Quo Vadis NATO? Adapting the Alliance to Russian Military Resurgence

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Russia's military resurgence and claims of its sphere of influence raised concerns for many neighboring countries who are the members of NATO. Since 2014, NATO is providing security to its most exposed members. Decisions taken at the two last NATO summits enhanced the Alliance's defensive posture on its eastern and southern flanks. This paper analyses the strategic goals of both NATO and Russia, and provides a brief assessment of how they are being achieved. The research proves that the assurance and deterrence measures applied so far by NATO has contributed to the overall stabilization of the situation in the region. However, those measures did not precluded Russia from continuing of its aggressive policy. The study argues also that NATO should further adapt itself by developing its defensive and offensive capabilities to match Russian threat. This should be pursued by a combination of conventional, nuclear and missile defense capabilities and enhancing the resilience to hybrid warfare. NATO should maintain the opportunity to restart a constructive dialogue with Russia, but should avoid this dialogue from a weaker position. Therefore, the paper also advocates for an urgent need to develop a new NATO security strategy.

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Quo Vadis NATO? Adapting the Alliance to Russian Military Resurgence

> Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after they occur.

—General Guilio Douhet[1]

The mission of the North Alliance Treaty Organization (NATO) has frequently been asked throughout the decades of its existence. From its very foundation, the strategy of NATO was also a subject of constant adaptation. From a massive retaliation response by all means, including nuclear weapons - through "flexible response"[2] - NATO has evolved into a more moderate, almost transparent Alliance with its strategic concepts that promoted concepts of cooperative security and crisis management.

However, NATO currently is facing the "old" challenge with a new façade, which questions its legitimacy and calls for review of existing strategy. It is the re-emergence of Russia's geopolitical ambitions, as seen by the war in Georgia, the annexation of Crimea, and the regional turmoil in Ukraine. All of these examples are taking place in the context of other challenges, which will shape the security environment for the coming decades. These are: the instability caused by ISIS, fear of revision of the global economic slowdown, unprecedented flow of refugees to Europe, and questions about the future of the European Union. Also the transatlantic link, which has always played a pivotal role in NATO's position, is now under consideration in the context of the post-election reality in the U.S. and uncertain results of upcoming elections in the leading European states.

The complexity of these events inevitably led to questions asking which of these issues should NATO address. This Strategic Research Paper (SRP) argues that one needs to focus on the most urgent one which is revisionist actions of Russia and their

possible implications to the future of NATO. In light of military threats created by Russia in the immediate vicinity of NATO, this paper will contribute to an ongoing discussion on the suitability of the Alliance's reaction.

Consecutive summits in Wales (2014) and Warsaw (2016) brought some strategic decisions to adapt to the new security situation. As the implementation of those decisions is underway, it is worthwhile to assess their impact on NATO as well as NATO-Russian relations. What should NATO's military experts anticipate about Russian military strategy in northeastern Europe? What are the most effective means by which NATO can deter Russian aggression and adventurism? What means can NATO employ to counter Russian military strengths and advantages? How do these ideas influence the future of the Alliance and how should NATO address this issue in the future Strategic Concept? These are the questions which this paper seek to address.

The thesis which this paper seeks to prove is twofold. Firstly, NATO's efforts to deter Russia and defend its eastern flank do not seem to bring the expected results in the form of changes in Kremlin policy. Secondly, NATO should be more proactive to apply durable solutions vis-à-vis Russia and maintain its cohesion in this crisis. The paper characterizes NATO's values and strategy as the foundation for the analysis. These are well described in the Washington Treaty of 1949 and the Strategic Concept of 2010. Then it will discuss changes in the security environment sparked by Russia's actions during the last decade and will define Russia's ends, ways and means for the perceived future. In this context, the main part of this project will be the research about effectiveness of deterrence provided by NATO so far, and its capability to adapt in order to implement its core missions. A suggested direction, which NATO should pursue to

maintain its values and character is a natural outcome of all the all considerations of this paper.

NATO's Values and Strategy

From today's perspective, the signature of the Washington Treaty in 1949 can be considered as the most significant act for global security in the second half of the 20th and the first decades of the 21st centuries. None of the other organizations, such as the League of Nations or the Warsaw Pact which also aimed to provide a security umbrella to its members, have endured long enough to prove their capability and fulfilled this core mission.

From its conception, NATO was designed as "an alliance-based collective defense organization built to deter, and if necessary to defend against the Soviet Union."[3] Meeting this imperative, as long as the Cold War era continued, NATO did not have any problem with its identity. The best description of the organization at this time was a famous statement by Lord Ismay, NATO's first Secretary General who observed that the Alliance was established to "keep the Americans in, the Germans down and the Russians out."[4]

The collapse of the Eastern Bloc ended the half century of Soviet domination in the region and changed the security environment in all of Europe. Russia, which emerged as the legal successor to the Soviet Union in the 1990s, was weakened with too many domestic problems to claim its rights to influence the international situation in the vicinity of its borders. Therefore, many countries that were members of the Warsaw Pact started a search for new security arrangements. Because NATO remained the only entity in this field, not surprisingly many applied for its membership. Consequently,

during the three enlargements which occurred between 1999 and 2009, NATO

accepted 12 new members who used to be either an integral part of the Soviet Union or

affiliated countries. Some may claim that there was no logical reason for this rush and

others still argue today that admitting former Soviet Republics to the Alliance was a

strategic mistake.[5] Aside from this debate, one can conclude that the enlargement on

one hand automatically dissolved Russia as a potential threat, leaving NATO with no

real opponent. On the other hand, this is a main source of Russian grievances and

serves as an argument for its revisionist policy.

