

A THREAT-BASED STRATEGY FOR NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK

SINAN ÜLGEN AND CAN KASAPOĞLU

NATO's Southern flank poses a set of unique challenges to the alliance, with complex and diverse threats from both state and nonstate actors. This environment calls for a policy response framework that reflects the heterogeneity of the landscape. Achieving this aim will require building on existing foundations, adjusting domestic narratives, and revisiting the questions of priorities and burden sharing. NATO allies will need to reach a political consensus to overcome the threat of an introverted Western world accompanied by adverse consequences for global and regional security.

Key Threats and Policy Responses

- **Hybrid warfare:** This threat requires multidimensional strategies for territorial defense, cooperative security, and crisis management.
- **Russia's anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) buildup:** NATO should develop a new maritime strategy for the Southern flank, enhancing the capabilities of its Standing Maritime Group 2. NATO's deep-strike, precision-strike, and stealth capabilities should be leveraged through advanced air platforms and munitions in the Eastern Mediterranean.
- **Iran's ballistic-missile proliferation:** An effective response would combine enhanced missile-defense capabilities with deployment of F-22 fighter planes in Turkey.
- **State failure:** NATO should mitigate the consequences of security threats presented by Arab countries facing state failure and help partners address their governance challenges.
- **Radical and violent nonstate actors:** A key priority for NATO's response to violent extremism should be to develop a more effective counterterrorism strategy.
- **Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among nonstate actors:** NATO should seek to upgrade its WMD proliferation surveillance capabilities and improve its awareness of chemical and biological threats.

Strategic Dilemmas Facing the Alliance

- Given its budgetary impact, a Southern flank strategy would require a potentially difficult-to-forge political consensus among NATO members.
- When devoting more resources to the Southern flank requires assigning fewer resources to the East, differences between NATO allies' threat perceptions can create a bottleneck. NATO's July 2016 Warsaw summit will provide a unique opportunity for the alliance to overcome this strategic vulnerability and deal constructively with the potentially divisive issue of priorities.
- This strategy will require burden sharing, a polarizing issue in the transatlantic relationship. To move beyond this, European policymakers should reshape their domestic strategic communications and underline the need for Europe to start reinvesting in its own security.
- The rise of populism in the West will impact the ability of the transatlantic alliance to project peace and stability in the world. This is the key obstacle to the elaboration of a forward-looking strategy to address the security challenges of Europe's South. NATO leaders must avoid entering into a domestically driven era of international policy inertia.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sinan Ülgen is a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels.

Can Kasapoğlu is a defense analyst at the Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies (EDAM).

CONTACT

Christine Lynch
Communications Director
+32 2 209 29 93
lynch@ceip.org

CarnegieEurope.eu



[@Carnegie_Europe](https://twitter.com/Carnegie_Europe)



[facebook.com/
CarnegieEurope](https://facebook.com/CarnegieEurope)

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace is a unique global network of policy research centers in Russia, China, Europe, the Middle East, India, and the United States. Our mission, dating back more than a century, is to advance the cause of peace through analysis and development of fresh policy ideas and direct engagement and collaboration with decisionmakers in government, business, and civil society. Working together, our centers bring the inestimable benefit of multiple national viewpoints to bilateral, regional, and global issues.

© 2016 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. All rights reserved.

The Carnegie Endowment does not take institutional positions on public policy issues; the views represented here are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Carnegie, its staff, or its trustees.