
REDEFINING THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY AGENDA: WHAT IS THE ROLE FOR THE NEW NATO STRATEGIC CONCEPT?

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Abstract

This article examines the ongoing preparation of the new NATO Strategic Concept (SC), which is expected to have substantial implications for the Euro-Atlantic security agenda. The analysis is aimed at identifying and exploring opportunities and challenges, which will have to be addressed in the new SC. Firstly, the main characteristics of current strategic environment, which highly influences the preparation of the SC, are examined. Secondly, analysis focuses on eventual roles of the new SC, thus revealing the main challenges to be reflected in the new strategy and assessing their implications to further transformation of the Alliance. Thirdly, the crucial dilemma of the balance between NATO's commitment to collective defence and its increasing global ambitions is addressed.

Introduction: A New Start for the Euro-Atlantic Security Dialogue

The decision to develop a new NATO Strategic Concept¹ (SC) has highly increased the intensity of academic and political discussion about the challenges and developments of the Euro-Atlantic security architecture. The process of preparing the new SC is often seen as an opportunity to foster strategic dialogue at the highest political level and reach consensus on the most pressing issues of transatlantic security cooperation, such as defining the *raison d'être* of NATO in

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¹ Strategic Concept is the key political document of NATO, which defines the objectives of the Alliance, assesses strategic environment, and provides the highest level of guidance on the political and military means to implement NATO's tasks. At the summit in Strasbourg-Kehl on 4 April 2009, NATO leaders decided to prepare the new NATO's Strategic Concept, which is expected to be adopted at the Lisbon summit (November 2010). It will be the seventh Strategic Concept in the history of NATO. The currently valid Strategic Concept was adopted in 1999.

the 21st century; eliminating obstacles in NATO-EU relations and ensuring true strategic partnership between these organizations; identifying the basic principles of NATO-Russia relations; finding ways to increase solidarity within the Alliance and ensure legitimate financial and operational burden sharing between the allies; defining the role NATO should play in the field of various non-traditional security challenges, such as climate change or energy security, etc.

Some analysts also emphasize the need to use the SC for providing new dynamism to the transatlantic partnership: as the centre of economic and strategic gravity is shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, there is a need to revitalize the partnership between the United States and Europe.² There is a call for a renewed Euro-Atlantic security framework, founded “on a strong U.S. involvement in NATO, NATO-EU relations aimed at promoting and projecting effective civil-military security beyond the Euro-Atlantic area and an EU-U.S. security relationship that assures the protection of the home base.”³

On the one hand, the need to develop a new SC is evident: the security environment has changed dramatically since the last SC was adopted in 1999. Terrorist attacks in the U.S. and Europe, operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the development of the European security and defence policy, the proliferation of nuclear technology, NATO enlargement, emergence of the new security challenges, the war in Georgia and many other crucial developments clearly have fundamental implications, which need to be properly reflected in the strategy of the Alliance.

On the other hand, despite the emergence of the new international security landscape, the definition of NATO’s role, as stated in the current SC, might be regarded as still relevant. According to the current SC, “NATO’s essential and enduring purpose, set out in the Washington Treaty, is to safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means.”⁴ In order to achieve this purpose, three fundamental security tasks of the Alliance are identified: (1) security – “to provide one of the indispensable foundations for a stable Euro-Atlantic security environment”; (2)

² Hamilton D., Barry C., “Alliance Reborn: An Atlantic Compact for the 21st Century”, *Atlantic Council of The United States*, 2009, p. 4. <http://www.acus.org/files/publication_pdfs/65/NATO-AllianceReborn.pdf>, 26/4/2010.

³ Larrabee F., Lindley-French J., “Revitalizing the Transatlantic Security Partnership: An Agenda for Action”, *Venusberg Group and Rand Corporation*, 2009, p. 8. <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2009/RAND_RP1382.pdf>, 22/4/2010.

