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# **Predictable Strategy and Unpredictable Operations:**

## **The implications of agility in Northern Europe**

**Conor Rodihan**

**Lt Col Matthew Crouch, USMC**

**CDR Ron Fairbanks, USN**

**Foreword by General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., USMC (Ret.)**



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**Conor Rodihan**

**Lt Col Matthew Crouch, USMC**

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Cover: The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer Oscar Austin transits the Arctic Circle on Sept. 5, 2017. The US Navy ship was on a routine deployment supporting U.S. national security interests in Europe. *Photo: US Navy/MC2 Ryan U. Kledzik.*

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## Foreword

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**F**ormer Secretary of State Henry Kissinger describes the current security environment as the most complex and volatile since World War II. The challenges we face demand creative and disruptive solutions. In that context, Dynamic Force Employment was developed and implemented to enhance the military dimension of competition, deterrence, and responsiveness in the event deterrence fails.

The United States and its allies face strategic competition with revisionist China and Russia, along with the destabilization and proliferation challenges associated with North Korea and Iran. Meanwhile, violent extremist organizations remain a threat to the American people, our allies, and our way of life. While being careful to appropriately prioritize its responses, as a nation with global interests, the United States and its allies must effectively meet each of these challenges. To that end, the United States requires military capabilities and force posture that can support a coherent and comprehensive National Defense Strategy.

In addition to the dynamic geopolitical landscape, today the United States finds itself at a point where its competitive advantage has eroded, operational requirements have increased, and the pace of technological change has fundamentally affected the character of war. These trends require continued adaptation on the part of the United States, as well as its allies and partners. During my time as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, we began to focus on change in

four primary areas: how we plan; how we support strategic decision making; how we manage the force; and how we develop and design the force of tomorrow. Work in all of these areas must continue to ensure success in the transregional and all domain challenges of the twenty-first century.

Dynamic Force Employment (DFE) is simply a part of this effort to adapt in response to the much broader political and military strategic challenges the United States faces. But, properly designed and implemented, DFE can be impactful by providing proactive and scalable military options while maintaining and helping rebuild readiness. This paper offers an astute analysis of the concept, how it is evolving in practice, how it can further achieve its intended strategic effects—and perhaps most importantly—how the United States can continue to integrate its greatest competitive advantage: its allies and partners, particularly members of the NATO Alliance.

I can think of no better organization to assess how the United States can integrate its allies and partners further into our defense strategy and operations than the Atlantic Council. This paper provides an excellent construct for doing just that, and is useful reading for understanding how the United States and its allies can embrace adaptation in the use of the Joint Force.

*General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., USMC (Ret.)  
Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*

## Strategic Context Considerations

**D**ynamic Force Employment<sup>1</sup> (DFE) and the Global Operating Model<sup>2</sup> introduced in the 2018 US National Defense Strategy (NDS) were unveiled under the framework of the 2017 National Security Strategy and in response to an emergent shift in the security environment. DFE has its roots based in a review published in 2016, the first Joint Staff net assessment after a fifteen-year hiatus, that identified an accelerating erosion of the long-held US competitive advantage.<sup>3</sup> It responded to the geopolitical shift from a unipolar world and recognized renewed strategic competition. This shift in US defense policy has proven prescient.

This text sets out to examine DFE on multiple facets, first identifying its origins and how it has transitioned from a concept into an operationalized process. It also seeks to assess the degree to which the application of DFE is achieving its stated design goals and how this employment construct is impacting allied plans and posture, while intending to inform the conversation on how the employment of US (and allied) forces can be used to achieve the Alliance's strategic aims. Lastly, it aims to anticipate what the fate of DFE might be given the Biden administration's priorities and the ongoing strategic reviews.

Today the United States and its allies face an increasingly aggressive and emboldened challenge from revisionist powers to the post-World War II, liberal rules-based order. The international environment is increasingly multipolar and competitive, characterized by heightened competition between nation states. The United States and its democratic allies are on opposing sides of a strategic competition with China on one hand and Russia on the other. China openly seeks greater influence over an expanded sphere and Russia, in relative decline, is consequently more belligerent, playing the wild card of spoiler and influencer in its immediate European neighborhood and beyond; the two are aligning as and when conditions and their interests suit.

This multinodal arrangement also is shaped by: an emergent India loosely aligning with the West but still clinging to its strategic autonomy; a European Union challenged by internal stress, strategic decision-making barriers, and the aftermath of Brexit; an adapting NATO seeking to more clearly define its role and address key deficiencies developed since the end of the Cold War; a Middle East reorienting its security perspective relative to both Iran and Israel; and a world increasingly influenced by the economic growth of the People's Republic of China and frustrated by both China's and Russia's continuous engagement in proxy warfare and belligerent competition, better defined as conflict within the nonkinetic portions of the spectrum of warfare.<sup>4</sup>

Further strategic trends of significance to US and allied defense policy include: the ongoing emergence of disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence; the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and its economic and other repercussions; a shifting balance of strategic focus from the Atlantic region to the Indo-Pacific region; and the uncertainty of the United States' role in world leadership, as well as political and policy uncertainty born of domestic challenges in the United States. Correspondingly, an emergent China and disruptive Russia have fomented discussion of a loss of confidence in traditional democratic norms as means of fostering development. A growing skepticism of globalism has given rise to illiberalism and detrimental nationalist sentiment throughout the world, drawing countries to turn away from international cooperation.

As ever, all of this occurs in a security environment where finite resources yield meaningful constraints for security-policy decision makers and force hard decisions to balance priorities. In this environment the agile military force that the United States hopes to operationalize through DFE is employed under a defense strategy premised upon three key assumptions.

1 According to the 2018 NDS, "Dynamic Force Employment will more flexibly use ready forces to shape proactively the strategic environment while maintaining readiness to respond to contingencies and ensure long-term war-fighting readiness." The follow-on US National Military Strategy of 2018 defines DFE as "the force management framework to prioritize preparedness for war while meeting current force demands in day-to-day operations. By proactively shaping the security environment through identifying and exploiting strategic opportunities, DFE aligns Joint Force actions across multiple global campaign plans, defense critical missions, time horizons, war-fighting domains, and geographic boundaries." See Department of Defense, *Description of the National Military Strategy 2018*, 2018, 3, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/UNCLASS\\_2018\\_National\\_Military\\_Strategy\\_Description.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/UNCLASS_2018_National_Military_Strategy_Description.pdf).

2 According to the NDS, "The Global Operating Model describes how the Joint Force will be postured and employed to achieve its competition and wartime missions." Foundational capabilities include: nuclear; cyber; space; command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, information, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4I2SR) systems; strategic mobility, and counterproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. "It comprises four layers: contact, blunt, surge, and homeland. These are, respectively, designed to help us compete more effectively below the level of armed conflict; delay, degrade, or deny adversary aggression; surge war-winning forces and manage conflict escalation; and defend the US homeland."

3 Interview with General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., January 20, 2021.

4 Lauren Speranza, *A Strategic Concept for Countering Russian and Chinese Hybrid Threats*, Atlantic Council, July 16, 2020, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Strategic-Concept-for-Countering-Russian-and-Chinese-Hybrid-Threats-Web.pdf>.



An F/A-18E Super Hornet launches from the USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) in support of Trident Juncture 18. Photo: US Navy/MC3 Adelola Tinubu

First, that the military is a suitable and proper tool across the scope of competition in the twenty-first century.<sup>5</sup> This might have been questionable from a traditional liberal democratic perspective in 2016. However, continued aggressive behavior by both China and Russia led to clear consensus among the United States and its allies that a more muscular and active defense posture is warranted.<sup>6</sup>

Second, that the military can be used as a coercive tool to undergird diplomacy. US policy and posture in the Indo-Pacific are clearly indicative of the view that military power can affect adversaries' policy. US actions in the Taiwan Straits are a prominent example, but an academic justification is clear in the recent publication of the US Naval Service's tri-service publication of *Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power*.<sup>7</sup>

Third, that the military will have a role in conducting competitive activities below the threshold of armed conflict. Related to this assumption, the strategy also asserts that belligerence in the form of "salami-slicing tactics" and fait accompli strategies must be confronted with appropriate, scalable, and proportionate responses.<sup>8</sup> This follows logically from the second underlying assumption about the coercive effects of the military in the diplomatic space to preempt such tactics and strategies. This assumption also implies that US strategic goals require an approach to deterrence outside of that provided by the nuclear triad. This last point is critical for understanding the essential role of DFE. In concept, DFE serves to bolster deterrence by injecting uncertainty into enemy risk calculations and compensates for fewer forward forces that traditionally support the forward presence deterrence model.<sup>9</sup>

5 Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, 2018, 4, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

6 Lorne Cook, "US NATO Allies Still Short on Defense Spending Aims," Associated Press, October 22, 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/estonia-europe-canada-france-gross-domestic-product-d6592c8267efdac36d66651d13347833>.

7 Guo Yuandan, "US 'Two-Warship' Transit of Taiwan Straits Last, Desperate Move by Trump Admin: Observer," *Global Times*, December 31, 2020, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202012/1211521.shtml>; and US Marine Corps, Department of Navy, and Coast Guard, *Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power*, December 2020, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/16/2002553074/-1/-1/0/TRISERVICESTRATEGY.PDF>.

