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Quo Vadis NATO?

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NATO held its third summit this year. That in itself is remarkable, but the real sensation is that this summit produced, no exaggeration, historic results. It was about time. The Alliance has wasted a number of years, largely because of the complexity and rapidity of the situation, but also due to indecision, internal divisions and let us say it openly, cowardice.

The international security situation, including the European security situation, has changed radically since the last strategic concept was adopted in 2010. Both in political-security terms and in military-technical terms. And NATO has been hesitant to respond.

By way of indication, Russia's departure from the path of cooperation in 2007 was obvious and open. Even before then, it was not sincere in its efforts to democratise and integrate into the European security system, but after 2007 it was clear that it had the opposite ambitions: see Putin's Munich Speech, the attack on Georgia and the annexation of part of its territory, its heavy-handed intervention in the Syrian war, its support for North Korea and, of course, its de facto occupation of Crimea and two provinces of Eastern Ukraine.

Nor has NATO adequately responded to the new challenge posed by China. We could go on incessantly about the inadequate response to Iran's nuclear weaponization and others. But this is also true in the military-technological field, where cyber warfare, drones, hybrid warfare, artificial intelligence and others have emerged, again only indicatively.

However, the unprecedented Russian aggression against Ukraine has had an impact. The Alliance got not only the opportunity, but the very urgent need to take stock of where it stands. The world has radically changed in the past decade and the change was multiplied by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the war that is still going on with little hope of ending any time soon, as we speak.

NATO has "woken up" from its "brain dead" state and has responded to these challenges with surprising strength. This reaction is clearly visible in the Communiqué adopted at the Summit and in the new Strategic Concept.

KEYWORDS: Madrid Summit, Russian Federation, China, strategic concept

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Csúcstalálkozót tartott a NATO. Idén már a harmadikat. Ez önmagában is figyelemre méltó, de az igazi szenzáció az, hogy a legutóbbi csúcstalálkozó, nem túlzás, történelmi eredményeket hozott. Éppen ideje volt. A szövetség elvesztegetett jó néhány évet, jó-

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rész a helyzet bonyolultsága és gyors változása miatt, de komoly szerepet játszott ebben a határozatlanság, a belső megosztás, és – mondjuk ki nyíltan – a gyávaság is.

A nemzetközi, és benne az európai biztonsági helyzetben a legutóbbi, 2010-ben elfogadott stratégiai koncepció óta radikális változások mentek végbe. Mind politikai-biztonsági, mint pedig katonai-technikai értelemben. A NATO mindeddig hezitált, hogyan reagáljon ezekre.

Csak jelzésszerűen: Oroszország 2007-ben nyilvánvalóan és nyíltan letért az együttműködés útvjáról. Addig se volt őszinte a demokratizálódási és az európai biztonsági rendszerbe történő integrálódása, de 2007 után pontosan lehetett tudni, hogy éppen ezzel ellentétes törekvései vannak: lásd csak Putin müncheni beszédét, Grúzia (Georgia) megtámadását és területei egy részének annektálását, a szíriai háborúba történő durva beavatkozását, Észak-Korea támogatását, és természetesen a Krim és Kelet-Ukrajna két megyéjének, de facto megszállását.

Nem reagált a NATO megfelelően a Kína jelentette újfajta kihívásra sem, illetve még sorolhatnánk az iráni nukleáris fegyverkezésre történő nem megfelelő reagálást és másokat is. De igaz ez a katonai-technológiai területre is, ahol – szintén csak jelzésszerűen – megjelent a kibernetika, a drónok, a hibrid hadviselés, a mesterséges intelligencia és egyéb.

Az Ukrajna elleni példátlan orosz agresszió azonban megtette hatását. A NATO „fölbredt agyhalott” állapotából és meglepően erőteljesen reagált ezekre a kihívásokra. Ez a reakció jól felismerhető a csúcstalálkozón elfogadott kommunikációban és az új stratégiai koncepcióban.