⁴ NATO, “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept, approved by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council.” Washington D.C., 23-24 April 1999. <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-065e.htm>>, 16/4/2010.

consultation – “to serve as an essential transatlantic forum for Allied consultations on any issues that affect their vital interests”; (3) deterrence and defence – “to deter and defend against any threat of aggression against any NATO member state as provided for in Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty”. Crisis management and partnerships are also identified as supporting tasks, needed for enhancing “the security and stability of the Euro-Atlantic area”.⁵ All these tasks can be considered as still relevant, as they are reflected in various forms of practical activities of the Alliance.

In order to identify and explore opportunities and challenges, which will have to be addressed in the new SC, this article focuses on three main issues:

1. Firstly, there is a need to take into account the main characteristics of the current strategic environment, which define the potential of the actors and will highly influence the content of the new SC. Four main elements of the current strategic landscape are identified and examined: (i) new generation of security challenges; (ii) high operational intensity; (iii) reengagement with Russia; (iv) increasing gap between Europe and the U.S.

2. Secondly, the analysis focuses on the eventual roles of the new SC, thus revealing the main challenges to be reflected in the new strategy and assessing their implications to further transformation of the Alliance. Four different roles are identified: (i) SC as a continuation of the Harmel Report; (ii) SC as a definition of NATO’s ambitions; (iii) SC as guidance for reforms and capabilities; (iv) SC as a message to publics and outside world.

3. Thirdly, the crucial dilemma of the balance between NATO’s commitment to collective defence and its increasing global ambitions is addressed. The balance between protection vs. projection is analyzed by revealing the changing perception of Article 5 and collective defence.

1. Strategic Context of Developing the New Strategic Concept

It is obvious that NATO is closely interrelated with other international institutions and structures. Its functions and security measures are defined by various characteristics of international security environment. The evolution of NATO

⁵ *Ibid.*

after the Cold War shows that the Alliance is a flexible international structure, capable of adapting its instruments to changing security landscape. Accordingly, the identification of NATO's future directions in the new SC will also be highly influenced by various external as well as internal strategic factors.

1.1. New generation of security challenges

The current international security landscape is characterized by a complex set of various asymmetric security challenges (terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction-WMD, cyber security challenges), socio-economic problems, transnational organized crime, ethnic tensions, fragile and failed states, environmental destruction, problems generated by climate change, competition over resources, etc.

Such a transnational pattern of security environment obviously is a challenge for the Alliance, which still considers "armed attack" as the main trigger for collective defence.⁶ It is not clear whether Article 5 could be invoked in case of large-scale cyber attack, major disruption of the flow of energy resources, or a chemical attack. Moreover, only a small part of current security challenges can be regarded as military. Accordingly, they cannot be addressed by military means.

The issue of pre-emptive action is also very relevant in the light of current security landscape. According to Karl-Heinz Kamp, "in an age of missile technology proliferation, vital threats may materialize before troops are sent in, for instance when long range missiles tipped with weapons of mass destruction are prepared for launch by potentially hostile regimes. To await the proof of aggressive intention would mean to wait for the launch of the missile – with hardly any chance to avoiding the deadly consequences"⁷.

The increasing missile threat to NATO's territory is evident, especially in light of Iran's nuclear ambitions. According to NATO Secretary General A. F. Rasmussen, "proliferation threat is real and growing – over 30 countries have or are developing missile capabilities, with greater and greater ranges. In many cases, these missiles

⁶ NATO, "The North Atlantic Treaty" Washington D.C., 4 April 1949. <<http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/treaty.htm>>, 25/4/2010.

⁷ Kamp K., "The Way to NATO's New Strategic Concept", *NATO Defence College*, Research Paper 46, June 2009, p. 6.

could eventually threaten our populations and territories”.⁸ The architects of the new SC definitely will have to consider sensitive issues of pre-emptive action.