8 Joe Varnar, "Salami Slicing in the Himalayas," Modern War Institute at West Point, December 17, 2020, <https://mwi.usma.edu/salami-slicing-in-the-himalayas/>.

9 The Department of Defense defines forward presence as "maintaining forward-deployed or stationed forces overseas to demonstrate national resolve, strengthen alliances, dissuade potential adversaries, and enhance the ability to respond quickly to contingencies." Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, (Washington DC: The Joint Staff, January 2021), 88, <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf>.

# Dynamic Force Employment: Origin, Concept, Function, and Impacts

In order to understand how the concept of DFE has been operationalized by the US military, it is critical to understand not just its origin, but also the purposes behind its adoption and the distinct definitions (which are addressed later) that the phrase has taken on as the concept has become a practice. DFE was originated to accomplish three distinct effects. First, it stands as a method of using military force to contribute to achieving strategic outcomes in a changed environment; it influences the enemy's strategic calculus. Second, it serves to mitigate the risk of increasing requirements by balancing resources, improving readiness, and capitalizing on agility. Third, DFE deliberately introduces uncertainty for the adversary's planning by incorporating unpredictability in US operational activities. Each of these intended effects is evidenced in the different elements of DFE's origin, concept, and function.

DFE's origin, as noted previously, flows from the realization within US defense-policy planning circles that the strategic environment has shifted from one of unipolarity to one of multipolarity. Critically, accompanying this is the recognition that the character of warfare has changed; the multipolar environment is further characterized as being contentious, with specific efforts by Russia and China to use tactics with military characteristics below the threshold of war to meet their objectives. Both are seeking to reorient the conduct of world affairs to favor their interests without consideration for the norms of the rules-based order—an arrangement that governed international relations for much of the world during the Cold War and nearly all of it since the fall of the Berlin Wall.<sup>10</sup>

At its base DFE is an acknowledgement that resource constraints do not permit the United States to provide coverage everywhere while also maintaining sufficient operational reserve and readiness to create strategic dilemmas for adversaries. By design it leverages the agility of US forces against multiple threats, relying on a globally integrated threat assessment and top-down allocation of priorities to mitigate against the increasing adversarial

activities of malign actors. It is an attempt to answer the dilemma posed in asking: how does the United States optimize a limited capability and achieve strategic effects?<sup>11</sup>

The 2018 NDS directly addresses this challenge and attempts to provide a series of adjustments to US defense policy that are designed to equip the United States to emerge successfully from this competition:

We are facing increased global disorder, characterized by decline in the long-standing rules-based international order—creating a security environment more complex and volatile than any we have experienced in recent memory. Interstate strategic competition, not terrorism, is now the primary concern in US national security. . . . America's military has no preordained right to victory on the battlefield.<sup>12</sup>

Underpinning the above were the key lessons of the 2016 Joint Staff net assessment, and the subsequent National Military Strategy: that the United States now faces an environment where transnational threats render the compartmentalization of threats by region neither practical nor appropriate, and further, that integration of the joint planning effort would have to address this.<sup>13</sup>

This new threat environment evoked shifts in Department of Defense (DoD) thinking: first there was a recognition that the inventory of capabilities did not meet the projected requirements given the trajectory of US adversaries; second, that strategic thinking could not balkanize or divide the problem set, instead plans would be integrated to consider intertheater relationships from a global, interconnected lens; third, resource allocation was adjusted to reflect these considerations and prioritization became a top-down department instead of a theater decision; and fourth, force development and design initiatives were reoriented on this framework.<sup>14</sup> The 2018 NDS operationalizes those lessons through three lines of effort.

10 Varnar, "Salami Slicing."

11 Interview with General Dunford.

12 DoD, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy*, 1.

13 DoD, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, June 2015, 6, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015\\_National\\_Military\\_Strategy.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf).

14 Interview with General Dunford.





Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., USMC testifies before the House Armed Services Committee in Washington, DC. Photo: DoD/Air Force Tech. Sgt. Vernon Young Jr.

## NDS Lines of Effort

There are three specific lines of effort (LOEs) directed in the NDS: build a more lethal force, strengthen alliances, and reform the DoD for greater performance and affordability.<sup>15</sup> DFE plays a role in effecting the outcomes of each of these efforts.

In concept, the most frequently discussed aspect of DFE is its intent to produce unpredictability in force employment. Senior DoD leadership, most notably, former Secretary of Defense James Mattis, have characterized DFE as “strategically predictable, but operationally unpredictable.”

In the words of former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford, in application this is meant to:

[direct] the Joint Force to introduce unpredictability to adversary decision makers through Dynamic Force Employment. Dynamic Force Employment allows us to develop a wide range of proactive, scalable options and quickly deploy forces for emerging requirements while maintaining readiness to respond to contingencies.<sup>16</sup>

Beyond the description of DFE in the NDS and congressional testimony from DoD leadership, a September 2018 article, *Dynamic Force Employment: A Vital Tool in Winning Strategic Global Competitions*, by US Air Force officer Tyson Wetzel asserts that DFE’s intent is to take competitors by surprise through disrupting the previously routine and scripted deployments of US forces, which were previously based on planning completed years in advance. This hopefully creates scenarios where, he says, “US force

<sup>15</sup> Tyson Wetzel, “Dynamic Force Employment: A Vital Tool in Winning Strategic Global Competitions,” *The Strategy Bridge*, September 18, 2018, <https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2018/9/18/dynamic-force-employment-a-vital-tool-in-winning-strategic-global-competitions>.

<sup>16</sup> *The Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2019 and the Future Years Defense Program: Hearings on the Department of Defense Budget Posture Before the Senate Comm. on Armed Services*, 115th Cong. (April 26, 2018) (statement of General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff), <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/18-04-26-department-of-defense-budget-posture>.

deployments . . . catch competitors unprepared, leaving them questioning the purpose and intent of deployments and forcing them to alter their operational or strategic calculus.”<sup>17</sup>

Wetzel also asserts that inherent in developing irregular deployment patterns is a requirement that US forces develop greater agility, a necessary trend evident before DFE’s conception and one likely to outlast any particular operating concept given the global strategic context. Because DFE is designed to create irregularity in the deployment of forces, it will necessarily create irregularity in forward presence. The effective counter to this key detractor of DFE is to enhance the readiness of the force to respond to emerging situations. As conceived, a force practicing DFE correctly is not only deploying in a manner that resists routine, it also is capable of redeploying rapidly to respond to adversaries’ movements and crises. In this respect, DFE aims to reinforce lethality. A force that is more agile and responsive is capable of more quickly massing fires and generating the required regional military overmatch to achieve operational success and offset any reduced forward presence.

There is a duality in the relationship of DFE to the second NDS line of effort: strengthening alliances. While in concept this new way of dynamically employing the US joint force aims to be strategically predictable and to provide US allies with confidence in US commitment and capability to meet its security guarantees, in practice it is not clear that DFE achieves either.<sup>18</sup> Implied in the adoption of DFE is a requirement for closer linkage with allied forces not only for planning (without closer coordination, the operationally unpredictable force opens presence gaps), but also for interoperability, as presence gaps must be filled by multilateral forces. Despite the effectiveness of US allies in such operations, there are potential drawbacks in this regard depending on how DFE is implemented and how closely it is coordinated with allies.

A choice to induce uncertainty in the enemy calculus without close coordination with the allied forces that will be called upon to fill those spaces, where US presence is gapped, also induces uncertainty in the friendly calculus.<sup>19</sup>

This can only be mitigated with sufficiently integrated deployment planning. Further, when called into action, allies must be prepared to conduct operations in advance of the arrival of US forces. When US forces commence operations, only effective interoperability will yield the cohesive transition of command and control, and transfer of battlespace required on the modern battlefield. In this manner, DFE at once pressurizes the requirements on US and allied forces, but also encourages both sides to achieve the stated goal of strengthening alliances. Fortunately, the result of repeated conduct of DFE offers greater opportunity for concept rehearsal and plan validation along with iterative improvements in interoperability.

DFE creates a similar paradox for efforts at reforming the DoD for greater performance and affordability. As DFE levies a premium for agility and theoretically reduces deployment burden on some forces, it is occurring in an era of competition that has increased the usage rate on naval vessels and the flight hours on strategic air assets.<sup>20</sup> In the midst of efforts to develop a more efficient force, maintenance costs are on the rise,<sup>21</sup> and at one point in 2019, all six of the East Coast US carriers were in port for rest, refit, or repair.<sup>22</sup> While the improved performance and affordability LOE might be primarily focused on bureaucratic reform and force-modernization concerns, DFE is at least in one key sense detracting from that effort. In contrast, when it comes to funding for improved performance, the United States’ use of the European Deterrence Initiative funds to support enhanced prepositioning and improved infrastructure alongside allied efforts has yielded meaningful improvements in the ability of US and allied forces to mobilize and respond inside the European theater.

## Global Operating Model: Operationalized

The challenges of strategic competition and the realization that the US joint force was ill-prepared for warfare against a near-peer adversary in a contested environment drove the development of the so-called Global Operating Model (GOM) in the 2018 NDS.<sup>23</sup> The GOM was seen by the Office of the Secretary of Defense as a “new conceptual paradigm” to frame the department’s approach to war fighting

17 Wetzel, “Dynamic Force Employment.”

18 Melanie W. Sisson, “A Strategy for Competition,” commentary, Center for a New American Security, August 27, 2020, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/commentary/a-strategy-for-competition>.