Reading the 1949 Washington Treaty in the XXI Century

The establishment of NATO just few years after the end of the Second World

War was dictated by the changing security environment in Europe. The West European

countries being threatened by the Soviet Union and its coercive actions in Berlin and

Prague and concerned about the growing strength of communist movements, and so

they requested to create a "treaty of alliance and mutual assistance."[6] If is frequently

repeated that NATO was constructed as the Alliance of values that can be found in the

Washington Treaty, such as to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and

civilization, individual liberty and the rule of law; to promote stability and well-being in

the North Atlantic area. The Members are also "resolved in their efforts for collective

defense and for the preservation of peace and security."[7]

As a defensive organization, NATO is committed to defending its member states

"against aggression or the threat of aggression and to the principle that an attack

against one or several members would be considered as an attack against all."[8] Articles

5 and 6 of the North Atlantic Treaty lay the foundation of NATO's response. According

to Article 5, each member will assist the attacked Ally by taking "such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."[9] Subsequently, Article 6 specifies that an armed attack will be considered if it happens either on the territory, or on the islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Ally, or "on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories."[10]

The NATO founders succeeded to formulate a universal document, which provides the flexibility to apply it for the years to come. However, this flexibility sometimes becomes an obstacle when one tries to apply its provisions especially in a contemporary situation. Besides Article 5 and 6, there is also Article 3 in which the member states commit to develop their "individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." This article seemed to be forgotten during the last two decades by some countries whose military potential suffered from constant budget cuts. Article 10 in turn, introduces the idea of the "open door policy" for any new "European State" which can be invited to the Alliance. More importantly, this article defines for the first time the condition of "unanimous agreement" of all the members, which should be the prerequisite to accept a new member state. This type of agreement, which can be acceptable in the long process of NATO's enlargement, nowadays can be perceived as another obstacle in operational activity of the Alliance. Regretfully, Member States transferred the principle of unanimity to all aspects of decision making, stalling many actions in the fast paced world.

Last and foremost, the Treaty does not provide a specification of any potential adversary or any type of aggression which it stands against. Lack of clarity in this area

was another argument for free interpretation and caused a lot of controversy through the decades of NATO's existence. Should NATO have engaged in solving conflicts out of its area of responsibility? What is NATO's AOR? Should NATO provide humanitarian assistance? Is cyber-attack, an armed attack in a sense of Article 5? Is Russia an enemy as the Soviet Union was before? These questions, and many more are still being asked by security experts, scholars and tax payers.

In such ambiguous provisions of the Treaty, one may see the causes of NATO's limited action or sometimes even inaction. For these reasons, NATO can be also called "obsolete" by its contemporary critics. On the other hand, thanks to its ability to adapt to a changing environment, NATO became the most unique organization by providing collective security to its members. The fact that during this time none of its members desired to take advantage of Article 13 of the Treaty and renounce its membership is a remarkable token of NATO's relevance.

<u>Validity of the NATO Strategic Concept 2010</u>

Some of the questions defined in the previous chapter were addressed in the strategies, issued by the Alliance over the preceding decades. Remarkably during the Cold War era, all of NATO's Strategic Concepts[11] were classified and considered the inevitability of nuclear arsenal application as the last resolve. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Alliance became more transparent and officially published all of its Strategic Concepts. The main goal of these strategies was to define the security environment and possible missions of NATO for the years to come. When the traditional threat seemed to disappear, very soon the Alliance understood that it must adapt to maintain its relevancy.

Consequently, the collective defense which was always its main mission slowly gave way to other types of activities. For the first time in the 1990s, NATO become involved in supporting Turkey during the War in Persian Gulf and facilitated humanitarian assistance to Russia. Later in this decade, it was engaged in a crisis management operation in the Balkans, which was out of its mandatory area. The 1999 Strategic Concept defined a "New Missions", which called to respond to a broad spectrum of possible threats to Alliance common interests such as regional conflicts, or "crises", the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. It also provided "Strengthened Partnerships" where the Alliance committed itself to build partnerships with the aim to increase transparency, mutual confidence and enhance the capacity of allies and partners to work side by side.

Another shift in the security challenge was marked by 9/11, when for the first time ever NATO invoked Article 5 and engaged in a counter-terrorist operation (Eagle Assist). Besides the major engagement in Afghanistan NATO remained engaged in other areas. It trained Iraqi security forces, countered the piracy in Africa, provided assistance during the Olympic Games in Athens, disaster relief to the victims of Hurricane Katrina in the U.S., and the earthquake in Pakistan.

All of these events shaped the Strategic Concept of 2010 in which the following three essential core tasks were specified:

- *Collective Defense*. NATO members will always assist each other against attack, in accordance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. NATO will deter and defend against any threat of aggression, and against emerging security challenges where they threaten the fundamental security of individual Allies or the Alliance as a whole.

- *Crisis Management*. NATO has a unique and robust set of political and military capabilities to address the full spectrum of crises – before,

during and after conflicts. NATO will actively employ an appropriate mix of those political and military tools to help manage developing crises that have the potential to affect Alliance security, before they escalate into conflicts; to stop ongoing conflicts where they affect Alliance security; and to help consolidate stability in post-conflict situations where that contributes to Euro-Atlantic security.

- *Cooperative security*. The Alliance is affected by, and can affect, political and security developments beyond its borders. The Alliance will engage actively to enhance international security, through partnership with relevant countries and other international organizations; by contributing actively to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament; and by keeping the door of membership in the Alliance open to all European democracies that meet NATO's standards.[12]

As in the documents which were adopted after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Concept of 2010 provided strategic miscalculation about the threat assessment. Authors of this document did not take into account obvious symptoms of Russian resurgence, such as war in Georgia (2008) or provisions of Russian Security Strategy (2009), which clearly did not accept the extension of NATO's military infrastructure. Instead, one can read in the Concept: "the Euro-Atlantic area is at peace and the threat of a conventional attack against NATO territory is low."[13] The concept also specifies an extensive list of threats and challenges (i.e. proliferation of WMD, terrorism, trans-national illegal activities, cyber-attacks, energy security, and environmental issues), which NATO is supposed to address.

Yet the security environment changed decisively over the years, and there is a requirement to revise the clauses of the Concept. At present, NATO admits the presence of an "arc of insecurity and instability along NATO's periphery and beyond"[14] and is intensively working on how to address the new challenges. Among the long list of "traditional" threats, the security situation provoked by Russia remains the Alliance's

concern. The two last NATO Summits explicitly provided for the measures to reassure its members threatened by Russia and allegedly to deter Russia from any further coercive actions. However, they again failed to specify whether and to what extent NATO is going to review its strategic concept.

<center>Security Environment - Russia's Ends, Ways, and Means</center>

Although after December 1991 Russia was considered as the legal successor of the Soviet Union, NATO very quickly stepped forward with the initiatives of cooperation. In 1991, Russia joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council and three years later was a member of the Partnership for Peace program. Consequently, the NATO-Russia Founding Act (1997) "provided the formal basis for relations" which was strengthened in 2002 with the establishment of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) to serve "as a forum for consultation on current security issues and to direct practical cooperation in a wide range of areas."[15]

Cooperation for some years went well that some experts were even allured by the idea that one day Russia could become a member. In Zbigniew Brzezinski's book, one can read: "Russia, twenty years after the fall of the Soviet Union, still remains undecided about its identity, nostalgic about the past, and simultaneously overreaching in some of its aspirations."[16] The author argues that between Russia and Europe is a weak "dividing line"[17], and strong cooperation between the U.S., Europe, Russia and Turkey is desirable because it would be beneficent to all the parties.