In addition to the various effects of the “dark side of globalization”, international relations are increasingly characterized by geopolitical rivalry and revived nationalism. Resurgent Russia (resuming various Soviet-era practices), rising powers in Eastern and South Asia, increasing power of alternative political-military structures (Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization, etc.), intense geopolitical competition in various strategically important regions (for example, Central Asia) characterize current external environment of NATO. These tendencies certainly affect NATO’s attitude towards collective defence and conventional military capabilities.

Such a mix of various security challenges is a headache for NATO. The new SC will have to assess NATO’s security environment and enhance the ability to adapt to complex and unforeseeable circumstances. Theoretically, in order to maintain the ability to “safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means”, NATO would have to develop a very broad spectrum of security measures. Practically, however, the problem of limited resources and different opinions of member states often hamper the consensus within the Alliance.

1.2. High operational intensity and Afghanistan

From the operational point of view, NATO currently is busier than ever before. More than 40 countries have their military contribution in Afghanistan (ISAF) under NATO command, more than 100,000 troops are currently deployed in this remote country. The Alliance is also conducting a stabilization operation in Kosovo (KFOR), anti-terrorist operation in the Mediterranean Sea (Active Endeavour), anti-piracy mission off the Horn of Africa (Ocean Shield), training mission in Iraq (NTM-I) and supporting African union in its peacekeeping missions.¹⁰ According to prominent NATO expert K. Wittmann, “the variety of NATO missions in the last years is breathtaking: maritime interdiction, peace enforcement,

⁸ NATO, speech by NATO Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen “Building a Euro-Atlantic Security Architecture”, 27/3/2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-75DD486E-684A6251/natolive/opinions_62395.htm?selectedLocale=en>, 18/4/2010.

⁹ NATO, “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept”.

¹⁰ NATO, Alliance’s operations and missions. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_52060.htm>, 14/4/2010.

security assistance, training support, capacity building, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief”.¹¹ Such a broad spectrum of activities raises many questions about the coherence of NATO’s strategy and the increasing role of the Alliance as a toolbox for peacemaking and peace enforcement.

NATO’s mission in Afghanistan is considered to be the “key priority” of the Alliance for the past several years.¹² Engagement in this operation has greatly influenced the strategic thinking and military transformation in the member states. Many analysts and politicians even claim that the failure in Afghanistan would potentially mean the end of NATO.¹³ Nonetheless, in light of preparing the new NATO SC, it is not clear whether this kind of large-scale reconstruction and stabilization mission should be regarded as a rule or as an exception of NATO’s business. SC is a long-term document, which provides a medium-term (10 years) strategic guidance for the development of the Alliance and, therefore, nations might try to avoid Afghan-centric document and leave more room for the “exit strategy”. At the same time, the new strategy might be used for reflection of the most important lessons-learned from the operations in the Middle East and the Balkans.

1.3. Reengagement with Russia

The Obama administration has taken a new “reset” course towards Russia and it might have considerable influence on the way NATO will define security environment and relations with Russia in the new SC. Improving relations with Russia is also one of the key priorities of NATO Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen, who is seeking to enhance NATO-Russia cooperation in various fields – missile defence, Afghanistan, non-proliferation, anti-piracy, combating terrorism and drug-trafficking, arms control, etc.¹⁴

¹¹ Wittmann K., “Towards a new Strategic Concept for NATO”, *NATO Defence College*, 2009, 58.

¹² See, for example: NATO, “Strasbourg/Kehl Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council”, Strasbourg/Kehl, 4 April 2009. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm>, 14/4/2010.

¹³ Vicenzino M., “The Public in the West has to buy into Afghanistan – and soon”, *NATO Review*, September 2008. <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2008/06/SUMMER_ART3/EN/index.htm>, 25/4/2010.

¹⁴ See: NATO, speech by Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen “NATO and Russia: a New Beginning”, 18 09 2009. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_57640.htm>, 18/4/2010; NATO, speech by Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen “NATO and Russia, Partners for the Future”, 17/12/2009. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_60223.htm>, 18/4/2010.