19 Jeffrey W. Hornung, “Japan and Dynamic Force Employment,” commentary, the RAND Blog, RAND Corporation, June 23, 2020, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/06/japan-and-dynamic-force-employment.html>.

20 Interview with officials from the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 3, 2021.

21 David B. Larter, “Despite Record Budgets, the US Navy Is Short Hundreds of Millions for Maintenance,” *Defense News*, August 19, 2019, <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2019/08/19/despite-record-budgets-the-us-navy-is-short-hundreds-of-millions-for-maintenance/>.

22 Paul McLeary, “All 6 East Coast Carriers in Dock, Not Deployed: Hill Asks Why,” *Breaking Defense*, October 28, 2019, <https://breakingdefense.com/2019/10/all-6-east-coast-carriers-are-at-the-dock-hill-presses-for-oversight/>.

23 *The National Defense Strategy: Hearings on Implementation Before the Senate Comm. on Armed Services*, 116<sup>th</sup> Cong. 6 (January 29, 2019) (statement of Elbridge A. Colby, director of the Defense Program, Center for a New American Security), [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Colby\\_01-29-19.pdf](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Colby_01-29-19.pdf).



A B-2 Spirit, assigned to Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, takes off at Lajes Field, Azores, March 19, 2021. The bomber supported a Bomber Task Force mission during which it integrated with Norwegian F-35s in the High North. *Photo:* U.S. Air Force/Tech. Sgt. Heather Salazar.

in this new era beyond the framework used in the Middle East against state and nonstate adversaries with lesser forces than Russia and China.<sup>24</sup> Understanding the DoD's DFE framework requires an understanding of the GOM outlined in the 2018 NDS and how it has been put into practice by the military.

The GOM outlined four "layers" of forces and assets: blunt, contact, surge, and homeland. These categories are an intellectual framework for addressing the operational challenges posed by near-peer threats and their specific theories of victories, while also acknowledging the realities of the US military's readiness crisis after decades of war in the Middle East and the cost of modernization necessary to meet future challenges. Though the unclassified summary of the NDS available to the public does not delineate the difference between the GOM force layers, defense

analyst Susanna V. Blume summarizes the categories succinctly in *War on the Rocks*:

Contact forces are "designed to help us compete more effectively below the level of armed conflict." These forces do not necessarily need to be full spectrum ready, but they do need to remain focused on competition, vice assurance, or engagement. Blunt forces "delay, degrade, or deny adversary aggression." These forces must be combat credible and kept in a high state of readiness, with access to the full suite of enablers and supporting infrastructure. . . . Surge forces are the "war-winning forces" . . . charged with managing conflict escalation . . . [while] homeland forces . . . defend US territory.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *The National Defense Strategy: Hearings 6* (statement of Colby).

<sup>25</sup> Susanna Blume, *How the United States Can Get More Strategic Bang for Its Force Structure Buck*, commentary, *War on the Rocks*, February 1, 2018, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/02/united-states-can-get-strategic-bang-force-structure-buck/>.

One of the lead authors of the 2018 NDS, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development Elbridge A. Colby, explained in testimony before the Senate Committee on Armed Services in 2019 that the contact layer is especially oriented toward activities in the “gray zone” and day-to-day competition that would help prevent a surprise attack by either main adversary. This implies that such forces are forward deployed at the nebulous front lines of strategic competition. Meanwhile, blunt forces could include standoff capabilities like long-range fires and do not necessarily rely just on forward-deployed forces.<sup>26</sup> As Blume analyzed, in order to best expend precious readiness, the model provides clarity regarding which operations and exercises best serve the goal of strategic competition and clarifies the role of forward-deployed forces in order to prevent mission creep.<sup>27</sup>

The US Joint Staff envisioned DFE as “one of the principal methods by which the Joint Force operationalizes the NDS’s Global Operating Model,” as it allowed the joint force to meet current global operational needs while also rebuilding readiness (or surge capacity) to maintain an advantage against other great powers.<sup>28</sup> In other words, given the readiness challenges and global requirements that may require rebalancing forces from and to certain theaters, the joint force aims to use its deployments as strategically as possible. For this reason, the initial application of DFE utilized a two-year time horizon to identify specific points where operationally unpredictable actions would proactively incur friction for adversaries’ planning and responses.<sup>29</sup> The US military utilizes the concept of DFE to use forces from across all layers of the GOM to enable operations that “proactively shape the strategic environment,”<sup>30</sup> and demonstrate combat credibility against Russia and China. The DFE concept envisions forces both from the United States and those already in theater as being able to demonstrate agility and strategically shape an adversary’s calculus. If deployments under the DFE framework are not demonstrating combat credibility or are leaving allies in the region flummoxed, it is because the framework makes it difficult to explain why US forces are present at one particular time and not at others.

In implementation, this paper finds that DoD employs forces in line with the principles of the GOM without using the conceptual terms of blunt, contact, surge, and homeland

as discreet classifications. Rather, DoD cordons off forces within the Global Force Management Allocation Plan (GFMAP) to ensure it has adequate ready units to meet any emergent crisis, while also retaining units back from deployment for readiness purposes. These cohorts, the Immediate Response Force (IRF) and Contingency Response Force (CRF), are allocated in line with NDS priority missions and represent progressive tiers of readiness from which designated units can be rapidly deployed. The IRF and CRF constructs have taken greater hold institutionally than the layers outlined in the GOM, though the origin of these two categories predates the 2018 NDS. For instance, DoD employment plans for fiscal year 2021 are specifically designed to operationalize the DFE framework and to test the IRF against agility requirements of rapid repositioning in the face of threats. Additionally, the adoption of the Bomber Task Force has created a group of assets from within the Air Force that employ the DFE concept by relying on mobility to move assets and deliver strategic effect in a crisis. This serves to make operations less predictable due to the effects the task force can bring, rather than its stationed geographic location, and demonstrates how the Air Force is planning for global responses rather than geographically limited apportionment across distinct regions.<sup>31</sup>

An explanation of the GOM and DFE might be summarized in this way: In order for the United States military to compete effectively it must have sufficient forces to serve in all aspects of a potential conflict, including at the front line, standoff capabilities to blunt an adversary’s strategic aims, an ability to surge further forces for a particular conflict, and sufficient forces to continuously defend the homeland. However, the demand for readiness and resource constraints do not allow the United States to have forces deployed at all times in all desired locations, especially given rogue threats beyond Russia and China. The DFE concept is intended to mitigate this risk by demonstrating the US joint force’s readiness and agility to respond rapidly to emerging threats globally. To accomplish this, the GFMAP designates specific forces into the IRF and CRF to ensure adequate forces are poised for rapid deployment no matter their geographic location. The DFE framework further mitigates risk by introducing uncertainty in the operational environment through proactive deployments intended to complicate adversaries’ planning and demonstrates lethality and resolve.

26 *The National Defense Strategy: Hearings 6* (statement of Colby).

27 Blume, *How the United States Can Get More Strategic Bang for Its Force Structure Buck*.

28 DoD, *Description of the National Military Strategy 2018*, 3.

29 Interview with General Dunford.

30 DoD, *Unclassified Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction: List of Priorities—Department of Defense Transportation Movement Priority System*, Glossary, February 12, 2020, GL-5, <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Library/Instructions/CJCSI%204120.02E.pdf?ver=uVO27JvPPG36M-66K0ySiQ%3D%3D>.

31 Mark T. Esper, *Implementing the National Defense Strategy: A Year of Successes*, July 17, 2020, 5, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Jul/17/2002459291-1-1/1/NDS-FIRST-YEAR-ACCOMPLISHMENTS-FINAL.pdf>.

All the above operational considerations must be understood as derivative from one key point: DFE was conceived first and foremost as a tool to assist the US joint force in delivering effects in support of specific strategic goals. Conceptually, success is contingent upon incorporating allied forces into the global operating model and developing an employment plan that correctly posts allied forces against presence gaps created by DFE and more clearly articulate the intent of irregular deployments. Consultations and planning with allies will also be necessary prior to any force reallocations that the United States pursues in order to rebuild readiness of the overall national joint force. Such reallocations would be expected to mostly take place in areas where the United States is not focused on the military dimension of competition with Russia and China—namely the military operations in Middle East.

### **Dynamic Force Employment: Practical Definitions**

DFE's operationalization by the US Department of Defense can be further defined in three distinct ways, with the first being the clear conceptual understanding (noted previously) that is used to define DFE's purpose: achieve strategic ends through dynamic employment of the force, generating uncertainty for the adversary and using agility to impact adversary thinking and action. This paper uses the terms "DFE" or "the DFE concept" to signal this definition.

The second definition, used within the DoD and which this paper refers to as the "DFE process," describes the specific process whereby a deployment of forces which qualifies as a dynamic force employment is approved. This process is distinct from the broader concept of achieving agility and impacting an adversary's decision-making calculus. It is instead the specific series of steps followed within the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense to achieve approval of deployments that apply DFE concepts and require forces or authorities not already assigned to combatant commanders. These events must meet predetermined criteria for a dynamic force employment that are paired to the four principles for generating unpredictability (seizing the initiative; challenging the enemy calculus; demonstrating agility; and dictating tempo). As in the case of the freedom of navigation operations conducted by the US Navy, these criteria impact if and when the DoD might conduct a specific short-notice operation or plan a more unpredictable maneuver.