This scenario, however, today seems to be wishful thinking. NATO's good will and readiness to cooperate did not pay off. From examining retrospectively, Russian leadership was keen to accept the cooperation with NATO as long as Russia was fixing

<center>9</center>

its own domestic problems. After stabilizing the internal situation (recovering from President Yeltsin's weak administration, a shrinking economy and the purging of Muslim fundamentalists in the Caucasus), Russia begun to exert influence on the situation in Europe. In almost twenty years of uninterrupted governance by Vladimir Putin as the Prime Minister and the President, Russia now employs all its instruments of national power to assert an increasingly larger impact on neighboring countries which once belonged to the so-called "sphere of influence." Although this term has its long history in international relations, it is no longer recognized in international law.[18] In the case of the "Russian sphere of influence" in Europe, it might apply both to former republics of the Soviet Union and to countries which used to be the members of the Warsaw Pact. Since some of these countries are now NATO members, Russia will not risk a direct application of its military force against them – at least at the moment. However, as some claim, "the 'unthinkable option' of a direct attack on countries such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could become reality if American leadership is weak and NATO's commitment to its Baltic Allies diminished."[19] This could consequently jeopardize the existence of NATO as the Alliance whose main task is to provide collective defense to all of its Members. This can eventually lead to the disintegration of the Alliance, leaving Russia's neighbors under an existential threat of their sovereignty.

Russia's strategic objective is to prevent any further NATO enlargement and to split existing NATO members. The aim of preventing NATO enlargement, which aroused Russia's protests since the beginning of this process in the late 1990s, was accomplished by provoking armed conflict in Georgia (2008) and destabilizing Ukraine (2014) by applying the means of hybrid warfare. The aim of splitting NATO countries

and to eventually weaken transatlantic links is executed at the present time. To reach this goal, Russia introduces a set of the means which are defined as the gray zone – "a combination of coercive and deterrent actions, below NATO's Article 5 threshold."[20] It maintains constant military pressure close to the borders with NATO countries and continuously organizes snap exercises to raise the combat readiness of its units. Russia is not afraid of projecting its force, for example flying its aircraft in provocative distance over a NATO ship.[21] Additionally, Russian military cooperation with Turkey over the war in Syria puts the unity of NATO into question. It suspended further disposal of weapons-grade plutonium that was part of a Russia – USA agreement, claiming it is, among others, "a result of NATO deployment on the territory of eastern flank members."[22]

The new Russian security strategy adopted at the end of 2015 identifies the U.S. and NATO as key threats to security.[23] In March 2015, Russia withdrew from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), which set equal limits on conventional weapons that NATO and Russia could deploy between the Atlantic Ocean and the Ural Mountains. It is estimated that the Russian military buildup along its borders with Ukraine and NATO countries has already significantly outnumbered forces of the countries on the eastern flank of NATO. Russia consequently has been modernizing its forces deployed in Kaliningrad oblast with the aim to develop it "into one of several Anti-Access Area Denial (A2/AD) hubs scattered around Russia's periphery".[24]

Effects of the Adaptation

From the very beginning of Russia's intervention in Crimea, NATO remained active to evaluate the development security situation and assure security of its members. This part provides the assessment of decisions taken during the NATO

summits in Wales and Warsaw, as well as examines the effects of deterrence and

defense measures applied by NATO to address the threat.

<u>Assurance, Deterrence, and Defense as of Wales and Warsaw</u>

While NATO was preparing its summit in 2014 in Wales, many commentators

claimed that besides accomplishing ISAF operation in Afghanistan there is really no

substantial subject to be discussed during the meeting. Yet the situation changed

dramatically at the beginning of the year with unfolding conflict between Russia and

Ukraine. As the Alliance was not really certain how to react to this challenge, it focused

on assuring those members which felt threatened by the situation. As a result of many

hours of heated debate, the Allies were able to agree upon the Readiness Action Plan

(RAP) and made commitments concerning their defense expenditures.

RAP called for the modification of already existing NATO Response Forces. In

practice a brigade of Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) supplemented by

two additional brigades were organized by the countries on a rotational basis. Those

brigades are supposed to operate in any threatened region of NATO's mandatory area

"before a crisis begins, to act as a potential deterrent to further escalation."[25] To

facilitate command and control over those units it was simultaneously decided that the

Multinational Corps North – East HQ in Szczecin, Poland would raise its readiness

level. A similar arrangement was developed for the southern part of Europe, where the

Headquarters of the Multinational Division South-East was established in Bucharest,

Romania. In addition, NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) have been organized in the

countries of the eastern flank to provide NATO with situational awareness, and assist in

rapid deployment of forces for more intensive exercises and operations. The Summit

Declaration called also for "appropriate air, maritime and special operations forces" to support the land component, and for capabilities to "effectively address the specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats."[26] However, little has been done so far in these areas.

The Allies pledged the increase of defense expenditures to the level of 2% of the countries' GDP and 20% of this sum is to be spent on major military equipment, and on defense research and development. For a long time, declining military budgets of the member states were a major concern of NATO; therefore, this crisis caused by Russia was merely the opportunity to address the issue again. Noticeably, countries declared to reach this level in a decade, which means that NATO will need to wait for the first results of this initiative.

Though symbolic in its principle, the decisions taken in Wales assured the Allies of the eastern flank and strengthened deterrence of the Alliance. In this way NATO sent a signal to Russia that it is determined to fulfill its obligations in accordance with its core missions. It was also the Alliance's first step to admitting that the security environment changed and to adapting to this new situation.