Pressing the “reset” button between Moscow and Washington and the enthusiasm of the NATO Secretary General is a historical opportunity for substantial improvement of relations with Russia. At the same time, the rapprochement with Moscow cannot infringe the solidarity of the Alliance, as many members still view NATO’s collective defence as directed against Russia¹⁵ and repeatedly express concerns about Russia’s foreign policy, including the disproportionate use of military force in Georgia, declaration of the spheres of influence, non-compliance with international commitments, etc.¹⁶

Finding the way to improve relations with Russia without sacrificing values and solidarity within the Alliance, therefore, will remain one of the central dilemmas for the architects of new the SC.

1.4. Increasing the gap between Europe and the U.S.

The problem of the declining defence budgets of the European countries is increasing. It is particularly evident in comparison with the United States, as the U.S. military spending accounts for over 70% of NATO’s total defence expenditures.¹⁷ Only six European states have reached the agreed target of 2% of GDP for defence.¹⁸

The defence technology gap between the U.S. and European forces is another obvious fact – European countries lack of investment in the technologies of command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR), which are considered as essential elements of modern war fighting.¹⁹ A disproportionately large part of European defence budgets are consumed by personnel expenditures. The U.S. spends several times more on R&D

¹⁵ Kamp, (note 7) p. 6.

¹⁶ See, for example, “An Open Letter to the Obama Administration from Central and Eastern Europe”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19/7/2009. <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75477,6825987,An_Open_Letter_to_the_Obama_Administration_from_Central.html>, 18/4/2010.

¹⁷ Billingslea M., “The Impact of Economic Crises on European Defence Budgets”, speech in the conference “New Challenges, Better Capabilities, Bratislava, October 2009. <<http://www.ata-sac.org/ncbc/highlights-news/ncbc-4th-panel-speeches-the-impact-of-economic-crises-on-european-defence-budgets/>>, 18/4/2010.

¹⁸ NATO, “NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement”, analysis and recommendations of the Group of Experts on a new Strategic Concept for NATO, 17/5/2010, p. 38.

¹⁹ Adams G., Logsdon J., “European C4ISR Capabilities and Transatlantic Interoperability”, The George Washington University, October 2004, p. 2-4.

and investment in new military technologies than all European countries combined.²⁰ As a result, serious problems of operational interoperability are inevitable in the long-term perspective. Such disproportion might also decrease U.S. interest in NATO and stimulate unilateral tendencies in U.S. foreign policy.²¹

This problem is even more amplified by the global economic recession. As a result of financial pressures, many European governments have made substantial cuts of their defence budgets. However, they still feel pressure from publics and politicians. Frequent casualties make the operation in Afghanistan very unpopular. Accordingly, expenditures for operations are seen as a waste of money in light of pressing socioeconomic problems. The lack of public support highly complicates the possibility for the governments to increase defence budgets.

The architects of the new SC, therefore, not only have to think about addressing the gap between European countries and the U.S., but they also need to find ways of “selling” the Alliance to the publics.

2. Four Roles for the New Strategic Concept

The new NATO SC is often expected to “articulate a grand vision” and provide “new strategic guidelines” for the coming decade.²² At the same time, NATO faces a problem of “shopping list”, as each member state tries to “export” its own security problems to the new SC. The strategy, which is suitable for everyone, might be worthless in practice. Therefore, the prioritization of NATO’s tasks is a necessity.²³

The role(s), which will be assigned for the new SC, might meaningfully influence the transatlantic security agenda in the upcoming years. In this article, four eventual roles of the new SC are identified and examined: 1. SC as a continuation of the Harmel Report; 2. SC as a definition of NATO’s ambitions; 3. SC as guidance for reforms and capabilities; 4. SC as a message to publics and the outside world.

²⁰ European Defence Agency, “European - United States Defence Expenditure in 2008”, December 2009.