The third case is manifest in operational practice and, as evidenced when assessing the implementation of the

DFE concept, shows the interpretations can fall short of the concept. In fact, the implementation of DFE globally is viewed in different ways depending on the command. In the US Navy's Pacific Fleet, DFE means to take a ship already on deployment and quickly shift its mission from the East China Sea down to the South China Sea, for example, in order to meet an emerging threat or quickly fill a gap caused by another ship's mission degradation. In the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, however, it means shifting a vessel from one deployment locale to another prior to the unit's deployment, or possibly taking a ship that is ready for deployment and shifting its deployment date up by several months to meet urgent needs. Each of these approaches meet the intent of the concept. However, only one is truly dynamic and has the ability to confuse the adversary.

When a fleet commander suddenly alters the mission and location of a key asset such as an aircraft carrier, it potentially forces adversaries to shift their focus and dedicate assets to a location they otherwise would not have. Due to the fairly large number of US assets available to the commander in the Indo-Pacific, the DoD's priority region, this task can be done with relative ease. Additionally, the US allies and partners in the region (namely Japan, South Korea, and Australia) have shown that they, too, can be flexible and will often fill a gap in certain missions when a US ship is called upon to meet DFE requirements. In the Indo-Pacific, allies and partners are more ready to meet the challenges presented by DFE due the need to routinely alter their own missions and locations to meet challenges presented by adversaries. However, other geographical locations are not so easily able to adapt to the DFE concept.

In Northern Europe, the potential for Russian aggression or even territorial incursion is a legitimate threat. Though the dynamism wrought by DFE in Northern Europe poses challenges for defending allies and partners, it also presents US commanders with increased opportunities for engagement and training with allies, as well as the chance to test and refine operational plans. Still, because fait accompli challenges posed by Russia are unique to the region, the operational use of DFE needs to be implemented differently than in the Indo-Pacific. In an effort to keep DFE effective in the Northern European region, there must be certain variances in method. European allies and partners need to be kept in the loop, as best as possible, in order to ensure they can plan accordingly to meet a potential gap in coverage in a critical location given limited resources. This paper uses the term "DFE deployment" to broadly describe the use of US forces to meet the intent of DFE.

# Dynamic Force Employment in Practice

**D**ynamic Force Employment has been put into practice over the last three years in an effort to gain the advantage in the competitive environment. One previously stated intent of DFE is to allow US forces the ability to easily shift from one mission to another in order to meet certain challenges, either those presented by adversaries or other outside influence (weather, equipment failures, etc.) on short notice. It is designed as a means to throw off adversaries and demonstrate that US forces are not tied to or hamstrung by any one mission set or location; rather, they are agile and can be maneuvered from one geographical location to another to meet any tactical, operational, or strategic goal. Operationalized within the model, dynamic deployments generate unpredictability through the four previously mentioned principles: seizing the initiative; challenging the enemy calculus; demonstrating agility; and dictating tempo.

## Agility on Display in Northern Europe

A look at Northern Europe provides further insights into the strategic direction and future dynamic operations of the United States, its allies, and the Alliance overall. Since the illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO has taken significant strides to adapt its posture and structure to deter more effectively and coherently across the Alliance's flanks. Steps in NATO's adaptation for multiregion, all-domain, and full-spectrum competition and conflict can be seen in the following actions: reform to NATO's command structure and the NATO Readiness Initiative in 2018; introduction of the NATO Military Strategy in 2019; the development of a concept for Defense and Deterrence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (DDA) in 2021, which considers the Alliance's activities across all domains and from competition to conflict; and a forthcoming plan for an area-wide strategy for the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, for crisis and conflict, among other guidance and developments.<sup>32</sup> Fundamentally, these adaptations represent a multinational and European-focused version of the NDS's imperative for global integration.

These efforts within NATO are driving strategic adaptations among NATO members. They trend toward a more

dynamic and integrated approach to the use of national forces for strategic allied effect in a flexible manner that reflects and balances the many priorities of the Alliance and its members while ensuring deterrence. This is essentially the same forcing function that the DFE concept creates from a US perspective—a more globally and regionally integrated strategy and force, reliant on flexibility. Allies are aligning quickly to this new concept, but the dynamism already shown by the United States is still several years away from occurring in a NATO context.<sup>33</sup> Still, evaluating US activities specifically can shed light on the intended use of, and implications for, a more dynamic US and eventually allied force.

Alongside these critical adaptations in NATO's structure, posture, and mission, the United States has responded to strategic competition in Europe by reassuring its allies of US commitment to collective defense through greater presence and activity on the continent over the past six years.<sup>34</sup> As Dynamic Force Employment has been implemented, Northern Europe has been a focal point for the United States to test it and other concepts in the practice of developing a global strategy and posture suited to a more agile operating model. The first example of a DFE deployment occurred in Europe in 2018 with the USS *Harry S. Truman* carrier strike group.

Despite the heavy emphasis in the 2018 NDS on the DFE concept and its role in assuring allies, DoD has rarely conducted deployments that follow the DFE process in conjunction with allies and partners around the world, including in Northern Europe.<sup>35</sup> In part, this is due to the fact that practically in the planning and operating stages, there is little to be gained from explaining whether a deployment will meet the criteria of the DFE process, or whether DoD considers the deployment simply an exercise. This has implications that will be expounded upon later.

Still, Northern Europe has seen a number of deployments and maneuvers that have been characterized by DoD as, or might be considered from the outside to be, examples of the DFE concept. The aforementioned deployment of the USS *Harry S. Truman* CSG in 2018 as part of NATO's Exercise Trident Juncture, and subsequent continued

32 Conversation with US government officials, February 24, 2021.

33 Conversation with US government officials, February 24, 2021.

34 John Vandiver, "700 Marines Arrive in Norway for Six-month Mission," *Stars and Stripes*, September 27, 2019, <https://www.stripes.com/news/700-marines-arrive-in-norway-for-six-month-mission-1.600760>.

35 Conversation with US officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, December 15, 2020.

activity in Europe, has so far been the most prominent example of a named DFE deployment.<sup>36</sup> This will be mirrored in 2021 with another CSG deployment into the High North (another term for the European Arctic region) meant to demonstrate US commitment to the region and perform yet another stress test for East Coast-based carriers under the DFE concept.<sup>37</sup> On a smaller level, during the 2018 CSG deployment, carrier-based aircraft participated in NATO's Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) exercise in the Baltic Sea from the Adriatic Sea, the first time such an exercise had occurred. This was highlighted by then-commander Admiral James Foggo III as an example of the DFE process operationalized and critically demonstrated the growing emphasis on intratheater flexibility.<sup>38</sup>

Other named DFE deployments have included the rapid rotation of two battalion-sized elements from an armored brigade combat team in Texas to a training area in Poland in 2019. In order to test NATO's concept of deterrence by rapid reinforcement and to reduce deployment timelines, these units drew on prepositioned stocks in the Netherlands for an exercise with NATO allies.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, during the final phase of the Defender-Europe 2020 exercise, a combined arms battalion from the United States conducted an emergency deployment readiness exercise to Poland (again in order to exercise another DFE deployment of an Army unit to Northeast Europe), drew and fielded prepositioned equipment, and executed a subsequent live-fire exercise.<sup>40</sup> These smaller and specifically directed DFE deployments are emblematic of the US Army's transition to "strategic readiness" and the ability to "dynamically project force and set the theater by mobilizing and deploying forces, sustaining them in a crisis, and deploying them when their mission is complete."<sup>41</sup> These two examples also represent a third form of US presence in Europe in the land domain alongside permanent

forward-deployed forces and persistent rotational forces: episodic deployments.<sup>42</sup> Given that the greatest value is placed on US land forces by US allies and partners, this growing shift toward episodic deployments is notable.

Air Force units also have participated in DFE deployments into Northern Europe, such as the deployment of F-35 and F-15 aircraft from the United States to Germany as part of Operation Rapid Forge.<sup>43</sup> Though not specifically named DFE deployments, increasingly frequent short-notice US bomber flights from the United States to the High North and European theater are examples of the agile operational tempo inherent in the Dynamic Force Employment concept but also sought more broadly in the NDS, as well as a sign of the attention Northern Europe and the High North are receiving in US defense planning.<sup>44</sup> These sorts of deployments do not only draw on units stationed in the United States for priorities in Europe. In addition to the carrier-based aircraft employed in BALTOPS 2018, two High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems were dynamically deployed from Germany to Romania in April 2021, while US Navy ships based in Spain also have deployed more dynamically intra-Europe to Northern Europe specifically, among other instances.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, given the DFE concept's role in achieving global integration, a more agile US joint force also has led the US military to redeploy Europe-based forces to other regions, mostly to the Middle East. Of particular note are the DFE deployments of F-16s stationed in Italy and Germany to the United Arab Emirates in 2019 and 2020.<sup>46</sup> Though these temporarily and rapidly redeployed forces are not always forces based in Northern Europe, they are the forces that would help form the initial response to a crisis in Northern Europe, particularly the air units. Therefore, and as noted previously, the Dynamic Force Employment

36 Megan Eckstein, "Foggo: US Navy Forces in Europe Sufficient to Handle Threats—But Only with Strong Collaboration with Allies," USNI News, US Naval Institute, October 25, 2018, <https://news.usni.org/2018/10/25/foggo-u-s-navy-forces-europe-sufficient-handle-threats-strong-collaboration-allies>.

