

RISKS AND THREATS ABOUT THE STABILITY OF THE STATES FROM EAST EUROPEAN SPRING INSECURITY

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DOI: 10.19062/1842-9238.2016.14.1.4

***Abstract:** In comparison to the past years, the security challenges of these days need new, strong and adaptive responses. Threats emanating from Europe's eastern and southern flank range from military to economic to cyber to energy security and give particular urgency to the Alliance's next summit. The NATO Summit scheduled for Warsaw in July has to mark the beginning of a new adaptation process of the Alliance in a world that faces disorder for the foreseeable future.*

***Keywords:** NATO, security threats, east, south, border, summit, Warsaw.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization also known as NATO has been formed in 1949 in order to deter the threat coming from post-war communist expansion as the former Soviet Union sought to extend its influence around Europe. Nowadays, NATO represents the global most powerful regional defense alliance ever exists. For more than sixty years, NATO has provided the umbrella behind which the democracies of Europe have grown in peace. Although the allies faced a lot of challenges and crises with the former Soviet Union during the Cold War, general commitment for deterrence and strong defense through NATO kept the peace.

Working together, the NATO members prevented another major conflict in Europe, and as a result, their societies could revive from the ash of World War II. Investments made for a strong defense and deterrence created at the same time the proper conditions for all NATO members to improve their economy. In fact, the safety and security provided by NATO was a multiplier reason that made it possible for the all countries to revive from war and reach new levels of prosperity than ever before.

2. RISKS AND THREATS

Unfortunately, today the European community faces a world that is more violent and unstable than at any other period since the end of the Cold War. The continue shifts within the geopolitical environment and political landscape are affecting the outlook for NATO.

The present most fearful threats for NATO's members are as follows: First of all, a more self-assertive Russia started to emerge as a new military power on the eastern border of the Alliance. In fact, Russia's continued aggressive actions threaten the European security order based on the premise to achieve a new rise among the world powers.

Second, deep rifts in North Africa, the Middle East, and Southwest Asia are the main challenges to the security of the southern part of NATO and therefore, the European countries deal with a variety of transnational threats that mostly come from instability in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL). Supplementary, the crumbling order in the Middle East has generated refugee flows not seen since World War II, and has given rise to potent non-state actors with the power to not only make unstable countries in the region, but also capable to perform terrorist attacks around Europe. Confronted with this versatile geopolitical context, NATO must recheck his strategy and take now a 360 degree attitude in order to protect his own security and thwart the entire range of security challenges from any direction, using all the components of his nations' military and politically power.

As a result, the revival of the collective-defense mission has gradually gained support among NATO allies, illustrated by the revised Strategic Concept in 2010 and the decisions made at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales.

In the light of new challenges appeared, new approaches has been taken into account: needs for increased budgets, improved cooperation with a selection of close allies, and a revitalization of the total defense concept.

Old foe or new ally and the future - Speaking about the security situation on NATO eastern flank, some analysts even worry that NATO is heading toward a new Cold War with Russia.

Since the beginning of 2014, President Putin has sought to undermine the system of European security and attempted to maximize his presence on the world stage. Putin's strategy mounted conditions that will weaken the transatlantic relationship, and damage the political cohesion of Europe. Supplementary, Russia's unconventional tactics could also degrade to conventional warfare if Moscow's frequent flexing of its military muscle slips out of control and leads to an accident or confrontation.

During the past years, Russia continues its military modernization efforts, and its actions in Ukraine and, especially the last one in Syria, show an increasing deployable force projection, combat capability and adequate logistical sustainment capacity. Nowadays, Eastern and Central European states, and especially Poland and the Baltic countries are most concerned about Russia's aggressive intentions in Europe and consider Russia's actions in Ukraine as a confirmation of their concerns. Russia's aggressive foreign policy toward Ukraine exacerbated by Moscow's illegal annexation of Crimea and the open support for both "little green man" and separatist forces in eastern Ukraine amplifies agitation and worries among NATO's eastern flank members.

Even more worrying, Russia has kept a nuclear arsenal that is far bigger than the capabilities of NATO's European members. According to the March 2015 New START figures, Russia manages an impressive nuclear power of 1,582 strategic warheads deployed on 515 intercontinental ballistic missiles/ ICBM, submarine-launched ballistic missiles/SLBM and strategic bombers.

