based on a classical understanding which only includes the military. Instead, the African approach effectively prioritizes human security. Hence, NATO should view security in Africa in the broadest sense possible, including political, military, economic, societal, environmental, and other elements. This change of understanding of security within NATO seems necessary for successful relations with Africa in the future.

**Figure 11: NATO's Responsibilities in the Southern Hub and African Expectations**



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A comparison of the Southern Hub missions and African expectations from NATO, however, produces a closer match. The Southern Hub missions are understanding the continent, supporting Africans, coordinating NATO activities and reaching out to African actors. On the other hand, the expectations of Africa begin with receiving support without interference in internal affairs. This is deeply connected with the number one mission of the Southern Hub, to understand the South. Actually, Africa does not expect significantly greater NATO involvement in the future; so NATO needs to understand its limits before it even begins to act in Africa.

Greater clarity on NATO strategic aims could be another issue for NATO staff in Brussels, in Norfolk, in Naples and all the HQs of NATO across the transatlantic region. African demands for support to the military sector, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, training and so on, also match with the coordination mission of the Hub. The demand for a platform for NATO/Africa relations is undoubtedly a major factor in justifying the necessity of the Southern Hub. One could easily claim that the foundation of the Southern Hub has a just basis and the execution of its activities will be so crucial that NATO cannot countenance failure of any kind there.

### 5. Recommendations for NATO

African and NATO security interests are closely interlinked. Instability in parts of the continent has been identified as one of the causes of irregular migration, especially to Europe, while terrorist organizations directly threaten the security of NATO member states.

The security threat perceptions as well as priorities of the continent and NATO are not matching each other, though. The prime security problems of Africa are a source of concern for the continent, whereas NATO is concerned with the wider repercussions of such security problems, including border control, migration, or piracy as opposed to ethnic conflicts, corruption, poverty and so on. However, there is a room "to melt them all in a pot" since they are linked. NATO should move African threat perceptions to the top of its list and prefer to resolve its own primary perceived threats using an indirect approach, because the elimination of the primary threats in Africa may indirectly solve the primary threats for NATO.

The African conceptualization of security is also different to NATO's, and it is not a classical one focused only on the military sector. Instead, African understanding is based principally on human security. Hence, NATO should view security in the broadest sense possible, including political, military, economic, societal, environmental, and other elements. This change of understanding of security in NATO seems necessary for a productive relationship with Africa in the future.

NATO should also maintain a position of strategic partnership and cooperate with the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in addressing continental and external threats to security. NATO can become a strategic partner for developing nations' security forces through training, mentoring and exchanges, and should also focus on 'Building Integrity' (anti-corruption). This approach should lead to a clear NATO strategy towards the South, and which becomes, in turn, a clear desire on the part of the continent.

The African demand for a platform for the NATO and African relations undoubtedly matches the concept of the Southern Hub. One would easily claim the foundation of the Southern Hub has,

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therefore, found a just cause, but this also means that the effective execution of its activities will be critical.

During the last decade, the experiences in Libya have had a negative impact on the perception of NATO in Africa. Rebuilding lost trust will constitute an important first step, before developing an effective relationship with Africa. Russia and China are not the only rivals for NATO on the continent: but they both also present some lessons about how to act on the continent in terms of gaining and regaining trust and confidence.

NATO also needs an expanded presence in Africa with clearly defined goals in the short term to further build trust. However, NATO should view its engagement primarily in the long-term, not episodically, and it should engage regionally primarily through the African Union. If it acts in that way, NATO will gain more trust and legitimacy on the African continent, to the ultimate benefit of both.

Overall, the main objective of NATO in Africa should be contributing to the creation of the necessary conditions in order to foster security and development across the African continent.

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