37 Interview with officer from the Norwegian Navy, November 16, 2020.

38 Christopher Woody, "The Navy's Top Officer in Europe Says the US's New Strategy Has Already Duped the Russians," *Business Insider*, December 21, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/admiral-says-navys-new-fleet-strategy-already-fooled-the-russians-2018-12>. The officer, Admiral Foggo, has since retired.

39 US Army Europe and Africa, "Armored Unit Deploys to Europe, Draws Prepositioned Stocks as Part of Dynamic Force Employment," March 19, 2019, <https://www.europeafrica.army.mil/ArticleViewPressRelease/Article/1788500/armored-unit-deploys-to-europe-draws-prepositioned-stocks-as-part-of-dynamic-fo/>.

40 US Army Europe and Africa, "Armored Unit Will Deploy to Europe for Final Phase of Defender-Europe 2020 Linked Training," press release, July 10, 2020, <https://www.europeafrica.army.mil/ArticleViewNews/Article/2269702/press-release-armored-unit-will-deploy-to-europe-for-final-phase-of-defender-eu/>.

41 US Army Europe and Africa, "Defender-Europe 2020," Stand-To!, US Army website, February 7, 2020, <https://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2020/02/07/>.

42 Conversation with Officers in US European Command, January 14, 2021.

43 US Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa, "Operation Rapid Forge Tests Department of Defense's Dynamic Force Employment and F-35s in Europe," press release no. 060719, July 16, 2019, <https://www.usafe.af.mil/News/Press-Releases/Article/1905658/operation-rapid-forge-tests-department-of-defenses-dynamic-force-employment-and/>.

44 Thomas Nilsen, "Norwegian Fighters Fly alongside Six B-52 Bombers," *Independent Barents Observer*, August 25, 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/08/norwegian-fighters-fly-alongside-six-b-52-bombers>; and US Army Europe and Africa, "Armored Unit Will Deploy to Europe."

45 US Navy, "US, UK Ships Operate in the Barents Sea," press release, May 4, 2020, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/2284536/us-uk-ships-operate-in-the-barents-sea/>.

46 Brian W. Everstine, "Spangdahlem F-16s Head to Middle East," *Air Force Magazine*, November 16, 2020, <https://www.airforcemag.com/spangdahlem-f-16s-head-to-middle-east/>.



A B-1B Lancer assigned to the 9th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron is refueled at Bodø Air Force Station, Norway, March 8, 2021. This is the first time that a B-1 has landed within the Arctic Circle. *Photo: US Air Force/Airman 1st Class Colin Hollowell.*

concept has the potential to both fill gaps in presence, but also to create gaps, and to do so on short notice for allies and partners.

The assumption underlying the DFE concept that US forces are overstretched and DFE's inherent linkage to the NDS key line of effort to develop a more lethal force have not only brought rapid deployments into and out of the Northern European area; they also are shaping US strategy and posture in Northern Europe and the entire European theater more broadly. The rotational year-round presence of seven hundred US Marines in Norway was ended this summer in favor of a more varied and intermittent presence

for twice-yearly exercises, part of the US Marine Corps's efforts to develop a force designed and structured to deter China.<sup>47</sup> Though yet unseen, these twice-yearly exercises could be coupled with a greater US naval presence in the High North.<sup>48</sup> Policy makers also have emphasized that, in theory, the DFE process would replace, where appropriate, heel-to-toe rotations, such as those seen in Norway.<sup>49</sup> The politically motivated withdrawal of US forces from Germany that was announced in the summer of 2020 and halted under the Biden administration, and the upcoming US Global Force Posture Review announced by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, also offer opportunities for evaluating how an increasingly dynamic US force might be

47 Philip Athey, "Marine Corps Announces End to Year-Round Deployment to Norway," *Marine Corps Times*, August 13, 2020, <https://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/your-marine-corps/2020/08/13/marine-corps-announces-end-to-year-round-deployment-to-norway/>.

48 Thomas Nilsen, "American Flags in the Barents Sea Is 'the New Normal,' Says Defense Analyst," *Independent Barents Observer*, May 8, 2020, <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2020/05/american-flags-new-normal-barents-sea-says-defence-analyst>.

49 Conversation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, December 15, 2020.





Source: The British Army (<https://www.army.mod.uk/news-and-events/events/defender-europe-20/>)

postured in the European theater and how that might impact allied cooperation.<sup>50</sup>

As the DFE concept enhances the agility and responsiveness of the force, the United States and NATO have simultaneously continued to adapt their strategies for defense and deterrence toward a strategy that relies on responsiveness, or rapid reinforcement, for deterrence. The US Army’s large-scale Defender Europe 2020 and 2021 exercises (and before them, Trident Juncture 2018), in which the US Army practiced the logistics of rapidly deploying a combat credible force from the United States to Europe, signaled to allies and adversaries the future of the US contribution to European deterrence. That is, though some

level of US ground, air, and naval forces will always be stationed in Europe to come to the defense of any ally in the immediate phase of a conflict, significant levels of reinforcement, readiness, and agility would be required of the United States and its allies to effectively enable response to a conflict in Northern Europe.<sup>51</sup> In essence, Defender Europe 2020 and 2021 identified some of the strategic implications of a more agile and US-based force.

This transition to a more agile force and posture is in its early phases and will present long-term and sometimes slowly developing implications for strategic and operational cooperation between the United States and its allies and partners. However, the immediate impact of the DFE

50 The plans announced by the Trump administration as part of the withdrawal from Germany also included the redeployment of an F-16 squadron to Italy, the unspecified rotational deployment of some armored units to the Black Sea region, and the relocation of US European Command and Africa Command headquarters. The expectation is that Secretary of Defense Austin’s Global Force Posture Review will adjudicate on these plans as part of its analysis of US posture in Europe.

51 Gareth Thomas, Peter Williams, Yanitsa Dyakova, “Exercise Defender-Europe 2020: Enablement and Resilience in Action,” *NATO Review*, June 16, 2020, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/2020/06/16/exercise-defender-europe-20-enablement-and-resilience-in-action/index.html>.

concept garnered attention from experts. The very idea that the concept strives to inject unpredictability into the operating environment has sparked concerns in the policy community over how it will impact stability vis-à-vis adversaries. This is an acute concern in Northern Europe, where on NATO's northern flank, Norway is reliant on transparency with Moscow as it balances NATO's dual-track deterrence and dialogue approach toward Russia.<sup>52</sup> That the United States would conduct deployments that, by design, attempt to inject unpredictability into Moscow's decision calculus in Northern Europe and the High North is thought to heighten the risk of misunderstanding and could lead to rapidly spiraling crises in a region of strategic importance for both NATO and Russia.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, a NATO-led response to Russian provocation below the thresholds of armed conflict is often complicated by a lack of a consensus on how and whether to respond.<sup>54</sup>

This is a valid concern and one that should be a priority for the Pentagon to answer, whether it maintains DFE as a concept or decides to move on in the next National Defense Strategy. Yet so far, policy makers are still trying to assess what indicators work as criteria for measuring the impact of any specific DFE deployment on an adversary's decision-making.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, impacting an adversary's decision-making calculus through deployments alone is a very high bar to clear and initial use of the concept suggests Russian decision-making is unimpacted by DFE deployments.<sup>56</sup> This is further reinforced through assessments of the United States' freedom of navigation program.<sup>57</sup> In order for a DFE deployment to have an effect on an adversary, the adversary needs to be aware of its occurrence and of its intent. If it is not, and deployments are not directly connected to strategic messaging, the DFE deployment risks not impacting the adversary at all or even possibly unintentionally impacting the adversary, which could lead to instability.

Equally, if not more important for regional stability in Northern Europe and more broadly, is how the Dynamic Force Employment concept impacts and is perceived by allies in the region. If the overall strategy behind the

concept, the use of the DFE process, and intent behind deployments are not explained to allies and partners, then when the United States is unpredictable in the eyes of an adversary it is also unpredictable in the eyes of its allies and partners. This is an especially risky proposition in areas such as the High North, where key allies such as Denmark, Norway, and the United Kingdom are critical to successful deterrence and stability. Some allies have been positive about the concept despite few named DFE deployments in Europe, but involving key allies in the US decision-making and planning process around the DFE concept, process, and deployments, or any other future agile operating concept for that matter, will be critical to the success of the overall US defense strategy in the region.

Going forward, the Pentagon is moderating expectations with regard to what extent DFE can impact and shape adversaries' decision-making in Northern Europe and other regions.<sup>58</sup> As the United States adjusts its priorities under a new presidential administration, DFE specifically and the goal of building a more agile force overall are likely to be emphasized as complementary to allocated forward presence, rather than a mechanism to shape adversaries' actions. In other words, it will likely be more narrowly intended as a hedge against the fact that some previously forward deployed units have been returned to the United States.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, the current usage of DFE planning and deployments to validate and refine operational plans and build interoperability with allies and partners has been beneficial, and similar usage of a more dynamic force in the future will yield further dividends.<sup>60</sup>

Still, even if the concept of DFE is restrained in the next NDS, the global security environment and resource constraints will continue to necessitate an emphasis on agility. This is likely to fall along the lines of the strategy and operations visible in the Defender Europe 2020 and 2021 exercises, as well as the agile elements that were a part of Operation Rapid Forge and Exercise Trident Juncture 2018 and the agility sought through NATO's DDA concept. This has significant implications for US defense cooperation with allies and partners, as well as multilateral cooperation within Europe.

