
Forward defense – concept, plan, and action for solving russian aggression at Nato's eastern border

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Abstract

Forward defense is not a new concept. It is rather traditional, coming from the Cold War and implying, originally, the nuclear posture and strategy. Following the issuance of the Madrid NATO Strategic Concept and Vilnius statement that not an inch of the Alliance's territory will fall under the control of the opponents, a new approach to forward defense is needed to cope with the multiple shifts in the security environment: Russian war of aggression, the change of technological generation, dilemmas of resources and capabilities, limits and multiple challenges from the international environment with superposed simultaneous crises. The perspective of possible attacks on NATO territory – in the next 2-3-5-8 years – requires a review of the concept and, consequently, of the political decisions, strategic planning, enforcement of those decisions, and development of forces and capabilities on the ground. Combining nuclear flexible capabilities, a strategy of massive retaliation with conventional forces and deterrence by reinforcement, deterrence by denial, forward presence, rapid projection capabilities, resolution, effective decision-making, and forward posture, we could build a new, updated doctrine of forward defense. However, the debate has to consider what is theoretically developed, technically feasible, politically acceptable, financially sustainable, and strategically credible in the „new forward defense” for granting inviolability of allied territory. The basic limitation is to define and refine forward defense without a reconsideration beyond existing means.

Keywords:

forward defense; deterrence; defense by denial; extra-territorial engagement;
strategic depth; forward posture.

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The concept of forward defense has roots in the history, geopolitics, and diverse levels of ambitions in historic times. The first type was developed by the naval powers, island states, and remote grand powers considering the need to face the enemy outside of their territory, in the grand seas and oceans of the globe. Be it the US, UK, *Türkiye*, Australia, or Singapore, all states had a share in the debate and introduced forward defense in their respective strategic and security documents. In some cases, the forward defense was just a piece or chapter of the post-imperial syndrome or of the neo-imperial strategies, nostalgic dreams of greatness, or newly discovered opportunities for projecting interests in its region, as the case is with the Soviet Union, Russia (Chifu & Tuțuianu 2017) or Iran.

UK had a sea, naval, and projection of power type of forward defense during its times of colonial global presence, which transposes today, in a limited version, in its military relation with Europe, the EU, and France, in particular. The US began forward defense thinking with naval forward defense, first outside its territorial waters, then it developed a global forward defense of its interests, and created a theory of protecting its citizens all over the world (US Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, n.d.) and access to needed resources (US Department of Commerce 2020), wherever they are situated, balancing regional powers (creating neo-realism as a theoretical approach, in the process) and linking its security with the security of Europe during the two World Wars and NATO foundation. The last decade brought the debate about fair burden sharing of costs for common defense inside the alliance (defense pledge) (NATO 2024) and responsibilities in Europe’s neighborhood. Discussing forward defense, the US moved to assume forward presence, then deterrence, and forward posture, discussing nowadays the credibility of an enforced forward posture and the needs of global coalitions and alliances, in a variable geometry.

Türkiye begins introducing the logic of “forward defense” with Mavi Vatan - Turkish naval doctrine. Davudoglu’s Neo-Ottomanism and zero problems with the neighbors was also a “forward defense” strategic theory, mainly based on a perception of common culture and on the systematic use of soft power, which became after 2009, and especially after the 15th of July 2016 attempted coup, a hard power pillar of Turkish forward policy (Taspinar 2008). As was the case with the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), formerly called the Turkic Council or the Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States. Here, the discussion about legitimate cultural ties, soft power approach, alliance, and forward defense and offensive aims is open and a number of states have different approaches, even rating those developments as direct threats – Greece, Cyprus, and Iran. Still, the novelty regarding that approach is also the defense beyond the national territory (Areteos 2020).

The Soviet Union and Russia embraced a theory of the needed space, strategic depth and buffer zones, coming from Ekaterina the Great and the burndown of Moscow by the Tartars. That led to Russian classical geopolitics and the institutionalization of the Kozakhs, free people, farmers, and fighters, defenders of the borders of the

empire. But this translated easier into imperial, post-imperial and neo-imperial ambitions of aggression, violence, and occupation when the Soviets introduced the spheres of influence, transformed by Russia into the sphere of strategic interest – with concepts and actions from limited sovereignty of neighbor communist states (Romaniacki 2016) to frozen conflicts and Russian presence in the post-Soviet space (Chifu & Țuțuianu 2017) as post-imperial approaches and annexation of territories by military force since 2008 in Georgia, as neo-imperialist aims. Russia proved that nonaligned, neutral states and buffer zones in its proximity become just grey zones not yet occupied by Russia.