Warsaw

The assurance and deterrence measures taken in 2014 stopped Russia's aggressive actions, at least for a while. It quickly became evident that if Russia really had plans to regain control over its former territories, it would not take more than 60 hours to reach the capitals of Latvia and Estonia. The time of NATO's limited response to this action would have been calculated to take approximately a week, up to 10 days.[27] Such analysis, combined with further escalation of the situation by Russia, required

further adaptation. On 9 July 2016, the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw issued a Joint Communique in which they officially introduced the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) and tailored Forward Presence (tFP). Noting the evolving nature of security challenges, particularly those caused by Russia, these defense initiatives aimed "to further strengthen the Alliance's deterrence and defense posture."[28] The essence of eFP is to provide four battalion sized battlegroups, which will be deployed in the Baltic States and Poland. The tFP in turn, provides for the initiative of Romania to establish the framework brigade which should assist in the training of Allied units.[29]
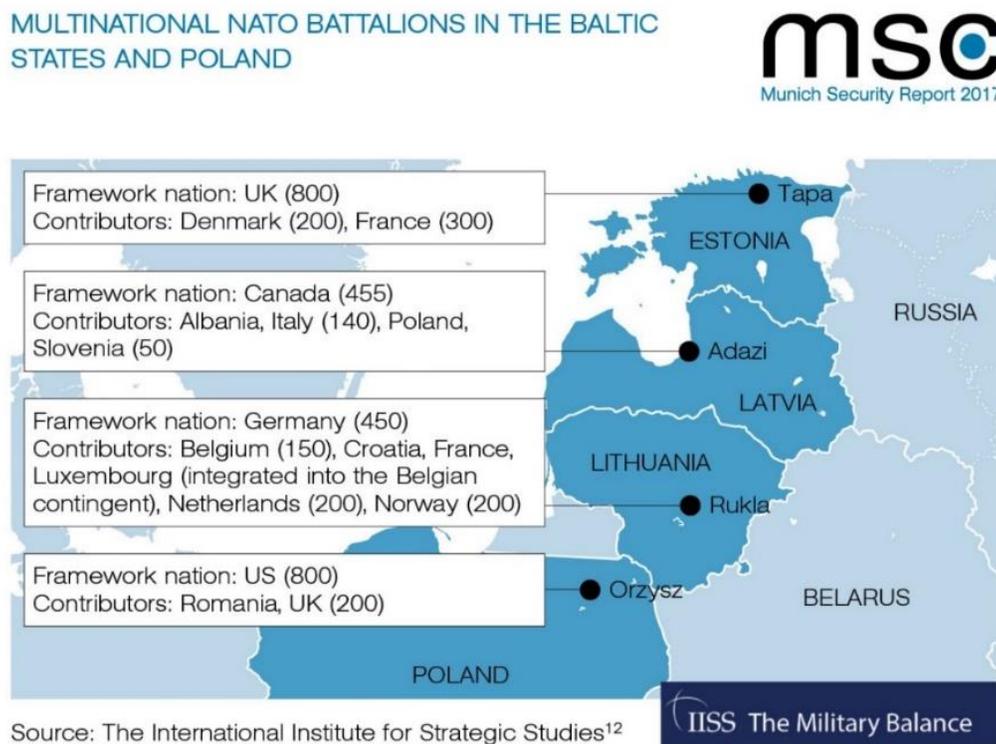

Figure 1. The Deployment of the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence in the Baltic States and Poland[30]

This summit also took into account the ongoing defense planning process, which should deliver "heavier and more high-end forces and capabilities, as well as more forces at higher readiness." The Allies also reiterated the need for robust and agile NATO Command Structure, credible ISR capabilities as well as strengthening maritime posture. Finally, they underlined that an "appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities" should be a cornerstone of NATO's strategy.[31]

After analyzing two years of NATO's adaptation, there is no doubt that the Alliance is struggling to address the security challenges. Slowly but firmly, it organizes its entire diplomatic, information and military tools in the way which could in the future cope with any possible threat. In this situation, NATO's objective remains to maintain its credibility, while delivering security to the member countries, as well as to preserve the cohesion of the organization. However, NATO needs to navigate this area very carefully as the cohesion is not the strongest feature of the Alliance. There is also uncertainty of whether the Allies will deliver what they pledged at the political level.

Does Deterrence Work?

Measuring deterrence is perhaps the most important and simultaneously most difficult element of any deterring activity. NATO's decisions as described in the chapter above do not differ in this aspect. The overarching question is how to set the criteria that should be applied to impartially examine whether the solutions brings a desired effect.

An interesting solution was proposed by the U.S. Naval College which examines deterrence by applying the "Relative Resolve" – which is understood as a difference between the Total Resolves of the Challenger and Defender. For further considerations "the Challenger" will be Russia and "the Defender" will be NATO. Resolve is identified

as a "state's willingness to run the risk of disaster" and consists of "Stakes – the strategic objectives and national interest of the actor", "Credible Capabilities – the relevant factors of time, space and forces for both actors to enhance the perception that escalation is possible", and "Risk tolerance – denoted as the inherent aggressiveness or boldness of actors."[32]

Stakes of the Defender and the Challenger were described in the previous chapters, and they cannot be measured mathematically. On one side, there is NATO which is always described as the Alliance based on values, defined in the Washington Treaty. On the other side is Russia, which claims its right to influence its vicinity neighborhood and perceives NATO as the threat. Judging as impartially as possible, one can assess that in this category there is a draw, 1:1.