Separately, the Federation of American Scientists check that Russia has several thousand no deployed strategic warheads and about 2,000 tactical nuclear warheads. More than that, another 3,200 warheads are awaiting dismantlement. Russia has also developed both the warheads and delivery systems that are more "usable" on the modern battlefield, so that the threat of using them is much more credible.

Lastly, Russian's use of unresolved conflicts as a foreign policy tool represents another face of the same coin. Labeling the prolonged conflicts in states around the Russian periphery as "frozen" denies the fact that all these are ongoing and controversial processes often controlled by Russia to provide pretext for military intervention.

Related to this, Russia's political use of "compatriots" in other countries, whom Moscow formally defines as almost anyone with any connection way to the former Soviet Union, stand as its new favorite strategy in order to legitimize any interference in its interested areas.

In addition to Ukraine, this deep-laid scheme could be especially important for Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, the Baltic States, and Republic of Moldova, which mostly have large ethnic Russian communities within. Regarding to this, Russia is waging a constant, unceasing information war against almost every European country. This war takes many forms, but information war involve the weaponization of information in such form as misinformation, propaganda, use of agents of influence, and reflective actions inducing adversaries to react in given circumstances they believe benefit them but in fact, work to the enemy's advantage.

NATO admits that Russia's current behavior is unacceptable, and that Moscow bears real responsibility for the current situation in Ukraine. However, remilitarizing the relationship with Russia would be dangerous, and it would be far from the ideal solution for NATO and the European countries security order.

Refugees, migrants and disguised terrorists -The instability on NATO's southern flank is mostly connected with its efforts to manage the current refugee and migrant crisis. Combined with the expansion of Islamic State (IS), the Syrian civil war has created a massive flow of refugees into Europe exceeding the European capacity to assimilate this migration. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the first three nationalities of the over one million Mediterranean Sea arrivals in 2015 were Syrian (49%), Afghan (21%) and Iraqi (8%).

Supplementary, the IS terrorists' disperse to Europe has made the attacks against some NATO states a reality that did not exist during the cold war.

In terms of security, the challenge that the NATO faces is the pernicious threat of jihad Islam generated by a bad combination of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the future sectarian developments, the Arab Spring, the Syrian civil war, the collapse of Libya in 2011, and the new civil war in Yemen in 2015. Above all, the rise of Islamic State and it expanded presence has plunged the Middle East into chaos and bloodshed.

Consequently, the developments have caused a severe humanitarian situation and the result is the largest refugee crisis since 1945.

The European migrant crisis or European refugee crisis began in 2015, when a rising number of refugees and migrants tried to seek asylum in the European Union, traveling across the Mediterranean Sea or through Southeast Europe.

Therefore, in the past months NATO decided to deploy ships to the Aegean Sea being in charge with monitoring and information collecting missions.

In fact, the purpose of NATO's deployment is not to stop or push back migrant boats, but to help NATO's members Greece and Turkey, as well as the European Union, in their efforts to manage human trafficking and the criminal networks that are fueling this crisis.

In fact, the people escaping hardship and war are not a threat to European security. Unfortunately, the refugee crisis serves as a catalyst for the political polarization that can definitely damage European cohesion and the ability to act together.

The range of threats for NATO was magnifying by Russian intervention in support of the Syrian regime. Nevertheless, the fearful feature was generated by the Russian' ability to project his military power so farther and quick.

Currently, the majority of NATO operations are focused on the southern flank. These include the anti-terrorist Article 5 naval mission Active Endeavour in the Mediterranean Sea (starting with year 2001) and the counter-piracy naval operation Ocean Shield in the Gulf of Aden and off the Horn of Africa.

NATO also have tried to enhance its ability to support missions in the region with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities based on unmanned aerial vehicles (the Allied Ground Surveillance system) stationed in Sigonella, Italy.

Additionally, NATO has expressed its intention to enhance regional stability through continuing cooperation mechanisms with a lot of partner countries around the region.

3. FROM WALES TO WARSAW

In light of the new security environment, at the Wales heads of state NATO summit in September 2014, the alliance agreed to eagerly desirous of achieving a Readiness Action Plan (RAP) in response to Russia's Ukrainian intervention. The RAP would increase the number, size and complexity of NATO's members' exercises and make sure that forces can be deployed quickly in order to deal with any challenge. Moreover, decisions made in September 2014 have established a new quick – response force that could support jeopardized members, particularly for those which are at the periphery of NATO's territory faster than the existing NATO Response Force (NRF).