For sure, this is not a genuine, acceptable forward defense, according to international law and the rules-based order. However, an excess of interpretation and wishful thinking transformed into reality once there was no opposition to Russia's offensive acts. Ukraine fell under this alleged forward defense approach (in fact space geopolitics). Putin's statements related to the need for a buffer zone inside Ukraine to defend Russia's interests (President of Russia 2024), as well as Lavrov's statements that this buffer zone inside Ukraine is as large as the new long-range reach of the weapons transferred to Ukraine (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2024) are showing both this territorial neo-imperial approach, as are indicating the 2021 ultimatums/proposals drafting Russia's view of the New Security of Europe (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2021).

Information warfare plays its role in this Russian approach to forward defense, especially in the post-Soviet space, by changing the environment into a friendly pro-Russian one – challenged by independent states as neo-imperialism (Chifu & Simons 2023). In fact, Russia rejected the buffer zones, transforming them into future controlled zones of Russia. Widening and occupying those regions was an attempt to close this new Fulda Gap in Eastern Europe, which led to the full-scale, high-intensity, long-term war of aggression in Ukraine. This happened once the space and territorial approach proved no longer valid after Ukraine hit oil refineries, oil depots, military bases, and logistical infrastructure 1,500 kilometers deep into Russian territory using civilian-industrial drones.

An interesting approach to forward defense could be found in Iran's strategy. Prompted by the needs of the Iran-Iraqi war, it shifted to religious Shia motivation for support towards minorities in Sunni states and moved to an ideological projection of the Revolutions and challenges to kingdoms and caliphates here on Earth. Rivalries and politics against the Israeli state and opportunities on the ground in Syria and Iraq, as well as in Yemen, raised the stakes to forward defense by proxies. The 13th April attack unveiled the direct confrontation and showed the limits of the military capabilities of Iran. Moreover, the leadership of Iran is aware of the limits and rejection in the society of those investments in proxies, so reconsidering that form of forward defense, prompted by opportunistic means, is on its way.

Methodology

In order to reach the aim of the study, a concept theoretically developed, technically feasible, politically acceptable, financially sustainable, and strategically credible „new forward defense”, and the applicability of such a concept in granting the inviolability of allied territory, we used comparative studies, an epistemological approach to the concept, content analysis, and extensive study of the security and strategic documents of different countries.

Forward defense: the concept

Forward defense is a concept with a clear definition but a significant need for constant adaptation to technological and strategic evolution, as well as to the specific applicability, resource availability, and capability gap within a given strategic environment. It does not fundamentally alter the conceptual basis of defense, as it primarily concerns the defense of a state’s territory as close as possible to the source of threat and as far as possible from its own territory. However, the complex relationship with one’s own territory, especially in cases of limited strategic depth, and the maritime component, including territorial waters and exclusive economic zones, alongside land borders, pose constant challenges. Additionally, the acceptability and resource availability to confront threats far from borders remain significant considerations, as does the ongoing technological evolution of capabilities and deterrence strategies.

The concept is tight and in a complex relation with the concepts of forward presence, deterrence, projection of power, forward posture, and credibility – both in terms of perception and concrete actions proving will, resolution, and factual applicability. Also, it changes with the technological generation. But the greatest change came with the rise of the historical distance from the use of nuclear weapons and today’s nuclear ways of deterrence, the credibility of nuclear deterrence, and the lack of acceptability of its use in concrete wars. If the classic strategic and tactical nuclear deterrence is still here (credibility disputable, still), the acceptability of the use of sub-tactical and theatre small nuclear weapons is a recently opened subject by Russia ([Tetrajs 2018](#); [Colas, 2023](#)).