Comparing the credible capabilities of NATO and Russia will be a matter of scrutinizing the military potential of both sides. Figure 2 analyzes the main aspects such as the defense budget, the active military personnel and the quantitative comparison of main equipment which is on the inventory of the Challenger and the Defender. The chart draws separate attention to the relevant assets of NATO as a whole, and only European members of the Alliance, to analyze what is the impact of non-European (the U.S. and Canada) to its overall capabilities. On the other hand, Russia's capabilities are also displayed separately and with the other five countries of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which can in theory support Russia in case of military conflict.
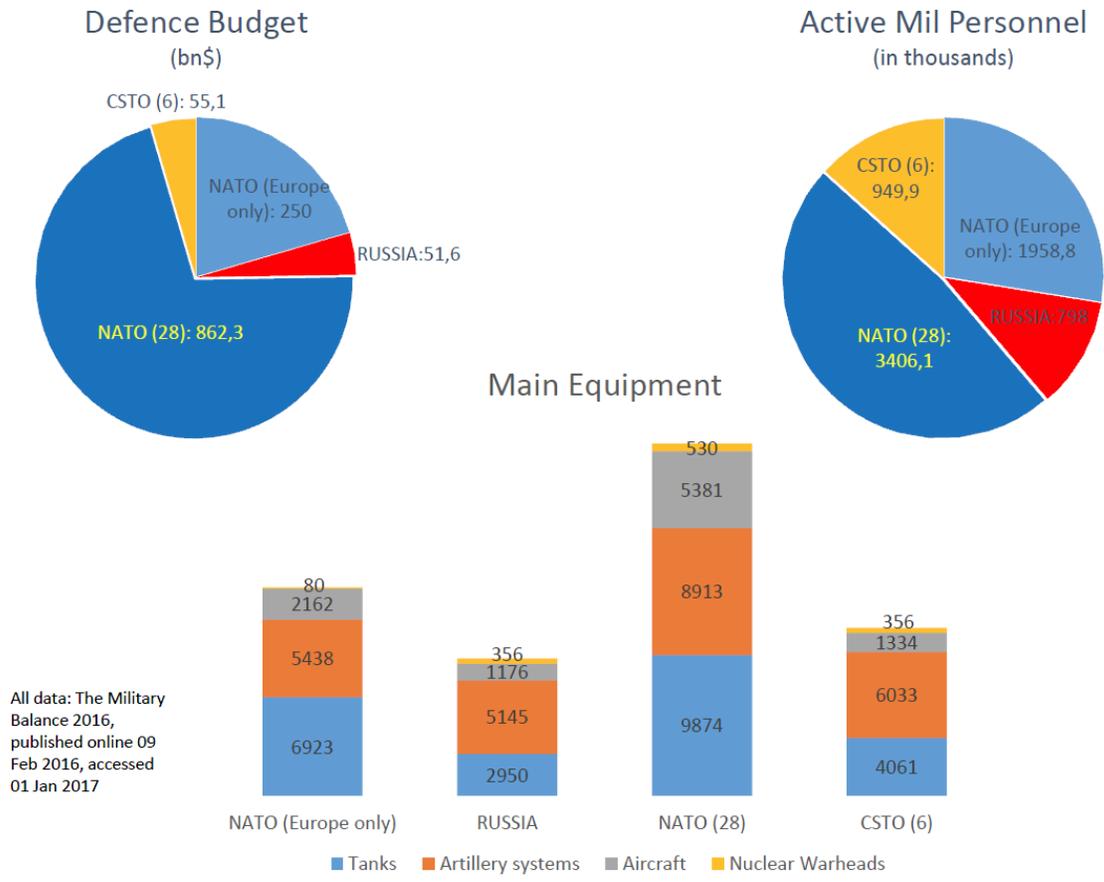
Figure 2. Credible Capabilities[33]

As one can easily notice, European members of NATO even without significant capabilities of the U.S. and Canada outmatch Russia with almost all compared categories. Only the number of nuclear warheads at Russia's disposal can constitute a concern for European countries, but again, the U.S. contribution in this area makes a significant change. As in the case of the Stakes, in category of Credible Capabilities one may declare NATO's decisive win, 2:1.

The Risk Tolerance can be measured more empirically than mathematically. However, by analyzing existing activities on both sides it is not difficult to conclude that there is much more aggression and boldness on the Challenger's side. Having relatively not much to lose, Russia gambles to regain the supremacy in the region. NATO on the

17

other hand, traditionally refrains from offensive action of any type and does not present a unanimous will to offer more robust answers; therefore, in this category, supremacy belongs to Russia, 2:1

In conclusion, one may estimate that the Total Resolves between NATO and Russia will be at the same level. In the final result there will be no difference in Relative resolves of these two players - see Figure 3.

Figure 3. Total Resolve

In this situation one can observe a stalemate; none of the adversaries gains any advantage over the other side. This can even serve as the explanation for why despite of NATO's efforts, Russia does not seem to change its policy. However, the wargaming

approach to deterrence offers one more noteworthy observation. It is a "salami tactics",

understood as "a strategy where a challenger can escalate gradually, slicing off small

parts of its objectives one at a time, with little expectation of defender retaliation."[34] In

the case of Russia, this strategy was successfully implemented between 2007 and

2014. Subsequent operations, such as a cyber attack in Estonia, war in Georgia and

finally military annexation of Crimea, met little reaction from NATO. As one may see in

Figure 4, even when the relative resolve is equal, the salami tactics allow Russia to

maintain initiative, while NATO barely reacts to the changing situation.
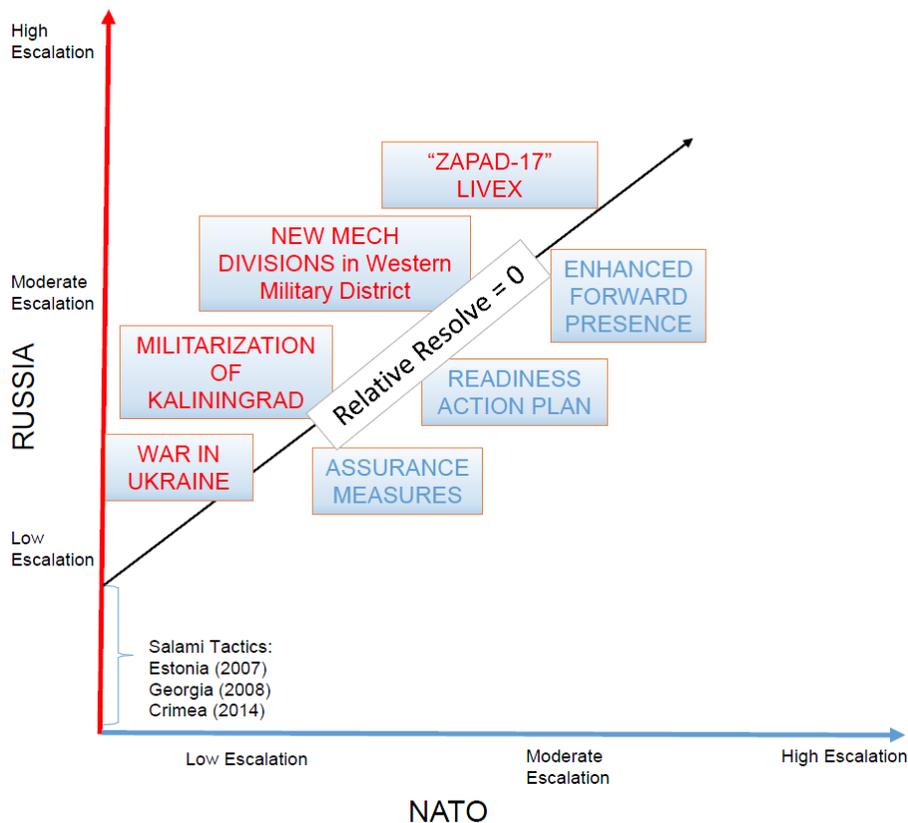

Figure 4. Russia's "Salami Tactics" as the Means to Maintain the Initiative

This explains why NATO's deterrence that should in theory bring a halt to the

Russian coercive actions have brought moderate outcomes so far. One may assert that

to some extent it prevented continuation of Kremlin's victorious march to the West. However, Russia's policy in last three years did not indicate it was interested in the immediate follow-up actions against other countries. Therefore, deterrence measures taken by NATO are rather considered as steps to ease the concerns of the countries which feel threatened by Russia. Obviously, at the moment this is the best of what NATO can offer. Taking into account that effective deterrence is the resultant of will and abilities to contribute necessary forces and resources, NATO can only adapt to the extent of which its members are willing to make changes.[35]