KULCSSZAVAK: madridi csúcstalálkozó, Oroszországi Föderáció, Kína, stratégiai koncepció

Introduction

It is no exaggeration to say that the Alliance has never faced such a huge number of different challenges at a very wide scale. It is not to suggest that the threats posed by the communist Soviet Union and its satellites in the Warsaw Treaty was a lethal Challenge. This challenge was threatening the end of humankind as we know it, which was very simple to handle. It required a tremendous effort – political and military –, but it was one faceted challenge – unlike today, when threats and challenges are complicated, comprehensive and multifaceted, as never seen before.

A further complicating fact is that the threat during the Cold War was clear and present. There was no way to deny it, whatever discussions and different views emerged between the allies, one fact was clear and undeniable: the task ahead of the Western allies was how to defend Western Europe, which *de facto* also meant, how to defend democracy and the civilized way of life against barbaric threat posed by communism embodied in the Soviet Union. And it was also clear and undeniable that this threat materialized above all in the Soviet threat against Western Europe. Also, it was obvious and therefore shared by most, if not all, that Western Europe and the United States can only counter this threat together: how on Earth could everybody agreed Western Europe was not in the position to defend itself alone, i.e. without the United States. In addition, it was equally plausible that the United States would not be able to defend Europe without the Western European states.

Consequently, whatever disagreements emerged between the Allies during the Cold War, the final conclusion was predetermined: only the strong cooperation between the Allies on the two sides of the Atlantic would do the job.

This situation fundamentally changed in the early 1990s when the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty, thus basically the Communist threat disappeared. The general agreement was – and Fukuyama put it in very tempting words – that the danger of a military confrontation on the continent has disappeared. This, at least, raised the question for the need of such a strong military cooperation between Europe and the United States. Moreover, as the military threat to Europe vanished maybe forever, the need for a strong and institutionalized cooperation between the European states was also put into question. This also means that the existence of a military alliance became questionable.

Without going at this point into details why NATO survived – and survived as a useful tool in the hands of the democratic world, its shortcomings notwithstanding – it is necessary to show what made it possible. Let us go for a moment back in history to the creation of the North Atlantic Alliance. I am sure everybody knows it, nevertheless it is necessary at this stage to point out what was the purpose of NATO at its creation, and how it was put into the text in 1949. The most common description of NATO's purpose comes from its first Secretary General, Lord Ismay. He formulated NATO's purpose as late as 1952: "To keep the Americans in, The Russians out and the Germans down."¹

I only quote it to show that while the genuine intention behind the formation of NATO in 1949 was indeed to meet and counter the Soviet threat, politically it was always clear that NATO's mission was not limited solely to the defence against the Soviet Union. It showed that NATO was looking at each and every enemy in order to decide how to defend its members against any potential threat by the Soviet Union or else.

It must become clear, when we look at the text of the Washington Treaty, first and foremost at its famous, most quoted, and indeed the most important part. It says: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations."²

There are two important observations that must be made in this context.

First, going through what most people think, Article 5 does not mean that in case of an attack each and every member will have to commit all its armed forces to common defence. When it says: "Each of them [...] will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."³ It stipulates though that an attack on any member of the alliance will trigger common defence with the participation of every member state – this is why the decision to invoke Article 5 must be taken by the North Atlantic Council, containing all Member states, by consensus – and every member state will decide individually, if and how it will participate in the common

1 Ismay 1954.

2 The Washington Treaty, Article 5.

3 The Washington Treaty, Article 5.

effort, meaning it may decide to engage its forces, partially or fully, or not, and decide to make a contribution some other way.

The other very important provision of the Washington Treaty is that it does not tell who the enemy is. The Soviet Union is not mentioned once in the Treaty.

Enemy is anybody, who launches “an armed attack is deemed to include an armed attack [...] on the territory of any of the Parties” and “on the forces [...] of any of the Parties”.⁴

This is what kept NATO alive even after the fall of the Soviet Union. Ever since we have made a good use of NATO, whenever a member state, or its interests have been threatened militarily.