52 Rachel Ellehuus, Johannes Gullestad Rø, Robin Allers, and Ingeborg Bjur, "Surprise and Stability in the High North," commentary, Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 14, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/surprise-and-stability-high-north>.

53 Ellehuus et al., "Surprise and Stability."

54 Interview with US government officials, February 24, 2021.

55 Conversation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, December 15, 2020.

56 Conversation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

57 Douglas Briller, *Reassessing the US Freedom of Navigation Program in a Complex Competitive Environment*, US Naval War College, October 25, 2018, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1077869.pdf>.

58 Conversation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, December 15, 2020.

59 Conversation with the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

60 Conversation with US European Command, January 14, 2021.

# Implications for Allied Defense Planners

**W**hether the Dynamic Force Employment construct is maintained or adapted under the Biden administration, an agile operating concept that provides DoD a tool below the level of armed conflict for use in global competition is one that is unlikely to fall to the wayside. As such, there are a number of potential trends worth greater assessment.

**Integration and communication will determine whether DFE is “strategically predictable.”** As it was designed, the DFE concept is only a tool used to support the military dimension of a national strategy for competition. For Dynamic Force Employment to be strategically predictable, it must be implemented within a whole-of-government strategy and aim to achieve specific strategic outcomes within the overarching strategy. Strategic predictability also requires that US allies and partners understand these intended effects and the overarching goals behind them. If these are not clearly communicated to allies and partners, ensuring strategic predictability in theaters where friendly nations are critical will be a challenge for the United States. Coordinated planning with allies through the entire planning cycle is likely too difficult to achieve, so ensuring allies have a clear understanding of the strategy must go hand-in-hand with learning through practice how allies can integrate into the DFE process and DFE deployments within an approximately ninety-day planning cycle.

**Europe will see more episodic developments in US forward presence.** The operationalization of the DFE concept and an overarching focus on agility are resetting the force management framework, leading to adaptations in US forward presence in Europe, such as the change in the persistent rotational presence of US Marines in Norway and the execution of large-scale exercises such as Defender 2020 and 2021. In some cases, these or other forces are being pulled back, ready for temporary or rotational deployments to theaters of global strategic importance such as Northern Europe. Allies in Northern Europe should operate under the assumption that at least some further drawdowns, repositioning, or adaptations in forward-deployed US forces are likely as the United States tries to hedge against multiple threats globally and continue its prioritization of the Indo-Pacific theater.<sup>61</sup> This is particularly important in the context of broader allied force-generation

concerns. As evidenced by the slower-than-desired implementation of the NATO Readiness Initiative and force-generation shortfalls in NATO’s command-and-control and standing operations and missions, the Alliance is already spread too thin and reliant on the United States to fill roles it might not be able to play consistently in the long term.<sup>62</sup>

What will be particularly noted by allies and partners will be shifts in US land-domain presence, given the importance of those forces to a conflict in Europe. Though any changes in US presence can significantly impact cohesion within NATO, as some allies perceive the moves as a sign of shrinking US commitment to collective defense, maintaining even a minimal US forward ground presence generally has a deterrent effect. It also is a key reassurance for allies, as evidenced by the interest among the Alliance’s front-line members in maintaining even a limited number of US troops on a permanent basis. However, as the United States evaluates the need for agility and mobility in its forward deployed forces where appropriate and necessary, it is worth noting that a RAND study, *What Deters and Why*, has shown that the more mobile these forward-deployed forces are, the less evidence there is that they deter. This could come down to the belief that mobile forces are perceived as a lesser sign of commitment, or that their impact is difficult to measure.<sup>63</sup>

**Middle East priorities will still draw resources.** Allied planners also must continue to recognize that despite the 2018 US National Defense Strategy’s focus on competition with China and Russia, requirements in the Middle East will frequently take precedence and inevitably draw forces away from other missions. These demands will create tension in the agile forces allocated to Europe (as already evidenced by the multiple F-16 deployments from US forces stationed in Europe to the Middle East) and the higher-readiness forces in the United States, from which most DFE deployments will be drawn and which are the forces ready to shape the strategic environment and rapidly transition to combat in a conflict in Northern Europe. This is not necessarily a drawback, as forces in Europe that can be deployed to and affect dynamics in the Middle East allow Europe to continue as a hub of global strategic value.

This is certainly not a new dynamic, but it will be more pronounced with a force that has global demands alongside

61 See the recommendations made in a recent report sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of the Army on the future US Army force posture in Europe: JP Clark et al., *Striking the Balance: US Army Force Posture in Europe, 2028*, US Army War College, June 2020, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/3729.pdf>.

62 Interview with US government officials, February 24, 2021.

63 Michael Mazarr et al., *What Deters and Why: Exploring Requirements for Effective Deterrence of Interstate Aggression*, RAND Corporation, 2018, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2451.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2451.html).

an episodic forward presence in Europe. Similar to adapting to episodic US forward presence, allies should have the capabilities available and ready, on short notice, to plug the presence gaps such a situation might create, while also ensuring they have the capacity to appropriately heighten the readiness of their own standard or reserve units per on-the-ground conditions in Northern Europe. This would be a useful practice should substantial elements of the IRF (from which most DFE deployments are drawn) be engaged in conflict or extended activity in the Middle East or elsewhere for a significant period of time.

**Greater stress will be placed on high-readiness forces.**

Given the above, there is likely to be a sustained reliance on European higher-readiness forces to fill multiple roles, including plugging presence gaps as well as exercising alongside and participating in DFE deployments. Such a reliance could potentially strain NATO Europe’s small and limited existing high-readiness forces. NATO has recognized the need for a larger pool of ready forces across the Alliance and taken a significant step through an initiative dubbed the four thirties.<sup>64</sup> However, these forces, particularly those of allies who border or are in close proximity to Russia, are likely to be called upon most frequently for both of the aforementioned reasons. This will stress their readiness to new levels and potentially weaken their preparedness for conflict. This is a tension the United States faces as well, with some policy makers concerned that DFE’s constant drain on the IRF will potentially have the opposite intended effect of the DFE concept and actually reduce readiness in the long term.<sup>65</sup>

In the future, allies might reconsider how they allocate resources for national readiness to counteract or account for this trend. This might include but would not be limited to rebalancing the distribution between high-readiness and reserve/conscripted forces; developing a greater diversity in high-readiness forces, particularly enablers; placing greater emphasis on plug-and-play interoperability with other allied high-readiness forces;<sup>66</sup> or even reorienting the mission of high-readiness forces.<sup>67</sup>

**DFE offers lessons-learned to refine operational plans and capabilities.**

So far, this paper assesses that the DFE concept’s strategic impact is most evidenced by the benefit that repeated testing of interoperability with allies and partners has on US and allied defense planning. These short-duration and proactive DFE deployments are helping to stress test NATO’s strategy of deterrence by rapid reinforcement through the validation of crisis contingency plans as well as training, tactics, and procedures among allies in Europe. These interoperability exercises also test and validate US unit readiness and operational plans (OPLANS) and make this process significantly easier.<sup>68</sup> Regardless of how the concept’s value is further evaluated and potentially adapted, US planners will continue to gain value from dynamically testing and validating OPLANS. Allies and partners should expect this to continue to be a priority use of a dynamic force, and in this regard, should take as much advantage of DFE’s benefit as possible for bilateral and NATO multinational defense-planning purposes. Though DFE improves interoperability and strengthens the Alliance’s ability to integrate forces when most necessary in the early phases of a conflict, its strategic effectiveness may be limited by the growing capability gap between the United States and its allies in key areas.<sup>69</sup> This gap, if not addressed, limits the integration essential to the US concept of DFE.<sup>70</sup>

**There will be greater opportunity and necessity for intra-regional operations.**

NATO allies have long been disposed to think of key regions for confrontation in Europe (Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea, Baltic Sea, High North) as distinct and unconnected regions. Yet the growing recognition that a conflict in one is likely to spill over into another (in particular from the Baltic Sea into the High North) and that Russia sees this horizontal escalation as a major concern in the High North, has led allied planners to refocus attention on the connection between regions.<sup>71</sup>

The planning shift necessary to implement the DFE concept requires a greater holistic and interconnected understanding of how intraregional operations shape Russia’s

64 NATO’s Readiness Initiative, announced in 2018, calls for the Alliance to have thirty mechanized battalions, thirty air squadrons, and thirty combat vessels ready for deployment in thirty days or less. Jim Garamone, “New NATO Initiatives Aim to Boost Alliance Readiness,” June 6, 2018, DOD News, US Department of Defense, June 6, 2018, <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/1541985/new-nato-initiatives-aim-to-boost-alliance-readiness/>.

65 Interview with the Office of the Secretary of Defense, December 15, 2020.

66 John R. Deni, “Disband the NATO Response Force,” Atlantic Council, October 14, 2020, [https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/nato20-2020/disband-the-nato-response-force/?\\_thumbnail\\_id=301339](https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/nato20-2020/disband-the-nato-response-force/?_thumbnail_id=301339).