The second observation is that the strategy of "not provoking Russia" does not work as well. As evidenced by the Figure 4, Russia implements its plan of strengthening the western theatre of operation without regard for what NATO will do. Some experts even claim "Putin remains a step ahead of NATO's" decision making process and quickly adapts his actions to keep the Alliance off balance."[36] In other words, the escalation that worried some western NATO countries has already become a reality. One needs to accept this fact and work to create a feasible solution to this situation, or else it is very likely that "prevarication and weakness by decisions makers in NATO and the West could only invite a war."[37]

<u>Reaction of Russia</u>

Security experts and the headlines of leading media in some of the countries in the region do not leave any illusion: Russia still plays in the gray zone with coercive military power and does not intend to stop at this stage. Moreover, Russia continues its military build-up along its borders and consequently raises the readiness of all its units deployed in the European part of the country. It has achieved an A2/AD capability in

Kaliningrad Oblast, which would hamper any NATO's unit freedom of maneuver. In addition, Russia's military engagement in Syria implies that Russia gained the power projection capabilities which could in the future be used against other adversaries, including countries in Russia's immediate vicinity.

Russia's stakeholders reiterate their concerns about an alleged violation so called the "Substantial Combat Forces" pledge. This pledge was in fact NATO's unilateral declaration that "it will carry on its collective defense by ensuring necessary interoperability and capability for reinforcement rather than by additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces."[38] This statement was included in the "NATO-Russia Founding Act", and its provisions do not stipulate any restrictions on geographical or size of such a possible permanent stationing. Signed 20 years ago, it also provided that NATO was not willing to station any substantial forces in "the current and foreseeable security environment." In the same document, Russia also pledged that it will "exercise similar restraint in its conventional force deployments in Europe." [39] In the light of all the security developments and actions orchestrated by Russia, it is clear that NATO sees these claims as entirely inadequate.[40]

Nonetheless, Russian authorities use this argument as the excuse for the international community, as well as internally to explain to its own society why it has to be ready for further confrontation. This is in fact not an isolated case which Moscow uses to its advantage. Change of administration in the U.S. was also the window of opportunity to project its military power not only in Eastern Ukraine but also in the Mediterranean Sea area and Middle East. It has already started preparing for another strategic exercise "Zapad-17" (West-17) in western military districts and Belarus. As

some experts from the region claim, this exercise could be a prelude to a further escalation of tensions, including the military subjugation of Belarus.[41] The ambiguity of such measures is exacerbated by negative official publicity spread by Russian officials.[42]

Russia has learned the lesson from the Cold War, when the policy of containment combined with an economically exhausting arms race led to the collapse of the entire Communist bloc. This time, one might expect Russia would like to achieve its strategic goals in a relatively short time, while avoiding military conflict on a large scale and devastating competition for technological supremacy.

Way Ahead: Awaiting the New Strategic Concept

Today and in the foreseeable future, a safe and stable environment in Europe largely depends on the way NATO will cope with Russian security challenge. Since the signature of the Washington Treaty, the strategic goal of the Alliance has not changed, which is to preserve security and safeguard the freedom of its members. In pursing this goal, NATO will need to continue the adaptation process which was initiated in Wales and Warsaw. The adaptation is based on "Deterrence, Defense and Dialogue" vis-à-vis Russia as supported by NATO's Annual Report 2016.[43] Last Summit specified that the first two "D's" should be provided by an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional, and missile defense, all orchestrated to resist the hybrid environment and to respond if the situation so requires. The last "D" needs the new strategy to clearly identify challenges and ways to address them. In anticipation of possible developments of the situation one needs to reflect on possible directions to which NATO should continue its adaptation.

<u>Conventional Forces on the Eastern Flank</u>

Credible Deterrence and Defense will depend on providing and sustaining resources and capabilities to prevent further Russian revisionism. As for now, Russia seems to respect nothing but pure military force. However, if such a force is not backed by determination of the countries that deploy it, Russia will not stop pursuing its policy. Being aware of this aspect, there are some experts who advocate for a much bigger contribution of land contingent deployed to the eastern flank. In the Rand report, one may find an analogy of defending an approximately similar frontier between West Germany and the Warsaw Pact, which demanded more than 20 allied divisions with subsequent reinforcements.[44] Obviously there is no strategic justification nor operational depth to deploy such a force today, especially in the Baltic States. However, expanding NATO's eFP battalions, which are deployed in the Baltics and Poland, to the size of brigade in each of these countries can be an option for NATO to consider. While combined with the forces of these countries and adequate air and naval support, NATO brigades could change the force ratio to make the defense of these countries more feasible. Unlike the battalions deployed in the framework of eFP, which are solely the "tripwire" to detect any aggressive actions by Russia, brigade-sized force in case of attack could demonstrate better resolve and provide time for NATO's decision making process.

Some members would raise the argument against such an expanded contribution, claiming that it will require separate force generation process or additional financial burden of the NATO states. However, there are already three VJTF brigades pledged by NATO countries and one U.S. brigade deployed in the framework of the

Operation Atlantic Resolve. In this situation, it is only a matter of NATO's consensus to change the VJTF area of deployment and readiness status, as well as coordinate with the U.S. for its contribution of the fourth brigade.

Should these brigades be deployed evenly in all countries along the entire eastern flank of the Alliance or in the selected locations, separate considerations still need to be done by NATO's military planners. Their deployment, for example, in all the countries of the region (Poland and the Baltic States) would bring more steadfast defense at the very beginning of the potential conflict. If NATO seeks more flexibility to react on the threatened directions it could maintain, the eFP battalions in the Baltic States and plan for the deployment of VJTF brigades in Poland and in Romania. By doing this NATO can achieve a strong response force ready to react on any possible direction. No matter which option is pursued, the land package should be supported by adequate combat support units and air components. The VJTF brigades can be allocated for planning and exercises to the HQ of the Multinational Division which is to be established in Poland.

Obviously, the deployment of approximately 15,000 more soldiers even in the mandatory area of NATO will have its financial and organizational implications for both the troop contributing countries, as well as for the host countries. However, keeping in mind that NATO members for several years maintained an average 40,000 – 50,000 strong contingent in Afghanistan, the financial aspect of this new commitment should be considered as the investment to the common defense, rather than as a burden. To sustain this commitment for extended time, NATO should consider creating a common budget for deterrence and defense. At the same time, as part of their contribution, the

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host countries should invest in the critical infrastructure to receive and stage the new NATO units.