How to perform forward defense at sea begins to be challenged by the new hybrid approaches of China in the South China Sea, with harassment and water cannon shooting on vessels in international, territorial, or disputed waters of the Philippines. Forward defense is no longer achievable without allies and coalitions, based on common values or common interests alike. The forward defense is confronted with the conceptual debates about defending the country by defending allies and how far such an effort should go when forward defense is the defense of allies ([Chifu & Simons 2017](#)). Now, the new generation of forward defense is debating actions beyond the borders. Far away, outside of the territory. A real lesson learned from

Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine when we can see how difficult and painful it is to regain a territory after losing it, in such a way as to avoid that even an inch of the territory might fall under the control of an adversary.

The concept undoubtedly stems from empirical analysis and practical military needs. Therefore, this flexibility in interpretations and methods of enforcement—altering, nuancing, or adapting the concept—affirms its degree of universality. For instance, Washington's preferred option of "forward defense" in critical regions like East Asia is preparing to counter threats when and where they materialize rather than responding directly long after aggression has occurred or responding indirectly by imposing costs in other theatres by clearly and credibly signaling that the United States will oppose an adversary's aims and come to the assistance of its allies (Montgomery 2017). Forward defense, in this case, covers both deterrence and assurance as well as granting stability in the regions where it matters most.

Australia has a forward defense concept linked to its strategic geography that "dictates that we should plan on more pro-active operations which focus on defeating attacks in our maritime and air approaches before they reach Australian territory. (...), it is about being prepared to contribute actively to our objective of a secure Australia in a secure region" (Parliament of Australia 1997a). The idea of action outside the territory is recent also in Australia's Strategic Policy 1997 which conceded that the defense of Australia might involve operations forward of Australia's shoreline, emphasizing the pursuit of security interests external to territorial Australia (National Library of Australia 1997, 31-36).

Australia not only recognizes the relation of forward defense with the local geographic environment, relativizes the concept to this context and explicitly introduces requirements of defense outside of the territory – and on the territory of allies in the region, outside of the naval concept acceptable as an insular country – but it also regards the added value of this forward pro-active actions beyond its territory even though resources and capabilities do not fit a level of ambition to defend widely against any threat. It is notable that structuring of forces for significant operations in Eurasia under forward defense, even though Australia's forces were not decisive, they could be used and seen as a means of procuring future goodwill and security from major allies (Parliament of Australia 1997b).

The observation about capabilities comes also in the Turkish approach to forward defense. Analysts of those documents note that "without the cumulative growth in the defense industry over the last four decades, a pronounced shift to the current hard power approach would not have been possible. (...) The growth over time of an indigenous defense industry and, equally if not more important, the sense of power that it has reinforced in Ankara generates an aggressive stance and readiness for military action in multiple spheres" (Sinem 2020).

Another case is Singapore's defense policy from 1965 to the early 1980s, defined as forward defense, with Singapore's Armed Forces (SAF), focused on acquiring the

capability to conduct an offensive military campaign within Malaysia in the event of threats to Singapore's security or the continuity of its water supply from Malaysia (Yaacob 2022). That introduces a debate about the thin line between defensive and offensive actions and whether this approach to forward defense does not have an offensive side. In this context, the case of Iran's forward defense is an interesting one: Tehran's logic behind forward defense is "preempting the penetration of symmetric and asymmetric threats inside Iran's borders" (Barzegar, n.d.). The application of power in Iran's wider security zone can be seen as an offensive action, even though the concept has evolved over the last 40 years since Iran's practical military needs during the Iran-Iraq War led to the forward defense concept based on the proxy model and has also proven its utility.

When ISIS carried out its first attacks in Tehran in June 2017, Iran claimed that if it had not militarily intervened in Syria and Iraq, it would have had to confront a far greater ISIS threat inside its borders. But in this case, the concept of forward defense on a large scale is viewed as part of a grand strategy to expand its influence, being rather offensive than defensive, even though the concept and its application were, in the beginning, a contextual one coming from happening, not planning (Vatanka 2021a). This is because Tehran's reliance on forward defense and depending on foreign militias is mostly by choice in all the versions of geopolitical forward defense from Yemen to Syria to Libya. Nowadays, the political and military elite in Tehran have begun to rethink the concept and the sustainability of the forward defense doctrine (Vatanka 2021b), considering the gap between costs and benefits and the internal development needs.