Thanks for the wisdom of the founding fathers, NATO remains an important instrument in the hands of its members, and yes, indeed, the community of democratic countries, even of those, who are not members, as they can also count on military assistance from and by NATO. This is the basis on which NATO has functioned since 1949. And this is the basis on which the NATO Summit took some important, this time it is no exaggeration to say: historic decisions.

Let us have a look at the most important decisions of the NATO summit.

The context

The NATO Summit took place in probably the most unstable and most dangerous time since the end of the Cold War. Maybe – with a few exceptions – even since World War II. The challenges and threats started mounting as early as 2007, when Russian President Putin in his speech at the Munich security conference⁵ announced that Russia had not at all been happy with the existing world order and would undertake action – for the time being not specified – to change it. The first proof of this happened as early as 2008, when Russia attacked Georgia and occupied almost 20% of it, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The West did not – or rather did not want – to understand the message and responded with the “reset” policy. The establishment of the NATO-Russia Council – especially after 9/11 attack in 2001 – was driven by a strong desire to handle Russia as an important strategic ally, especially in fields like anti-terrorism. Even then Russia’s Middle Eastern ally Syria deployed chemical weapons, the use of which the American President Obama declared a “redline”, the West remained under the illusion that Russian policy would continue – and that was also a big mistake as Russian foreign policy has never sought a strategic alliance with the West – it has sought it has sought cooperation where the best cooperation is possible and confronted it only where it is unavoidable. It was only towards the end of Obama’s presidency that the Americans recognized the mistake – which they never acknowledged and tried to correct the policy. Europe was even worse. They enthusiastically supported the reset policy and further increased Europe’s dependence on Russia, especially in the field of oil and gas supply. Consequently, in the political sphere there was no room for change.

4 The Washington Treaty, Article 5.

5 Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference.

Donald Trump's presidency changed a lot of things, but part of the American administration, notably led by the president himself, continued to look for some reconciliation with Russia's Putin. Even the aggression against Ukraine by invading and annexing the Crimea and then fighting a "hybrid war" in eastern Ukraine, did not change American or European policy too much. Although the Americans and the British started to think, and also did a little to support Ukraine, but hardly was it more than nothing. And with the shameful Minsk Agreements that basically would have rewarded the aggression and punished Ukraine, this policy started to remain in place. Then by the end of the summer of 2021, Russia started massing troops on the Ukrainian border, increasingly clearly preparing for an attack, it was only the Americans who warned that this was not the usual military exercise but a clear preparation for an invasion. Most of Europe did not believe it.

When then Russia indeed invaded Ukraine, the West started waking and step by step started to take sides with Ukraine and support its fight against the Russian invasion.

This, of course, did not convince Putin to become closer to the West – especially as his internal policy became brutally more and more dictatorial, thus put Russia more and more on a confronting path with the West.

In parallel with this, many other challenges and threats occurred. Here we only list them shortly: the rise of China, cyber security, new technologies with special attention to drones, climate change, and so on.

By the time of the NATO summit in mid-2022, the situation had become clear and NATO states agreed in the declaration that the world around them had become unstable and dangerous.

NATO rediscovered de Gaulle's strategy and, at the same time, also came to the conclusion that the threats we have to face are multiple. Here is what the Summit Communique says: "We continue to face distinct threats from all strategic directions. The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, continues to pose a direct threat to the security of our populations, and to international stability and prosperity."⁶

The Strategic Concept

The new Strategic Concept reflects the changes in the strategic environment, the threats and challenges NATO has to face and spells out the answers that the alliance will find to counter those threats and handle the challenges.

The Strategic Concept is a more detailed response, offering what we believe is necessary to maintain Europe's security and stability – or rather, in many respects, what is necessary to effectively deal with both the current situation, which is predominantly defined by the Russian aggression against Ukraine that the Alliance sees as a direct threat to NATO countries, their security and territorial integrity.