67 Marco Giannangeli, “Royal Marines to Embrace Original WW II Commando Role as They Relaunch with New Weapons,” *Express*, November 3, 2019, <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1199250/Royal-Marines-news-rebrand-elite-force>; and Forces.net, “Royal Marines Prepare For Arctic Deployment In Scottish Highlands,” November 5, 2020, <https://www.forces.net/news/royal-marines-prepare-arctic-deployment-scottish-highlands>.

68 Conversation with US European Command, January 14, 2021.

69 The capability gaps include areas such as cyber, electronic warfare, and command-and-control, among others, per interview with General Dunford.

70 Eric Schmidt and Robert Work (chair and vice chair, respectively), *Interim Report November 2019*, National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, November 2019, 45, [https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/-/media/sites/magazine/03\\_linkedfiles/nscai-interim-report-for-congress.ashx](https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/-/media/sites/magazine/03_linkedfiles/nscai-interim-report-for-congress.ashx).

71 James Black et al., *Enhancing Deterrence and Defense on NATO’s Northern Flank: Allied Perspectives on Strategic Options for Norway*, 2020, 7, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR4381.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4381.html).



Paratroopers from the 173rd Infantry Brigade in Aviano, Italy prepare to load a C-130 during an emergency deployment readiness exercise in support of a broader Dynamic Force Employment. *Photo: US Army/Sgt. Henry Villarama.*

decision-making calculus. As evidenced by aircraft launching from the USS *Harry S. Truman* in the Adriatic Sea and participating in a NATO exercise in the Baltic Sea, DFE deployments are likely to accelerate this trend. As more dynamic forces conduct further flexible operations and exercises, they will likely be employed across geographic domains as a demonstration of both capacity and capability, as well as a forcing function for more integrated defense planning between NATO's flanks, akin to the purpose of global integration but in a regional context. This will occur naturally and purposefully, and allies will be more rapidly pressed to understand what if any impact this has on Russian strategic thinking, particularly as it relates to the High North and Russia's bastion defense strategy, in order to effectively posture deterrent and reinforcement forces across the entire European theater.

**Whether the Dynamic Force Employment process predominantly occurs in the sea, air, or land domains will be based on ease.** The DFE planning process includes meeting four parameters: seizing the initiative, challenging the enemy calculus, demonstrating agility, and dictating tempo. These are all collectively most easily achieved in the air domain, given the dynamic and quick-moving nature of an air mobile force. Therefore, the DFE process is largely going to occur in the air domain as well as the naval domain.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, even though there have been quite successful ground-based DFE deployments in Europe as part of the Defender 2020 exercise, the military mobility challenge in Europe will likely limit the effectiveness of ground-based DFE deployments at least in the short term.<sup>73</sup> Structural and physical obstacles faced by ground forces moving within Europe make land-based forces a

<sup>72</sup> Interview with officials from the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, February 3, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> JP Clark et al., *Striking the Balance*, 34.

less practical choice for inclusion in the DFE process, especially in an evolving crisis where DFE deployments might be used to fill gaps in presence or demonstrate activity on short notice. The predicted reliance on US air forces to operationalize the DFE concept will further tax already scarce air mobility and aerial refueling assets. Allies in Europe should take account of these factors and invest in capabilities, develop plans, and posture their forces appropriately to take advantage where possible, and compensate where necessary, for a predominately air-domain based DFE process.

**Battle handover and multidomain operations are of increasing importance.** A battle handover is a “coordinated operation between two units in the close-in battle which transfers responsibility for fighting an enemy force from one unit to the other . . . to sustain continuity of the combined arms fight.”<sup>74</sup> In a situation where timelines are compressed and allied forces are numerically disadvantaged and reliant on forces from the United States for rapid relief, allied forces will need to ensure they can effectively integrate incoming US forces on the battlefield. Allies should expect that they will need to provide the majority of the contact force along with the ability to quickly transition command and control to larger NATO or US command structures in a smooth and efficient way if they hope to take foremost advantage of multidomain operations and account for any delays in decision-making.

These initial forces also will need to be as capable as possible. Given multidomain command and control and requisite capabilities are essential for operational effectiveness, the United States will likely need to make traditionally US-only technical capabilities available to allies in the contact layer to ensure they are multidomain capable.<sup>75</sup> This further emphasizes the need for a joint combat development process among allies.

**Capabilities that counter Russia’s A2/AD bubbles are a unique factor.** How developments in counter anti-access/

area denial (A2/AD) capabilities are introduced could shape the future of the DFE concept and stability in Northern Europe. Offensive long-range fires are one example. In Northern Europe, the integration of developments in long-range fires could counteract and hold at great risk Russia’s A2/AD systems. However, this ability to reshape the balance of forces vis-à-vis Russia, not to mention the possibility that some of these capabilities in development are not compliant with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, means that their deployment in Europe has the potential to be destabilizing and damaging to allied cohesion even after both the United States and Russia have withdrawn from the bilateral treaty.<sup>76</sup>

The United States has made no public decision on where these new capabilities will be first deployed, whether to the Indo-Pacific, Europe, or within the United States to ensure maximum flexibility. If this capability is held in the United States and occasionally used in Europe, such a dynamic deployment risks being destabilizing and escalatory in times of crisis. “For the United States today, the requirement to deploy an essential capability would place policy makers in the position of having to make a pivotal, escalatory decision very early in the crisis,” noted a study by the US Army War College. “Such a scenario would be the opposite of expanding the competitive space; it would be foreclosing policy options rather than opening them.”<sup>77</sup> This could even be true in a scenario of generally heightened tension and lack of communication with Russia, dynamics evident in today’s security situation in Northern Europe.

Thus, when it comes to the potential dynamic deployment of long-range fires and other counter-A2/AD capabilities, allies should pay close attention to the level of tension exhibited by Russia and be in frequent contact with the United States and other allies to as carefully as possible calibrate any response or particular DFE deployment. This should be done regardless of the scenario, but is particularly warranted as new capabilities are brought into the competitive space.

74 US Department of the Army, *Tactics and Techniques for Combined Arms Heavy Forces: Armored Brigade, Battalion Task Force, and Company Team*, Field Manual 71-123, September 30, 1992, as accessed on the Global Security website in 2021, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/fm/71-123/index.html>.

75 JP Clark et al., *Striking the Balance*, 41.

76 JP Clark et al., *Striking the Balance*, 55.

77 JP Clark et al., *Striking the Balance*, 55.

## Recommendations

The following menu of suggestions for the United States and its NATO allies and partners is designed to: offset any risks that occur naturally as a new defense strategy and operating concept are implemented; appropriately plan for and adapt to evolving models of transatlantic defense cooperation and defense planning in Northern Europe; and harness the benefits of the DFE concept and a more agile US force in a way that enhances NATO's dual-track strategy of deterrence and dialogue vis-à-vis Russia.

### Steps for the United States

- **Integrate allies and select partners more thoroughly into the DFE process.** At present and in part due to classification issues, allies are frequently in the dark as to the strategy and intent behind the concept as well as the criteria for the DFE process and specific planning around DFE deployments. This hinders the concept's effectiveness in competitive spaces where allies are critical. The United States needs to explain to allies how the DFE concept fits into its broader competitive strategy. Going forward, the United States should ensure that allies are fully aware of the strategic intention of the DFE concept, are involved appropriately early in discussions on where and how DFE deployments are expected to effect strategic outcomes or offset gaps in US forward presence, and are involved in the planning of specific DFE deployments. This will allow allies to go beyond simply tactically accompanying DFE deployments and instead complement US efforts at the strategic and operational levels through revisions in their own posture, activity, and information operations. Greater joint planning will have the added benefit of incorporating allies' and possibly partners' regional expertise into the decision-making process—which could be uniquely helpful in places like the Atlantic Ocean, High North, Baltic Sea, and Black Sea regions. In the short term, the solution will need to be a timeline that balances US concerns over operational security with allies' desire to be involved from the onset. Such a balance should be ironed out based on practice and given the budgetary-driven yearly planning cycle for DFE deployments, and the timeline could potentially be four to five months.
- **Consider new memoranda on operational security and information sharing.** Achieving unpredictability in

any planning horizon hinges on secrecy and the United States naturally needs to protect parts of its sensitive OPLANs and planning for routine deployment in order to be successful. While this does create a problem to varying degrees for integration and joint long-term planning with allies, it can be mitigated. Today, the information sharing afforded to NATO allies by NATO Secret levels of classification is seen as fairly sufficient.<sup>78</sup> However, as technology evolves and bureaucratic obstacles arise, DFE deployment timeline considerations and classification levels may change faster than modifications to NATO-wide or bilateral information-sharing arrangements allow. In order to improve DFE's strategic effectiveness in areas where allies are critical, maintaining operational security along with close communication is an absolute must and can be further enhanced through additional memoranda of agreement (MOA) and technical discussions on information sharing. These MOA can be bilateral, modeled after the one recently signed between India and the United States in October 2020 or the long-existing agreement with France. Or, in an effort to allow for greater cooperation in a more dynamic environment, these MOA can be multilateral and broader, modeled after current Five Eyes information-sharing agreements. In either form, these agreements can be used to allow more specific uses of information sharing that may not be available within the NATO framework and can lead to stronger cooperation and coordination for DFE deployments. The end result would be a more agile coalition capable of meeting emergent threats on shorter timelines.