Epistemological analysis proved that the concept is indeed very stable and the definition is clear and with an identity that recommended it for a concept of its own. The idea of applicability and concrete practical definition linked to regional or local situations and security environment is an acceptable variation and does not induce difficulties in the conceptual structure of forward defense. How this forward defense is reached and where – inside its own border as close as possible to the contact line, in front of the coastal line, in territorial waters or economic exclusive zones – in the case of the Navy – or outside the national territory, in what legal conditions, depending on the region, this is to be developed and covered by nuances and interpretations that do not relativize the concept. The same goes with the content of forward defense and its interpretations of some actions falling under the offensive realm in the process: we are coming back to the epistemological debate about the line between defensive and offensive actions in military studies, which is a classical one.

NATO's history on forward defense. Before the war came back to Europe

Forward defense is not a new concept in the transatlantic allied framework. In the first Strategic Concept of 1949, the forward defense was about deterrence by

punishment through the threat of American atomic weapons ([Monaghan 2022](#)). The original aim was to create a powerful deterrent to any nation or group of nations threatening the peace, independence, and stability of the North Atlantic family of nations ([NATO 1950a](#)) and deterrence by denial through positioning adequate forces to defend allied territory against invasion. NATO's denial strategy was one of forward defense designed to "arrest the enemy advance as far to the East as possible" and active opposition to peacetime aggression "by all measures short of war" ([NATO 1950a](#)). It is true, we were close to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki use of nuclear weapons, before the first Soviet nuclear test (29 August 1949). Therefore, the conceptual base was using the supreme weapons syndrome and relied only on this basis and on the then-present memory and impact of the use of this nuclear weapon.

It was with NATO's second strategic concept, in 1952 that a proper "forward strategy" for the defense of Europe was established, considering "to hold the enemy as far to the East in Germany as is feasible, using all offensive and defensive means available to deny or limit his freedom of action to the maximum extent" ([NATO 1952](#)). In 1957, we were discussing about forward deployed forces, with strategic bombers force in the forefront ([NATO 1957](#)). And in 1958, U.S. general Lauris Norstad, then Supreme Allied Commander Europe stated the aim of defending "as far forward as possible in order to maintain the integrity of the NATO area" - including Scandinavia ([NATO 1957](#); [NATO 1952](#)). It was the first out-of-area-like mission, with forward defense accepting activities beyond NATO's territory.

In 1968, the forward defense had still an important nuclear component. We were after the Cuba crisis and the shift was from massive retaliation – the forward deterrent up to date – to flexible response. The threat of punishment through an overwhelming nuclear response to Soviet invasion or nuclear use was still in the Strategic Concept, with "massive retaliation" plus a forward-deployed "shield" force that NATO could rapidly reinforce. Moreover, in order to bolster the credibility of NATO shield forces, the fourth concept emphasized "rapid augmentation of its forward posture" through "appropriate echeloning in depth in suitable tactical locations," logistic support, tactical mobility, supplementing local forces with those of allies, and a fully trained, equipped, and ready NATO reserve force ([US Department of State 1962](#)).

In 1991, despite the existing nuclear threat from the Soviet Union, the strategic concept introduced a reduced forward presence. In fact, NATO's post-Cold War strategic concepts placed a new emphasis on the ability to project power out of the area through expeditionary operations. That was the new instrument for forward defense. For example, to meet the "significantly reduced level" of forces now assigned to NATO's Eastern Front, American forces based in Europe were reduced from 330,000 to 100,000 troops ([Kugler & Binnendijk 2008, 45](#)). If during the Cold War, "NATO's guiding operational paradigm was Forward Defense, from Northern Norway, across West Germany, to eastern Turkey, in the post-Cold War era the operational paradigm became NATO's capacity to conduct expeditionary operations of varying purpose and scale" ([Palmer 2016](#)).

In 2010, the forward defense force was replaced by a smaller forward presence through the concept of deterrence by reinforcement. Only in 2014, after the return of the change of European borders by military means, did NATO return to deterrence. “We, the Heads of State and Government of the member countries of the North Atlantic Alliance have gathered in Wales at a pivotal moment in Euro-Atlantic security. Russia’s aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace” (NATO 2014).

At this moment, some were even discussing the fact that the changes in NATO membership also created new areas for forward defense, most of which must now be fulfilled by former members of the Warsaw Pact. Those sources stated that aside from Poland, several of those countries were making very mixed efforts to develop military forces that are modern and interoperable with the forces of older NATO states, and these changes altered the major regions where NATO must conduct forward defense (Cordesman & Hwang 2021a) claiming that forward defense was, practically, impossible to enforce for practical reasons.