6 NATO 2022 Summit Declaration, Madrid.

Moreover, the Russian aggression is a clear and present danger to the existing security structures in Europe and beyond.

By doing so the Strategic Concept spells out NATO's core tasks: "Our new Strategic Concept reaffirms that NATO's key purpose is to ensure our collective defence, based on a 360-degree approach. It defines the Alliance's three core tasks: deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security. We underscore the need to significantly strengthen our deterrence and defence as the backbone of our Article 5 commitment to defend each other."⁷

The Strategic Concept continues to go into more details on how these tasks can be achieved and gives the firm assurance that the Alliance will implement those measures as foreseen in the Washington Treaty. By doing it, the Strategic Concept does fulfil its key objective: showing the direction the defence of the alliance and its member states should go to ensure the effective implementation of the three core tasks mentioned in the Concept, thus providing the member states – and also Europe – with a sustainable security structure and stability for the next decade to come.

"While NATO is a defensive Alliance, no one should doubt our strength and resolve to defend every inch of Allied territory, preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Allies and prevail against any aggressor [...] NATO's deterrence and defence posture is based on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defence capabilities, complemented by space and cyber capabilities [...] To that end, we will ensure a substantial and persistent presence on land, at sea, and in the air, including through strengthened integrated air and missile defence [...] We will continue to enhance the collective readiness, responsiveness, deploy ability, integration and interoperability of our forces."⁸

All this represents so its significant shift from the strategic concept of 2010 and in many respects reminds us of the Strategy of the Alliance during the Cold War. No surprise, as the situation is also more like to the times when the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw Treaty posed a very serious threat to the members of NATO and the entire non-Soviet Europe. Today there is no Soviet Union, but the Russian leader does not give up his dream – a nightmare – to restore it, if not in all terms, but in essence, i.e., in the form of spheres of influence of what the Soviet Union used to be. Of course, Russia is not the Soviet Union and it will never be. Obviously, most of the states that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union do not want and are not willing – and will not – to return to the *status quo ante*.

Being said that, it is not difficult to discover and recognize the similarities: this situation reminds us very much of the Cold War era, when the strongest military power of Europe did threaten the rest of the continent. Moreover, unlike the Soviet Union that never launched a real military attack on NATO countries or its "semi-allies", current day Russia is fighting a bloody war of aggression against Ukraine. Although Ukraine is not (yet) a member state of NATO – nor of the European Union – NATO would betray its own basic principle and endanger its own, as well as its member states' security, if it would not stand up against the Russian aggression. An independent

7 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Madrid.

8 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Madrid.

Ukraine, its sovereignty and territorial integrity is a key to the security of NATO member states. We must fight this war and defend NATO, in reality, against the direct threat of Russian aggression – be it non-military or military.

NATO is determined to use the entire arsenal at its disposal to achieve the objectives set out in the Strategic Concept. All member states will provide the Alliance with what they have at their disposal in order to support collective efforts, if, when, and how necessary. It will require maintaining and strengthening Transatlantic Cooperation, as – it was the case during the Cold War – it is impossible to provide effective defence against Russian or any other significant threats without maintaining the solidarity and the common military posture between the United States of America and the European Allies. This is particularly true, when it comes to weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, as Russia possesses the largest nuclear arsenal of the world and can only be deterred from deploying it if the only comparable nuclear arsenal of the United States supports NATO operations.

To a different extent it is also true to other military assets. Europe can and should make a significant contribution even in the nuclear area by providing the nuclear arsenal of France and the United Kingdom, but there are also other types of threats that can only be met with strong Transatlantic cooperation, such as cyber warfare, drones, submarines, air superiority, etc.

“The strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States, are the supreme guarantee of the security of the Alliance. The independent strategic nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France have a deterrent role of their own [...] National contributions of dual-capable aircraft to NATO’s nuclear deterrence mission remain central to this effort.