²¹ Billingslea, (note 17).

²² See, for example, Aybet G., Moore R. (eds.), *NATO: in Search of a Vision*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010.

²³ Kamp, (note 7) p. 4.

2.1. Strategic Concept as a continuation of the Harmel Report

In 1967, the North Atlantic Council of NATO approved a report “Future tasks of the Alliance”, which was prepared by a special group lead by Belgian minister of foreign affairs Pierre Harmel. The report identified two main functions of the Alliance:

1) “Maintain adequate military strength and political solidarity to deter aggression and other forms of pressure and to defend the territory of member countries if aggression should occur”;

2) “Pursue the search for progress towards a more stable relationship in which the underlying political issues can be solved. Military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary. ... The participation of the USSR and the USA will be necessary to achieve a settlement of the political problems in Europe.”²⁴

The Harmel Report is often considered as a background for fundamental shift in Western attitude towards the Soviet Union and its satellites. The report challenged the strategy of isolation and suggested cooperation with adversaries as an alternative approach. The group led by Harmel believed that détente is possible without sacrificing the ability to deter and defend aggression. The Harmel doctrine is often considered as one of the turning points in the history of the Cold War, which revitalized détente between the Eastern and Western blocs and laid the foundations for the Helsinki process.

Today, the dynamics of NATO-Russia relations are very much dependent on the U.S. administration and NATO’s Secretary General, who insists that NATO’s “ultimate goal is a relationship that allows us to pursue common interests even when we disagree in other areas”.²⁵ However, the suggestion for real conceptual changes in European security came from Russia. President Medvedev has proposed a new European security treaty, which is aimed at creating a new institutional framework in Europe. Medvedev claims that the “European security treaty is designed to draw the line under the Cold War era and codify the principle of indivisibility of security in international law. In practice this means that states and international organizations cannot strengthen their own security at the expense of security of other states and organizations”.²⁶

²⁴ NATO, “The Future Tasks of the Alliance”, Report of the Council – ‘the Harmel Report’, 13/12/1967. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_26700.htm>, 25/4/2010.

²⁵ NATO, speech by Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen “NATO and Russia: a New Beginning”.

²⁶ Medvedev D., “Mission: Partnership”, article published in the Slovak newspaper Pravda, 1/4/2010. <http://eng.kremlin.ru/speeches/2010/04/06/0800_type104017_225137.shtml>, 18/4/2010.

In light of these proposals and the positive attitude towards Russia by the current leadership of the Alliance, the new SC could be regarded as an opportunity to re-conceptualize relations with Moscow. Various options of reforming the current international security framework in Europe could be considered based on Medvedev's proposals. However, the U.S. has rejected the idea of a new European security pact: U.S. Secretary of State Clinton was very sceptical about negotiating new treaties, saying that Russian ideas should be "pursued in the context of existing institutions, such as the OSCE and the NATO-Russia Council".²⁷ Even the report prepared by the Group of Experts, which was appointed by the NATO Secretary General to provide analysis and recommendations for the new SC,²⁸ emphasizes that "Russia has sent conflicting signals about its openness to further cooperation with NATO, and its proposals for an alternative security order in Europe seem designed in part to constrain NATO's activities".²⁹

Regardless of fundamental changes in international security landscape, it seems that the main ideas of the Harmel Report are still very relevant and might be reaffirmed in the new SC as the key elements of strategy towards Russia. The period of increased geopolitical tension between NATO-Russia, which can be well illustrated by Putin's speech at the Munich security conference 2007, is over. The cooperation with Russia was switched "on" once again even despite the war in Georgia, which is now considered as just one of the disagreements, which should not disturb pragmatic diplomacy based on mutual interests.

The chair of the Group of Experts Albright has emphasized two basic assumptions of the report: "First, the Alliance has an ongoing duty to guarantee the safety and security of its members. Second, it can achieve that objective only if it engages dynamically with countries and organizations that are outside its boundaries."³⁰ It is perfectly in line with the main suggestions of the Harmel Report.