NATO’s forward defense debate before and after Russia’s war of aggression

The approach and interpretation of the forward defense concept in practice, in NATO’s framework, was rather conservative and restrained. It came from the strict and conservative views at the European level and the consensus process of decision. The first reference mentioned that, in order to strengthen its deterrence credibility, NATO should also officially end its self-imposed restrictions on the permanent deployment of troops on the Eastern Flank (Wojciech 2022).

Leon Panetta found another condition on forward defense: America leading at the international stage - engaging other nations and building capable coalitions. So, more than ever, Americans must go abroad to remain secure at home, with a ready and well-trained military, forward-positioned and equipped with the most modern and advanced weapons and systems available. A typical American forward defense, in a NATO context, as well, but recognizing, at the same time, the limits of the capabilities: “the threats we confront are simply too numerous and complex for Americans to address alone. We simply lack the resources to defend our country and our citizens sufficiently against revisionist powers, rogue states, and terrorist organizations simultaneously” (Panetta 2020). Therefore, the solution to forward defense was a system of coalitions and alliances with a variable geometry.

The years after 1991 till the war led to a period of a sharp decline in US forces in Europe. In the period before 2014 and the beginning of the Russian war with Ukraine, U.S. troop numbers dropped from 222,500 to approximately 40,500. It is also estimated that the total troop strength for the entire U.S. European Command

(USEUCOM) deployed in Europe dropped from 283,100 to 66,998 (Cordesman & Hwang 2021b). Most European states in NATO cut their forces, had far lower rates of modernization, and cut back sharply on sustainability. The new allied states came with an added value but also created new burdens for forward defense. In this framework, forward defense shifted more conceptually to US total forces it could project into a forward combat zone, be it in cyber, space, precision and long-range conventional strike, deployable land-based air defenses, all becoming the subject of new U.S. force development programs (Cordesman & Hwang 2021b).

A new impetus to the development of the forward defense concept came with the war, in February 2022, when defense beyond the allied territory became once again interesting and subject of debate. The reinsurance and deterrence measures initiated since 2014 were insufficient for the allies of the Eastern Flank, especially for the Baltic space who lack a geographic space of retreat because they are small and narrow so a Russian attack scenario could have become a *fait accompli*. Even the shift from increased forward presence and deterrence to greater defense capability, decided by the Allies back in 2014 with the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), was no longer enough for the purpose that allied territory not to fall into Russian hands in the first place (Matlé 2023). So, NATO continued to evolve its military strategy away from a “forward presence” to a “forward defense” posture at the summit in Madrid, with brigade-strong forces that would be a central component of NATO’s new strategy.

Ceding NATO territory to Russian forces, with the view to eventually retake it, leaves the citizens of those NATO and EU countries vulnerable, and all war crimes in Ukraine are proof of that (Bergmann & Svendsen 2023). NATO shifted from its Enhanced Forward Presence with multinational battlegroups to more permanent forward defense across the Eastern Flank, with 300,000 troops on high alert, a massive uptick from the 40,000 troops comprising the alliance’s quick reaction force, the NATO Response Force, before Madrid Summit. That became the argument and capabilities needed for defending every inch of NATO territory, requiring NATO forces to have a high degree of combat readiness to fight a conventional war (Cancian & Monaghan 2023).

From forward presence and deterrence to forward posture and the new forward defense at NATO’s borders

The United States assumed that it could no longer rely for the forward defense of its allies primarily on rapidly projecting power at the time of need to defend allies and partners in the Western Pacific and Europe against Chinese or Russian aggression. Combat-credible U.S. forward posture in the Western Pacific and Europe can offset the United States’ time-distance disadvantage, so the interest moved to build a forward posture to “deny a quick and cheap Chinese or Russian victory while buying time for the full weight of U.S. power to be brought to bear” (Fabian 2020).

The Pentagon introduced the criteria of credibility – for their own citizen, for the allied countries, and the adversaries alike – of its US forward posture. Coming back to three main lines: (1) it must be sufficiently lethal and resilient to fight outnumbered on highly contested battlefields from the start of a conflict; (2) it should be integrated with the forces of allies and partners to form a cohesive, combined defensive posture; and (3) it must receive rapid reinforcement and resupply in the event of a war ([Fabian 2020](#)). On the contrary, any withdrawal of U.S. forces for any reasons – from costs, non-observance of the Defense Pledge, a China-First policy in DC, would jeopardize U.S. national security interests and represents unexpected messages for the authoritarian regimes in China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and elsewhere.