We will continue to invest in our defence against Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear threats. We will enhance our policies, plans, training and exercises and assess our capabilities to ensure that these requirements are integrated into our deterrence and defence posture.”⁹

Under the current circumstances, the ability and the capacity of NATO member states to resist the threat or even use of force requires enhanced implementation of what Article 3 of the Washington Treaty prescribes. The notion of resilience became a very important part of NATO’s military posture. And resilience is not achieved in a day. This means that NATO and its member states have to focus their efforts on building the necessary capabilities in peacetime to be ready to deter and, if necessary, to counter threats from Russia or any other potential adversary.

“Resilience is a national responsibility and a collective commitment. We are enhancing our resilience, including through nationally-developed goals and implementation plans, guided by objectives developed by Allies together...We welcome the considerable progress on Allied defence spending since 2014. In line with our commitment in Article 3 of the Washington Treaty, we will further strengthen our individual and collective capacity to resist all forms of attack.”¹⁰

9 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Madrid.

10 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Madrid.

NATO will put special emphasis on (military) conflicts below the level of major war with Russia. Conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution have become a significant integral part of NATO's policy and military posture. There are numerous (frozen) conflicts in Europe that can anytime turn into hot armed conflicts. Especially, when we take into consideration that Russia is increasingly using these conflicts to undermine European security and stability. It is enough to mention the conflict in Transnistria, which is under constant threat by the Russian model for aggression against Ukraine. Russia has played and continues to play an important role to keep the Azeri-Armenian conflict alive. Russia keeps 20% of Georgia occupied as a result of its 2008 aggression against the country. And even in former Yugoslavia, Russia is actively interfering with the situation, notably especially in Kosovo and Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and also lately in Northern Macedonia-meaning the entire Western Balkans.

NATO cannot accept the existence of such conflicts, especially not as a result of Russian interference. Although we have not been able to solve them, and more likely than not, we will have to live with some of these conflicts for quite a few years to come, it is not possible to ignore or avoid playing an active role in managing those conflicts, and wherever possible in solving them.

This will require continued and even increased efforts on the part of the Alliance, including the use of military force when necessary, whether in peacekeeping or peace-enforcing role.

"NATO Allies have a shared interest in contributing to stability and managing conflicts together through NATO. We will continue to work to prevent and respond to crises when these have the potential to affect Allied security. We will build on the unique capabilities and expertise we have acquired in crisis management. To that end, we will invest in crisis response, preparedness and management, through regular exercises and leverage our ability to coordinate, conduct sustain and support multinational crisis response operations."¹¹

Cooperative security has become one of the important tasks of the alliance. It can take many forms, including partnerships that NATO has developed: a significant number of countries can make and do make important contributions to NATO's efforts maintaining security and stability throughout the world. And, probably the most significant and demonstrative form of cooperative security is enlargement. Enlargement has become one of NATO's most important tasks after the fall of the Warsaw Treaty and Communism. It has not only made NATO stronger and more comprehensive in providing security and stability for the entire European continent, but also it significantly contributed to the democratic transition of the former Warsaw Treaty, i.e., Communist countries by helping them to reform their military, both in terms of the establishment of democratic political and civilian control over them and supporting their transition from old-time Soviet-type warfare to modern military posture compatible with NATO's.

11 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Madrid.

In this spirit NATO has reaffirmed its Open Door policy meaning that countries that aspire to become members of the Alliance and are able and ready to fulfil the requirements of membership, will continue to be potential members of NATO. The clearest demonstration of this policy was the joining of Finland and Sweden to the Alliance during the Summit.

It does not mean, however, that NATO membership will be available immediately to everyone who wants to become a member. Enlargement will have to respect the framework created by the Washington Treaty and respect the political circumstances of the time. Nobody will have the right of veto of enlargement. It is the sole responsibility of the Alliance, its members and the country concerned, if and when it will become possible to join.