- **Connect information operations to Dynamic Force Employments.** To ensure it supports broader national security objectives for competition and matches the DFE concept's intent, each DFE deployment should be complemented by strategic messaging by the United States and, wherever possible, coordinated with messaging from allies and partners. NATO's underlying strength and ability to shape Russian behavior is not its military capability but its political cohesion—a fact that should be more prominently leveraged in the information environment to signal and metaphorically surround Russia as part of a competitive strategy. This would likely have the greatest impact in ensuring the DFE concept can alter Russia's decision calculus. Lessons can be learned from NATO's integration of strategic messaging into its major exercises over the past three

78 Interview with US government officials, February 24, 2021.



The carrier Harry S. Truman transits the Strait of Gibraltar. Harry S. Truman and its escorts returned to Norfolk after a shortened three-month deployment in 2018, a major break from the norm. *Photo: US Navy/MC2 Thomas Gooley.*

years.<sup>79</sup> Practically, a criterion should be added to the principles of the DFE process that states there must be an opportunity for strategic messaging before a DFE deployment is approved. Coordination within the inter-agency as well as public affairs and other information elements must be incorporated in the planning process, much like in the freedom of navigation operation (FONOP) program. The US Department of State should be more heavily involved in or aware of the planning of DFE deployments and play a large role in strategically messaging their occurrence at an appropriate stage.

- **Assess where operationalizing Dynamic Force Employment can be coercive or destabilizing.** Impacting an adversary's decision-making is a high bar to clear. And not understanding if and when an adversary is reacting to agile force movements, and why, is a dangerous proposition. DoD should develop a comprehensive

set of indicators to evaluate the impact DFE deployments have on an adversary and evaluate this data over time. This should include data gathered by allies and partners to help determine how deployments can have added benefit in the competitive environment as a coercive tool beyond filling gaps in allocated posture and without inadvertently leading to escalation.

### Steps for the Alliance

- **Invest in resilience and secure logistics and transportation infrastructure.** If the United States, and likely therefore the Alliance, is to depend on rapid reinforcement for deterrence and defense, it must dedicate much more significant resources to resilience. This should include expanding and dispersing equipment and munitions stockpiles to facilitate the dynamic deployment of ground forces; improving and duplicating

<sup>79</sup> Interview with US government officials, February 24, 2021.





US soldiers offload a M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System in Romania, part of a dynamic force employment exercise from Germany to the Black Sea region. *Photo: US Army/Spc. Jabari Clyburn.*

lines of communication; hardening, defending, and dispersing points of debarkation; and strengthening the cybersecurity of logistics and transportation networks.

- **Emphasize battle handover in exercises.** NATO exercises should more frequently test the Alliance's battle handover capabilities. Large-scale exercises such as Defender Europe 2020 and 2021 are already testing rapid reinforcement concepts, but NATO and bilateral US exercises from large to small should include handover from national to NATO or US command and control as well. Preparation for battle handover should also be given higher priority in NATO's ongoing development of the Concept for Deterrence and Defense of the Euro-Atlantic Area.
- **Seek opportunities to integrate activities on NATO's flanks.** The DFE concept is likely to highlight the interrelation between NATO's flanks. The United States should continue to emphasize agility in this regard, using DFE

deployments between regions as a forcing function for narrowly focused allies to more closely consider intra-regional dynamics. Allies in Northern Europe should take particular advantage of this trend to exercise and plan for operations between the High North and the Baltic Sea. Such developments would be beneficial for aligning threat perceptions and reinforcing cohesion within NATO.

- **Leverage NATO's strategic political effect in support of allied operations.** Establishing a consensus view on a singular issue is a distinct Alliance advantage. Even when military action is not taken by the Alliance and instead by individual allies, providing consensus political support from thirty allies for that action is immensely effective. This political effect was evident in the allied response to Russian public statements on the US withdrawal from the INF Treaty. Additionally, when all NATO allies attribute fault for hybrid acts below the threshold of conflict, it provides a solid basis of political support

for specific allies to take action outside of NATO structures, navigating around the delays that come when allies might differ on what exact operational response to take. Further leveraging this political-then-operational approach can ensure that when DFE deployments are intended to challenge hybrid threats from Russia, they will be more likely to achieve strategic objectives if connected to a clear signal of allied solidarity.<sup>80</sup>

## Steps for European Allies

- **Invest in complementary capabilities.** As allies make future investments, priority should be placed on those capabilities that allow them to integrate and take full advantage of US forces as they rapidly arrive. These could include among a host of others: command and control; cyber; electronic warfare; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities to support targeting requirements for long-range fires; national long-range fire systems, which are most valuable in the early stages of a conflict; battle management systems to take advantage of the F-35's data-collection capability; and littoral strike capabilities and concepts that take advantage of the geography in the High North and Baltic Sea, as well as the agility of the US Marine Corps, the UK's Corps of Royal Marines, and the Netherlands Marine Corps. Perhaps most importantly, this should mean a concerted effort by allies to build joint capabilities from the ground up and coordinate efforts with the United States at every stage of the combat development process.
- **Build more European coalitions of the willing.** Facing resource constraints, European allies will be hard pressed to combine force structures designed to protect national sovereignty alone with elements that allow them to complement US dynamism. Greater multilateral action is likely to be the answer, but not through NATO, which faces concerns over its speed of

decision-making. Instead, smaller groupings including the Nordic Defence Cooperation (NORDEF), the UK-led Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF), and other regional initiatives are likely to be the pathway for smaller nations to develop flexibility and participate at least partially in a joint force structure that multiplies capability and enables greater activity. European allies should reinforce these existing arrangements (in particular the Northern European-focused JEF and NORDEF) and seek other opportunities for operational cooperation in other initiatives. While the limitations of the Alliance might not allow for NATO-assigned units to conduct DFE deployments now, NATO's DDA concept is paying dividends outside NATO structures. On an individual and focused multilateral basis, allies, recognizing the requirement for recapitalizing a combat-effective force, are already developing deterrent postures and incorporating operations that display the agility critical to making DEF a successful operating concept.<sup>81</sup> This is a positive step in the direction of smaller group activity, and efforts along these lines should be encouraged.

- **Strengthen bilateral dialogue with Russia.** At a time when the definition of strategic stability in Europe is changing due to the introduction of various nuclear and conventional capabilities, and when routine dialogue channels with Moscow are weakened, existing channels need to be utilized as much as possible. Norway's bilateral dialogue with Russia on stability in the Barents Sea region and the High North more broadly should be emphasized as a key channel for communicating allied intent and defense activities while also assessing Russian responses. Until such time as broader channels like the NATO-Russia Council can be brought back to life, allies' bilateral dialogue with Russia should be discussed at NATO so as to ensure allies are communicating as coherently with Russia as possible and avoiding activities that hinder the competitive strategy.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with US government officials, February 24, 2021.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with US government officials, February 24, 2021.

## About the Authors

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**Conor Rodihan** is the assistant director of the Transatlantic Security Initiative in the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. He is the co-author of "Geometries of Deterrence: Assessing Defense Arrangements in Europe's Northeast" and has previously supported the Atlantic Council's two flagship task force reports on defense and deterrence in Europe, "Permanent Deterrence: Enhancements to the US military presence in North Central Europe" and "Moving Out: A Comprehensive Assessment of European Military Mobility." Prior to joining the Atlantic Council, he interned at the US Mission to NATO. He is a graduate of the University of Denver, where he received bachelor's degrees in International Studies and Russian.



**Lieutenant Colonel Matthew R. Crouch** is the academic year 2020 to 2021 Commandant of the Marine Corps Senior Military Fellow at the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security of the Atlantic Council. In this role, he focused his research and writings on defense planning policy and deterrence. Originally from Sparks, Nevada, Lieutenant Colonel Crouch received his commission from the United States Naval Academy in 2000 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science. He was selected for training as a Naval Aviator upon graduation. Throughout his twenty-five-year military career, Lieutenant Colonel Crouch deployed four times to the Middle East to include three deployments to Iraq and one to Afghanistan. Having served in a variety of positions of staff and command, he was most recently assigned to the United States Marine Corps Forces, Korea staff where he served as the Director of Operations (G-3). Lieutenant Colonel Crouch is a qualified MV-22 and CH-46E pilot. He holds a Master of Arts degree in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland along with a Master of Business Administration degree from Hong Kong University. He is an Olmsted Scholar.



**Commander Ronald C. Fairbanks** is currently the senior US Navy fellow at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center. Afloat, Commander Fairbanks completed his division officer tours aboard USS *Port Royal* (CG73) as the communications officer and gunnery officer and then aboard USS *Dewey* (DDG105) as the fire control officer. During his first two sea tours, he deployed to the Fifth Fleet area of operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He has also deployed as the weapons officer and combat systems officer on USS *William P Lawrence* (DDG110) in the Seventh Fleet area of operations. His shore assignments include expeditionary fires officer in Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Atlantic (EWTGLANT), the training and readiness officer (N7) in Commander Navy Expeditionary Combat Command Pacific (COMNECCPAC), and as the executive assistant to the deputy commander, US Pacific Fleet from May 2018 through July 2020. A native of San Diego, California, Commander Fairbanks attended the University of Southern California on a Naval ROTC scholarship, graduating in 2006 with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations.





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