NATO also needs to calculate the risk in pursuing this step. It is highly possible that Russia will use it as the opportunity to further escalate the situation. As some experts claim, it is likely that Russia can use exercises Zapad-17 in fall this year as the pretext to increase its military influence in Belarus. The deteriorating internal situation in this country creates ideal conditions for Russia to exert political power. This can put NATO units deployed in the Baltic States in a diametrically more complicated situation. Therefore, deploying VJTF brigades in the eastern flank will enhance NATO's response options and create a situation in which "risk of a quick gamble to seize the Baltic Region would not be easy or painless for the Kremlin."[45] If NATO does not want again to be merely reactive to the developing situation, it needs to carefully analyze the security environment and make appropriate decisions.

Nuclear Capabilities

This is a subject which is not easy to discuss nor make a consensus on the forum of the 28 member states. Firstly, NATO is concerned about non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and is still convinced about the possibility to create a "non-strategic nuclear force posture" in Europe in cooperation with Russia.[46] Secondly, nuclear members of NATO understandably claim to maintain national control over nuclear weapons and means of delivery. Thirdly, non-nuclear members where the missiles are deployed are internally divided on how to approach the issue of nuclear deterrence. And lastly, there are also doubts on how the "Franco-British deterrent for Europe could take shape with London currently exiting from the European project."[47]

At the same time, Russia is overtly intimidating NATO by deployment of its missiles in the region and with threats that even a limited clash might lead it to use theater nuclear weapons. Moreover, it has already divided European Allies and now is trying to weaken U.S. ties to NATO, and to undermine U.S. extended nuclear deterrence. All of this is done to block NATO's efforts to expand its presence along the Russian border, and to deter NATO states from "deploying its missile defenses, and not reacting to Russian pressure or limited military actions and irregular warfare in states near Russia."[48]

This is why, besides the constant reiteration of NATO's nuclear posture in its declarations and documents, the Alliance seems to be blackmailed by constant Russian activity in this area. To cope with this issue, NATO needs to engage its nuclear members more actively. There is an exceptional role for the U.S. capabilities in this area. As subject experts claim, "there is a need that Russia sees a firm U.S. commitment to match Russian nuclear threats with an effective U.S. deterrent, and one that avoids undermining both Russian and NATO European perceptions that extended deterrence poses a real threat."[49]

Another area in which NATO can be more proactive to mitigate Russia's nuclear threat is enhanced preparedness and training of the nations that could potentially find themselves in the area of nuclear disaster. NATO has already developed "Guidelines for first response to a CBRN incident" and organizes "International Courses for Trainers of First Responders to CBRN Incidents". Although primary responsibility to protect the population and infrastructure in such cases rests with the member states, NATO can further develop the possibilities to assist nations in this area. The leading role in this process should be given to the Joint CBRN Defence Centre of Excellence in the Czech

Republic. As it is now oriented to the NATO forces it could extend its services to the civilian population.

Missile Defense

The deployment of Russian Iskander-M ballistic missile and the possibility to field new ground launched cruise missile create additional threats to all European capitals within the range above 1,500 km from Kaliningrad Oblast.
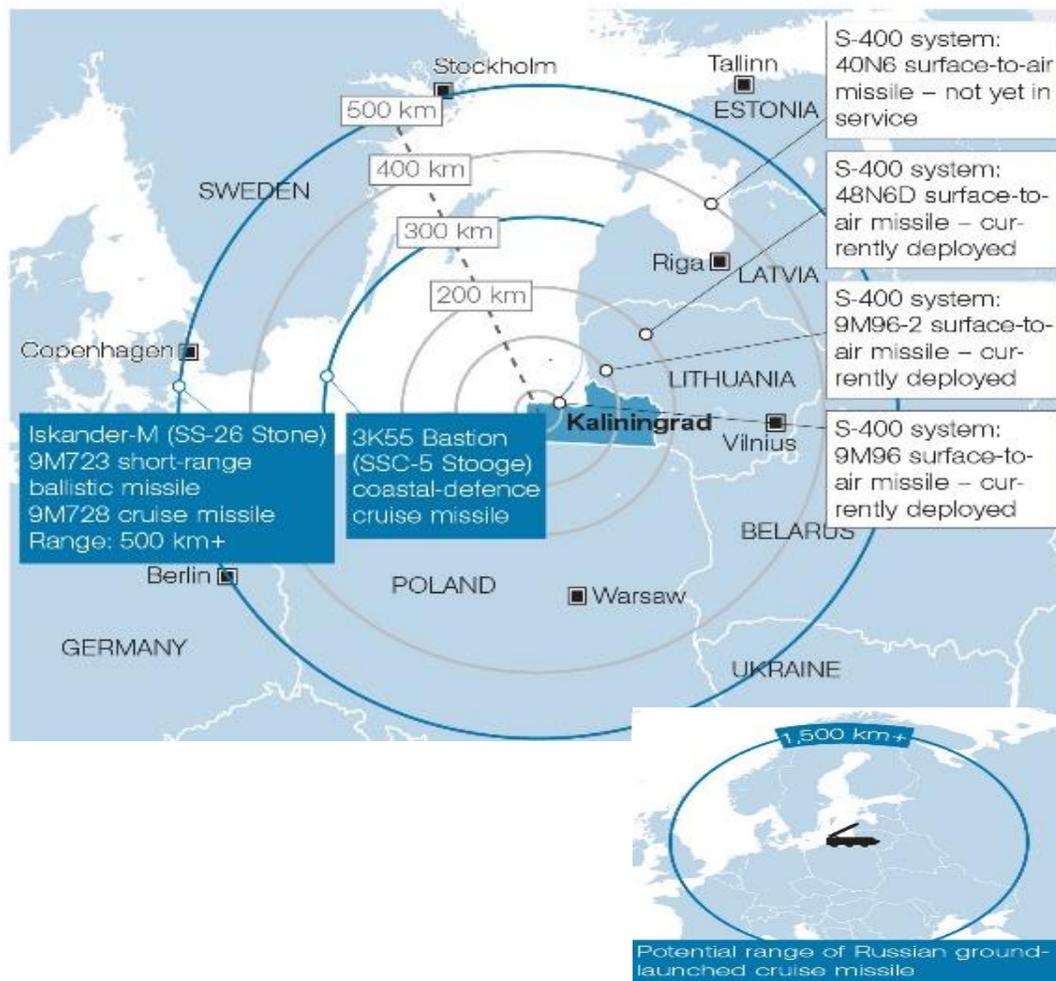