Russia, including eminently the Russian aggression against Ukraine

NATO's Russia policy has undergone a very significant change. Its new Russia started after the democratic changes in Europe in 1989-1990. This was a natural change: as with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty the threat of an invasion against Europe has all but disappeared. This remained the strategic situation as long as Putin took over the Kremlin. I believe, Putin has never been the "statesman who stabilised Russia", nor wanted he to establish any kind of democracy as we know it in Russia. The first years, however, while Russia was extremely weak, he did not show his real face. It was not before 2007, with his famous speech at the Munich Security Conference, and even more the invasion of Georgia in 2008 that he showed what he really was and what he really wanted. The West, however, continued to nurture the illusion that Russia could become a strategic partner. This illusion guided the West, especially during the years of President Obama, to take some friendly – I think rather naive – steps like the "reset" and the establishment of the Russia-NATO Council.

This Western policy made Putin think that the West was not able, nor willing to take up to fight with him. This was the real mistake the West made, note what many "realists" claim that the West abused the weakness of Russia, or had made promises that it did not fulfil.

Even after the invasion of Georgia the rest did not realize that Putin had changed his policy. Increasingly Russia became more and more aggressive, more and more abusive, more and more threatening its neighbours. The Russian invasion of the Crimea in 2014 and shortly after that the Russian aggression against Ukraine using "hybrid warfare" in Eastern Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk, did not wake us up. Yes, Western policies started to change. But the change was rather cosmetic. Moreover, when the West – especially Western Europe, led by France and Germany – decided to alleviate the consequences of the Russian occupation of Eastern Ukraine, the agreements negotiated by the Minsk group and imposed on Ukraine, were rather a weak copy of the Munich Agreement with Hitler.

It took almost until Russia had dispatched its troops in Ukraine, i.e., early 2022, that the rest started to grasp the importance and the danger of Russian policy. American secret service reports that suggested strongly, as early as autumn of 2021,

that the Russian invasion was imminent, were rejected as if the Americans had only been trying to turn Western Europe into enemies of Russia. Dependence on Russian oil and gas continued to grow, especially with the building of the North Stream 2 pipeline that Germany rejected to abandon until the very last moment.

This was the situation NATO found itself in when Russian troops invaded Ukraine. Much to the credit of the United States, Great Britain, and increasingly other western European states - even including neutrals like Switzerland – woke up it started to develop the right policies towards the conflict, towards Russia, by offering slowly but steadily support to Ukraine. We had to walk a thin path between helping Ukraine as much as possible and avoiding a direct confrontation with Russia.

Directly before the summit NATO found itself in a situation that required an urgent and strong response to the Russian aggression. And much to the credit of NATO and its members NATO has found it. Surprisingly quickly and surprisingly united. The Alliance responded by introducing measures that would have been unthinkable a few months ago.

It must be mentioned that the European Union also reacted in a way that many – especially Putin – would not have expected. This has shown that common values continued to bind these two organisations together. It has shown that the European Union, in case of need, is in fact the most important partner of NATO. It has shown that democracies might be slow in reacting, but when push comes to shove, they pick up the fight and stick together. The details are well known. The results of the Russian aggression have been the opposite of what Putin's intentions were when he took the decision to start a war against Ukraine, and indeed against Europe, against democracy and against a rule-based world order. Although the fight in Ukraine still continues, and it will, in my opinion, for quite some time, we can safely say that although Russia still might be able to make some territorial gains – at least temporarily – it has already lost the war. Ukraine remained a functioning country, the long and controversial process of the building of a Ukrainian nation, basically came to completion, transatlantic relations strengthened in a way that we could only dream about before, instead of undermining the unity of NATO and reducing its influence, NATO became stronger, not the least by the for the earlier unthinkable move for Finland and Sweden to join the Alliance.

Probably the biggest surprise has been the tragic underperformance of the Russian Armed Forces. It became very clear that the much emphasised and advertised military reform was a failure and the hundreds of billions of dollars invested in it did not produce the desired results. The “Wunderwaffe” Russian technology proved to be far from miraculous. They either do not exist, or Russia is not capable of producing them in any significant numbers. In addition, the training, the Military Doctrine and Rules of Engagement of the Russian Armed Forces still build upon World War II experience – obviously with some exceptions. Russia remains basically a “third world country with nuclear weapons”.