The solutions in Europe of such a forward posture combat-credible would mean extending the U.S. military to fit into an operational concept of deterrence by denial, an enhanced military presence, of approximately 100,000 American personnel in Europe, based on the current 5+2 model that maintains five total brigade combat teams (BCTs), including the two additional BCTs deployed after Russia's invasion (one rotational armored brigade combat team and one rotational infantry brigade combat team in Romania) in addition to the pre-war units (a forward-stationed IBCT and Stryker brigade combat team based in Italy and Germany, respectively, and one rotational ABCT as part of Operation Atlantic Resolve) ([Jones, Daniels, Doxsee, Fata, & McInnis 2024](#)). This posture would maintain the seven fighter squadrons currently forward deployed and add a persistent rotational deployment of fifth-generation aircraft to NATO's Eastern Flank.

“What we are looking for from NATO in this next phase is long-term planning for how it will contain Russia post-Ukraine and provide resilience and reassurance to countries that cannot do that on their own. That could be permanent basing or it could be rapid readiness - being able to deploy quickly, instead of being stuck in a big base in one place. That is all up for development, which I think is incredibly important” ([Wallace 2022](#)).

This led to NATO's defense and deterrence reset in Madrid, but that should be moved ahead in Washington DC with planning against Russian “Maximum Intentions” ([NATO 1950b](#)). This could mean coming back to NATO, coming back to its strategy of the sword and the shield in its 1957 form, a combination of strategic nuclear forces to deter attack through the threat of massive retaliation, alongside the forward defense of NATO's Eastern front through the basing of significant forces as far East as possible. That could explain, partially, Putin's return to the nuclear rhetoric and saber rattling, however, based more on reaffirming a symbolic return to its last argument of superpower, after the degradation of its conventional forces in Ukraine.

Some ideas for the new forward defense content could be also brought from Australia's recent documents. The 2020 Defence Strategic Update states: “The

capacity to conduct cooperative defense activities with countries in the region is fundamental to our ability to shape our strategic environment.' The 2023 Defence Strategic Review takes this concept further, stating: 'To protect (Australia's) strategic interests, we must contribute to the maintenance of a regional balance of power in the Indo-Pacific that is favorable to our interests' and 'We must posture for the protection of Australia and for integrated defense and deterrence effects in our immediate region.'

In this case, 'forward presence' is defined as the presence of formed units or sub-units beyond the main domestic raise-train-sustain areas. This definition encompasses a long presence; open-ended rotational deployment; and the permanent stationing of forward presence forces. Forward presence can support many different objectives, including defense diplomacy or direct assistance for political influence; capacity building to increase self-help; and demonstration of commitments. In this paper, we focused on what is arguably the most difficult and demanding – and, for Australia, also the most unfamiliar – form of forward presence: the deployment of armed forces to signal a deterrence commitment ([Australian Army Research Centre 2023](#)).

The success factors for forward presence as a deterrence posture are rating forward presence under the conditions of deterring by denial and defending beyond the national territory, a conceptual framework that identifies 'forward defense', which seeks to deter by denying the adversary, its intended objective, albeit within a broader national strategy for reinforcement and potential escalation ([Australian Army Research Centre 2023](#)).

From our perspective, the new concept of forward defense should clearly address the need for contiguous zones where deterrence by denial is reinforced by additional instruments. The NATO Eastern Flank has already witnessed breaches and threats stemming from the war of aggression in Ukraine, such as drones entering the airspace and debris from missiles or artillery causing destruction upon impact. This might entail establishing no-fly zones in proximity to Alliance territory, with the agreement of sovereign states where possible, and authorization to intercept any military aircraft crossing a designated line outside Alliance territory to prevent it from reaching NATO's territory or harming Alliance citizens. Additionally, integrated ballistic and air defense with partner states should be established to protect allied territory and citizens, alongside those of sovereign states. A transparent doctrine of forward defense should be publicly communicated to warn, prevent, and deter any transgressions in this regard.

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