Figure 5. Russian Potential Missile Capability in the Kaliningrad Oblast.[50]

This requires additional capabilities connected to Missile Defense. NATO has been already addressing the issue of defense against ballistic missile threat for more than a decade. In 2005, it introduced the Active Layered Theater Ballistic Missile

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Defence Programme which is aimed to protect its personnel deployed in the operations. This program was subsequently developed in the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) to protect "NATO European populations and territories."[51] In 2012, NATO declared BMD interim capability, which consisted of a radar deployed in Turkey, one ship deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, and a Command and Control Battle Management and Communication node at Ramstein Air Base, Germany. All three elements remain under NATO command and control.[52] In addition the U.S. European Phased Adaptive Approach (EPAA) is to provide regional BMD to protect Europe, including the forward deployment of U.S. forces.

What is clearly underlined, BMD is neither capable against nor directed at Russia's strategic nuclear deterrent, but focuses instead on ballistic missile threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic area. However in this situation, NATO countries should further develop missile defense capabilities by acquiring additional ground-based air and missile defense systems (such as Patriot or SAMP/T) or contribute complementary capabilities as a force protection of existing BMD assets. Establishment of a robust and resilient system of Air and Missile Defense prepared to neutralize Russian assets deployed in Kaliningrad and Belarus should mitigate Russian leverage in A2/AD.

<u>Hybrid Defense and Offense</u>

NATO has already noticed that traditional approaches to deterrence in the light of Russian aggression seems to be inadequate. This implies the necessity to prepare deployed troops to operate in a gray zone. There are a number of steps which NATO can implement, both of defensive and offensive nature. Firstly, NATO troops will need to maintain vigilance while deployed in the eastern flank. NATO forces will be subject to

constant surveillance, especially by Russian-speaking minorities of the Baltic States. Any possible misstep will be promptly reported worldwide, undermining the credibility of the entire forward presence.

The societies of the countries where those forces are deployed need to be aware that NATO has limited capabilities to deal with non-military challenges. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that these countries develop Resilience of Civil Preparedness in the areas, agreed by NATO Defense Ministers: "continuity of government, energy, population movements, food and water resources, ability to cope with mass casualties, civil communications, and civil transportation."[53] NATO forward presence units apart from daily military cooperation and exercises can assist in developing this civil readiness notion in these countries. As the military alliance, NATO is also well suited in Special Forces operations and in intelligence and surveillance data collection and analysis, which will be essential to cope with hybrid challenges.

Also in a cyber domain there is a scope for cooperation between all the member states. Several NATO countries have already established their national cyber defense centers. Now is the time to coordinate those efforts for the sake of unity of action. Again, information-sharing, situational awareness, regular joint tabletop and live exercises, and the alignment of crisis-response procedures should become routine in NATO.[54]

Dialogue – Strategy and Information

On every possible occasion, NATO repeats it is open to dialogue with Russia which is met with Russia's little interest. Moreover, seeing NATO's internal divergence on how it should react to Russia's challenge, Russian stakeholders disregard any contact with NATO, preferring direct talks with separate countries rather than with the

entire organization. Effective dialogue with Russia in this situation should be commenced by setting priorities and strategy, which should be consistently communicated to the other side. This needs to be clearly stated in the revised NATO Strategic Concept that should take into account all the changes of the security environment. However, at the moment NATO members are reluctant to open this discussion, claiming that it could "further erode the cohesion of the Alliance than strengthen the transatlantic unity."[55] Indeed, there is a different perception of the threats NATO faces today, largely connected to geographic location and political-economic ties with Russia. Therefore opening a debate on a new set of tasks to NATO can, according to the critics, result in the final document that by any means will not address the issue. So paradoxically, NATO which is historically known for its decision making process based on consensus is suddenly afraid to open discussion on the project which will require another consensus.

Yet it should be noticed that NATO formulated its existing strategy for about 5 years, between its first requests and its adoption of the document in 2010. The process was also criticized by the member states. This allows for optimism that the Alliance sooner or later will find its critical mass of members, which will push for the new strategy. When this document is finally commissioned, the strategic core missions will need to be reformulated. Keeping in mind that these missions should guide the Alliance for the years to come, it is obvious they should address and clearly communicate NATO's posture towards Russia. There are already voices articulating that the "Protection of the Alliance territory" should be one of them; however, it "must be backed by credible capabilities". Another mission is strictly related to the concept of dialogue

with Russia; though, with the reservation that such dialogue should be implemented

from the Alliance's position of strength, and that expectation of the dialogue should not

be overestimated.[56] In the current and anticipated situation, it seems to be a reasonable

approach to which the Allies should subscribe.

Summary

The relations between NATO and Russia are already assessed to be at their

lowest point since the end of the Cold War, and NATO cannot afford the luxury of not

taking any action. In the given environment, the further and decisive adaptation gives

the biggest possibility to achieve the political objective of responding to Russia's

challenge and maintaining political cohesion in the Alliance. The adaptation will provide

the required assurance to all Allies and demonstrate an indivisible security of the Euro-

Atlantic region. It will also ensure that all the members are included, and the Alliance

acts unanimously.

NATO faces today the strategic dilemma of losing its credibility on one hand and

risking a conflict on a large scale with Russia on the other. This issue does not

differentiate from the challenge which NATO had to cope with during the Cold War.

What has changed are the ways and means which NATO has to apply today and in the

future to accomplish its strategic objectives. This is why, although the combination of

conventional and nuclear forces still remain the pivot of deterrence and defense, there

is a growing requirement for other tools. These tools will be mainly non-military, will

involve the population of the Alliance and will also include dialogue with Russia,

however from the position of strength. Such approach backed by the new strategy

should allow more room for taking appropriate decisions which will be acceptable by all of the Allies.

If NATO is to anticipate any future scenario, it must be ready for either further deterioration of the situation or a more conciliatory approach of Russia. The considerations offered in this paper prove that without firm and coherent policy backed by credible forces there will be little chance to find common ground for peaceful relations with Russia. On the other hand, they demonstrate how painful the process is to reach consensus among the 28 nations which present divergent interests and security concerns. However, to remain a credible organization which is capable of accomplishing its missions, NATO needs to address this strategic challenge with the resolve it has presented so far during almost 70 years of its existence.

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