It became also clear that it was not only the Russian civilian industry that was based on Western technology, including spare parts, but also the Russian military technology. This means that Russia is not and will not in the foreseeable future be

able to produce high-tech products, including weapons, especially not in sufficient numbers. This will significantly further reduce Russian capability to fight wars like the one in Ukraine. The flipside of it might – I think it will – increase Russia’s reliance on nuclear weapons, which will be a significant negative change, even compared to the Soviet Union.

NATO has played a very significant role in all this and will continue doing so. The effect of Russian aggression will be long-term. It will relegate Russia to a pariah state and reveal the genuine weakness of it. A country that has – again – overstretched and by that making joining of developed, let alone democratic states impossible for decades to come. The main loser of it will be – again – the Russian people.

“The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. It seeks to establish spheres of influence and direct control through coercion, subversion, aggression and annexation. Challenge our security and interests [...] NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to the Russian Federation [...] We will continue to respond to Russian threats and hostile actions in a united and responsible way [...] significantly strengthen deterrence and defence for all Allies, enhance our resilience against Russian coercion and support our partners to counter malign interference and aggression. In light of its hostile policies and actions, we cannot consider the Russian Federation to be our partner. However, we remain willing to keep open channels of communication with Moscow.”¹²

Relations to China

This is the first time that NATO has paid special attention to the challenge posed by the People’s Republic of China at such a high level. Rightly so.

One of the biggest challenges, if not the biggest, is the rise of China. The big challenges how to integrate this new superpower in the international world order – that in itself is undergoing a significant change – in such a way that does not lead to war. History shows that the emergence of a new superpower has been the result or the cause of a big war: in today’s world that cannot be the case. NATO has recognised that it is not its mission to be a leader in this process. However, it has also admitted that the Alliance cannot remain outside this process.

Very wisely the Summit has made a clear difference between Russia and China, calling the first a direct threat and the second a challenge. Accordingly, there must be a significant difference how the Alliance handles these two issues.

“The People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values. The PRC employs a broad range of political, economic and military tools to increase its global footprint and project power, while remaining opaque about its strategy, intentions and military build-up [...] We remain open to constructive engagement with the PRC, including to build reciprocal transparency, with a view to safeguarding the Alliance’s security interests.

12 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept.

We will work together responsibly, as Allies, to address the systemic challenges posed by the PRC to Euro-Atlantic security and ensure NATO's enduring ability to guarantee the defence and security of Allies."¹³

Other threats, challenges and opportunities

The Summit made it clear that there are a lot of other challenges that might become threats to the security of NATO member states. New technologies – such as cyberwar capabilities, drones, laser weapons, etc. – occurred that open new possibilities to make everyday life better, and also offer new possibilities for defence. They might be destabilizing the battlefield. This will require the adaptation of NATO's defence posture, significant investment in the development of these new technologies, including defence against them.

The totally new phenomenon in NATO context is the mention of climate change. NATO, of course, does not play the central role in fighting climate change, but it is essential for the Alliance to take into account considerations relating to it. And it is not only the direct effects that matter for NATO, but also the consequences that might lead to new conflicts, increase migration and other negative effects that NATO must handle.