Consequently, the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) appears as a multinational combat unit consists of ground forces, with naval, air and Special Forces units in support, staffed by member countries on a rotating basis and ready to deploy on a two days' notice.

Moreover, in order to support the rapid deployment of the VJTF, in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania were set up little command and control facilities, so-called NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) occupied on a rotating basis. The NFIU work closely with authorities of the host country together to explore logistical networks, issues of transport and support infrastructure. At the same time, the US created and funded a European Security Initiative to provide resources for a strengthened military posture in Europe.

Supplementary, new NATO's deterrent posture was strengthened by US Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter on February 2016 when he announced that the Pentagon will push \$US3.4 billion into forces and training stationed in Europe. According to Carter's declaration, the US forces will be separate from those announced by NATO, and will offer an important reinforcement to allied forces distributed throughout Europe. Nowadays, there are two U.S. Army infantry brigades stationed in Europe, one in Germany and the other one in Italy. The new \$3.4 billion plan outlined by US Administration would aggregate another brigade to the mix, but it would be made up of soldiers from the United States, on rotating basis. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg quoted that the US decision to place military assets in Central and Eastern Europe strengthens deterrence in the region and subsequently US has played a big role in the alliance's reinvigorating process. Two years after the Wales NATO Summit, progresses in fulfilling the Readiness Action Plan (RAP) are notable and constitute an encouraging sign toward bolstering the Alliance's credibility. In the same direction, the NATO's February 2016 defense ministerial and the planned increase of the U.S. commitment to embattled Allies are both, signals for a strong change in the Alliance's posture toward Russia and the threats of an unstable southern neighborhood. Now, looking forward for 2016 – Summit in Warsaw, every

NATO member are fully aware that this Summit will be crucial for the future way on which the Alliance must decide how to manage the new security challenges. In this regard, managing the east-south security situation will indeed be critical to keep Alliance unity. Therefore, the biggest challenge for Alliance will be how to find the adequate strategy to keep together divergent interests of its members.

Nowadays, Spain, Italy, and Greece are more interested in Mediterranean security. Portugal looks south, but tends to view the Atlantic space as the center of gravity for Alliance cohesion.

Poland, the Baltic States, Bulgaria, and Romania without a doubt and at the same time understandably put the Russian challenge first. On the other side, France has a huge wager in security in the Mediterranean and south to the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa, but stay ambivalent about a leading role for NATO there.

Turkey is a leading stakeholder for a credible NATO approach to security on its Middle Eastern borders, but Ankara is equally concerned about countering Russia in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and in Syria, a concern greatly reinforced by Russian air and naval operations along Turkey's borders in Syria.

Last but not the least, NATO's major powers – the United States, U.K., Germany, and France – will be decisive in managing this balance. Nevertheless, the growth of the Russian factor in the east is an other source of risk but may also prove a unifying element across NATO's geography.

CONCLUSIONS

While NATO faces many challenges, all members must to admit that the Alliance is the only major defense organization with adequate force, credibility and capabilities to deal with Europe's security crises and/or other issues. NATO's leaders in Warsaw will discuss many new challenges faced by the Alliance but the most important issue will be how to strengthen European defense to overcome these multiple threats to NATO. In fact, finding the proper way to strengthen European defense will provide the capabilities to deter the threats from the East and form the South, as well.

NATO nations promised to spend two percent of the GDP on defense but only a little number of members has reached the goal. In real, only five of 28 NATO countries met their 2015 targets of two percent of GDP on defense spending. Therefore, more discussion on this issue could be useful in Warsaw.

Speaking of Russian aggressive stance, many analysts agree that, despite intimidation tactics, Putin will not gamble on provoking a war. The worst scenario would be Putin's use of "hybrid" tactics against the Baltic or the Black Sea states. In this potential case, propaganda, information operation, cyber and "little green men" to infiltrate a target state would be the means. However, if the unpredictable Russian leaderships will stay in charge, NATO must cultivate a corporate defense built on confidence and interrelationship.

If the Alliance is to remain relevant, the growing risks and threats coming from Europe's eastern and southern border will need to be addressed. In Warsaw, NATO must now shift its strategy toward an increased forward presence that would be in place before a conflict starts, and thus serve as a deterring and stabilizing force.

Last but not the least, the increased geopolitical importance of the Asia-Pacific region is prompting the United States to re-direct a larger amount of his military resources to that area of the world, and therefore, Europe will need to make a greater contribution to his internal security.

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