²⁷ US Department of State, speech by Secretary of State H. Clinton "Remarks on the Future of European Security", 29/1/2020. <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/01/136273.htm>>, 25/4/2010.

²⁸ The report "NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement", prepared by the Group of Experts, is expected to become a basis for the intergovernmental negotiations about new NATO Strategic Concept.

²⁹ "NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement", report prepared by the Group of Experts, p. 26.

³⁰ NATO, remarks by M. Albright at the meeting of the North Atlantic Council with the Group of Experts on NATO's New Strategic Concept, 17/5/2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_63678.htm>, 17/5/2010.

Harmel emphasized the importance of communication channels as a means to address disagreements. The current debate within the transatlantic community shows that the same approach is going to be applied in the new SC. It seems that NATO will re-emphasize the need to improve relations with Russia based on openness for cooperation, pragmatic relations, and shared interests.

2.2. Strategic Concept as a definition of NATO's ambitions

Sixty years after the foundation, the traditional functions of NATO are still relevant: 1) ensuring collective defence for NATO members; 2) embodying transatlantic link and functioning as a forum for allied discussions on security; 3) offering a framework that eliminates balance of power in Europe and allows for focusing on common challenges.³¹

NATO has already rejected a “fortress mentality” and engaged in various out of area activities. However, in light of rapidly changing international security landscape, the question “what NATO should *not* do” is not answered completely. It is not clear as to whether the Alliance should assume new roles in such fields as proliferation, biological attacks, organized crime, maritime security, food, water and resource scarcity, climate change, etc.³²

The new SC, naturally, is seen as an opportunity to identify primary and secondary roles of the Alliance. Many suggestions defining NATO's level of ambition can be found in the academic literature. For example, the prominent think tank RAND recently completed a study “Recasting NATO's Strategic Concept”, which identifies five main directions for NATO³³: 1) re-focus on Europe (renewing NATO's concentration on the needs for collective defence and homeland security); 2) new focus on the Greater Middle East (fighting against al Qaeda, addressing the problem of Iran's nuclear ambitions and ensuring success in Afghanistan/Pakistan); 3) focus on fragile states (concentrating effort on such countries as Somalia, Sudan, Yemen, etc.); 4) focus on non-state actors (non-state actors as a key factor in order to address the problems of terrorism and proliferation of the WMD);

³¹ Hamilton D., Barry C., (note 2) p. 4.

³² Wittmann, (note 11), p. 64.

³³ These five directions are identified according to RAND study “Recasting NATO's Strategic Concept: Possible Directions for the United States”, 2009. <www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/2009/RAND_OP280.pdf>, 18/4/2010.

5) global Alliance of liberal democracies (the enlargement of NATO based on liberal democratic values).

Compared to such academic proposals, the political discussions within NATO are less ambitious. According to the report of the Group of Experts, “NATO is strong and versatile, but it is by no means well-suited to every task. ... Depending on the needs in any particular case, NATO may serve as the principal organizer of a collaborative effort, or as a source of specialized assistance, or in some other complementary role.”³⁴ The report is also rather clear about the geographical spectrum of NATO’s activities: “NATO is a regional, not a global organisation; its authority and resources are limited and it has no desire to take on missions that other institutions and countries can handle successfully”.³⁵ NATO’s role in the fields of energy security and climate change is considered rather limited.³⁶

Moreover, it seems that the new SC is not likely to be very innovative in terms of defining the main tasks of NATO. The report of the Group of Experts identifies four “core tasks” for the Alliance: 1) maintaining the ability to deter and defend member states against any threat of aggression; 2) contributing to the broader security of the entire Euro-Atlantic region; 3) serving as a transatlantic means for security consultations and crisis management along the entire continuum of issues facing the Alliance; 4) enhancing the scope and management of partnerships.³⁷ These tasks basically reiterate the “fundamental security tasks” (security, consultation, deterrence and defence, crisis management, partnerships), named in the 1999 SC.