"We are confronted by cyber, space, and hybrid and other asymmetric threats, and by the malicious use of emerging and disruptive technologies. We face systemic competition from those."¹⁴

"Climate change is a defining challenge of our time, with a profound impact on Allied security. It is a crisis and threat multiplier. It can exacerbate conflict, fragility and geopolitical competition [...] Climate change also affects the way our armed forces operate. Our infrastructure, assets and bases are vulnerable to its effects. Our forces need to operate in more

extreme climate conditions and our militaries are more frequently called upon to assist in disaster relief."¹⁵

Conclusions

It is no exaggeration to suggest that this NATO Summit will go down in history as one opening a new chapter for the Alliance. NATO has undoubtedly played a decisive role in maintaining peace and stability in Europe, and indeed, the entire planet during the Cold War. Very few question that. But after the changes in 1989–1990 many questioned the rationale of the continued existence of NATO arguing that, as it was created to counter the Soviet threat, with that threat gone, NATO's rationale disappeared. Member states continued to insist that the Alliance is still needed, but in reality, they did not devote the necessary attention, including the necessary financing for the Alliance to fulfil its core tasks. This notwithstanding,

13 NATO 2022 Strategic Concept.

14 Summit Communiqué.

15 NATO Strategic Concept.

NATO survived. We found new rationales for its existence and it has proved quite useful on several occasions, like the conflicts surrounding the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the management of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

But we all knew that this was not the real thing. Debates on the necessity of its continued existence and its future surrounded NATO all during the 1990s and the 2000s. For a moment, the terrorist attack on September 11th, 2001, raised the opportunity to reinvigorate NATO, as the Alliance reacted very smoothly and quickly: as early as September 12th, the North-Atlantic Council (NAC) declared that the terrorist attack on the United States was an attack on all members. Accordingly, the NAC – first time in its history – unanimously declared that Article 5 was invoked.

It was a very important demonstration that NATO still could be useful, if and when an attack happens. Unfortunately, the unintended consequences were almost devastating. NATO's role as the main deterrent functioned during the Cold War based on the assumption that in case of an attack, not only Article 5 would be invoked – as it indeed happened after 9/11, but that would inevitably lead to actions by all NATO countries, using their available assets in collective defense. After 9/11, however, nothing happened. Article 5 was invoked, but NATO did basically nothing. It became clear that Article 5 itself was an assumption that all member states would act, using their military assets – that assumption existed during the Cold War and served as the basis for an effective deterrence – and not an outright obligation. That unintentionally undermined NATO's credibility as an effective deterrent.

Nevertheless, NATO survived and by today this situation has changed radically. The increased Russian threat that culminated in the aggression on Ukraine made it clear that a military attack on the Alliance cannot be excluded. That then mobilized NATO and led to serious action. We must note that, what NATO and especially NATO members did in response to the Russian aggression was by far not in line with the then still valid NATO Strategy, that was adopted more than ten years ago, in 2010. NATO nevertheless was able to jump over its shadow, *de facto* pushed the old and outdated strategy aside and acted as if the new strategy, that then was only in the planning, would have already been in force.

At the Summit in June then this has been corrected: the New Strategy adopted by the Summit reflects on the new realities, correctly spells out the challenges and threats to NATO and offers strategic guidance on how to respond to them.

“Winston is back” – shouted Churchill when he was appointed as a new member of the British Cabinet. He was back and his influence changed British policy towards Hitler and made a very significant, indispensable contribution to the efforts that led to the Allied powers' victory.

NATO is back – could we shout and be (almost) certain that with that victory over the aggressive, imperialist Russia is secured. But its effects go much beyond that. As the world has been going through a paradigm change from the old Westphalian international (security) order to a new, post-Westphalian order, caused by the fourth industrial revolution and globalisation, the need for security has increased. Threats by states and non-state actors have multiplied, technological development, again, reinvigorated the old competition between offense and defence – and for the time being offense took the lead.

Democracy is under attack, too. An increased number of states is turning towards authoritarian rule and even dictatorship, threatening the very existence of our values. The rule-based international order is on the verge of collapse. In this situation a defensive alliance is indispensable. As “NATO is back”, we now have it. The Summit opened and created the opportunity to make NATO the effective defence structure for democracies in Europe and beyond. But nothing lasts forever. We must, as a first step, translate the Summit’s decisions and guidance into concrete steps, secure the necessary funds for their implementation, and – even more importantly – nurture and further strengthen the Alliance’s unity of thought and unity of action.

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