The only considerably new functional element of the Alliance is a growing consensus about the importance of civilian capabilities. Back in 2006, Comprehensive Political Guidance, adopted by the leaders of the Alliance, stated that “NATO has no requirement to develop capabilities strictly for civilian purposes”.³⁸ In 2010, the report of the Group of Experts emphasized that operational reality in Afghanistan spotlighted the need to be prepared for integrated civilian missions at all levels. According to the report, NATO needs “a small civilian planning unit within NATO

³⁴ “NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement”, report prepared by the Group of Experts, p. 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19-21.

³⁸ NATO, “Comprehensive Political Guidance Endorsed by NATO Heads of State and Government”. 29 November 2006. <<http://www.nato.int/docu/basicxt/b061129e.htm>>, 18/4/2010.

to maintain points of contact, share information, and engage in joint planning with partner countries and organisations”.³⁹ It also stated that “NATO’s Defence Planning Process should identify civilian capabilities ... to be deployed along with initial combat forces for immediate post-conflict stability operations”.⁴⁰ The need for integration of civilian and military capabilities was also highlighted in many other strategic documents of the Alliance.⁴¹

It can be predicted that NATO’s functions in the new SC will be defined without suggesting any fundamental innovations and will remain based on the principles that were the driving force of the Alliance during the last decade.

2.3. Strategic Concept as practical guidance for reforms and capabilities

What needs to be done to ensure the practical value of the new Strategic Concept? This is one of the central questions for the strategists and policy makers of NATO. The new SC has the potential to become a real strategy, i.e. to provide practical guidelines for the development of NATO capabilities.

According to the NATO defence planning process, namely the SC is the main strategic document, providing an overall assessment of the strategic environment and the highest level of guidance on political and military means, which should be used in achieving NATO’s fundamental security tasks.⁴²

U.S. Secretary of Defence Gates recently emphasized that the new SC has to be more than “just words on paper” and should actually reflect “NATO’s operational and institutional structures”.⁴³ Secretary Gates called for more action in such fields as missile defence, cooperation with partners and non-military multinational organizations. According to him, “despite the need to spend more on vital equipment for ongoing missions, the alliance has been unwilling to fun-

³⁹ “NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement”, report prepared by the Group of Experts, p. 42

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ See, for example, NATO, “Declaration on Alliance Security, issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council”, Strasbourg/Kehl, 4 April 2009. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52838.htm>, 18/4/2010.

⁴² *NATO Handbook*, Brussels: NATO Public Diplomacy Division, 2006, p. 18; 52-53.

⁴³ U.S. Department of Defence, remarks delivered by Secretary of Defence Robert M. Gates, 23/2/2010. <<http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1423>>, 18/4/2010.

damentally change how it sets priorities and allocates resources”.⁴⁴ The progress can be achieved by ensuring political commitment of NATO leaders and by “developing new ways to maintain capabilities through multinational procurement, more common funding, or reallocating resources based on collective rather than national priorities”.⁴⁵

NATO Secretary General is also repeatedly calling for the prioritization of resource projects, collective solutions to capability development (multinational defence acquisitions), more common funding, specializations of tasks, pooling resources and avoiding the duplication of capabilities and structures.⁴⁶

Besides for the problem of building capabilities, the question of reforming NATO is very relevant. R. Gates has harshly criticized NATO’s institutional machinery and shrinking defence budgets of the European states: “the Alliance faces very serious, long-term, systemic problems. ... We also have to acknowledge and address excess infrastructure and outdated command structures that bear little resemblance to NATO’s real-world needs. ... The demilitarization of Europe has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace.”⁴⁷

The current SC is rather explicit about capabilities – it provides guidelines for the development of NATO’s forces, describes missions and requirements of Alliance’s military forces, provides the main characteristics of NATO’s conventional and nuclear forces, etc.⁴⁸

The new SC could provide directions for NATO transformation in various fields: 1) optimizing decision making (qualified majority could be used at some decision-making levels instead of the consensus rule, which is still applied to all NATO decisions); 2) improving early warning systems (intelligence sharing, planning, and information power); 3) enhancing multinational military formations; 4) operationalizing comprehensive approach (ensuring that civil-military cooperation exists at various levels of the command chain; preparing for hybrid operations); 5) creating new mechanisms of sharing operational costs (searching alternatives for the current principle “costs lie where they fall”); 6) promoting defence industrial

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ See, for example: NATO, speech by Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen at the Belgian Royal High Institute for Defence, 26/4/2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_62923.htm>, 29/4/2010.

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Defence, remarks delivered by Secretary of Defence Robert M. Gates (note 43).

⁴⁸ NATO, “The Alliance’s Strategic Concept”.

cooperation (enhanced NATO-EU coordination in the field of defence acquisitions); 7) focusing on deployable conventional forces and commonly funded force enablers (strategic and theatre lift, C4ISR),⁴⁹ etc.

2.4. Strategic concept as a message to publics and the outside world

Political support from the governments of member states is absolutely essential for the efficiency of NATO. Notably, political support for the defence spending can be highly influenced by public opinion. In light of the current economic recession, defence expenditures are often seen as unfair waste of money, which could be reallocated for various social needs and invested in economic development. These tendencies are particularly relevant in Europe. Shrinking defence budgets in many Central and Eastern European countries during the last few years is a good illustration of this problem. Economic downturn has distracted attention from security problems.

At the same time, the Alliance is suffering from various misperceptions and stereotypes. In the eyes of public, NATO it is often seen as an old-fashioned institution. The mission in Afghanistan is often considered as having nothing to do with the primary interests of participating countries. Some politicians are constantly complaining about diverting resources to Afghanistan, instead of funding education or social programs.

In this context, the new SC can be seen as an opportunity to explain and justify the relevance of the Alliance to society. To this end, the adoption of the new SC needs to be supported by intensive campaign of public relations. Effective public diplomacy and the use of media are key elements of rebuilding the relevance of NATO in the eyes of the citizens. According to former NATO Secretary General Scheffer, the new SC has to “ensure that NATO remains understood by our publics, and relevant to their security needs”.⁵⁰

The preparation for a new strategy is even more important in terms of explaining the role of NATO to the outside world. The transformation of the Alliance after the Cold War from a regional alliance of collective defence to a global cooperative

⁴⁹ Atlantic Council, “Stratcon 2010: An Alliance for a Global Century”, April 2010; <http://www.acus.org/files/publication_pdfs/3/STRATCON%202010%20REPORT_FINAL.pdf>, p. 10-13; Hamilton D., Barry C., (note 2), p. 43-49.

⁵⁰ Scheffer J. de Hoop, “Bucharest: a milestone in NATO’s transformation”, NATO Review, March 2008. <<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2008/03/ART3/EN/index.htm>>, 26/4/2010.

security system⁵¹ has raised many questions and suspicions among other international players. NATO's engagement in Afghanistan and active development of partnerships is seen a challenge in such countries as Russia and China. The role of the Alliance is not entirely evident even to some partner countries. According to the conclusions of the special seminar, which was specifically devoted to examine the issue of partnerships in the context of the new SC, "many partners have the sense that NATO is actively seeking their contributions to current operations, but they don't see a clear strategic direction in the relationships."⁵² For example, although the Alliance is cooperating with the Persian Gulf countries through Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, it is not clear as to whether NATO is seeking to ensure its own security interests in the region, promote regional security or strengthen security of particular regimes.⁵³

The misperceptions of NATO's role can be well observed in Russia's foreign policy. Russia still considers NATO as one of the main external military dangers (*основная военная опасность*) for Russia's security in its military doctrine.⁵⁴ Other major powers also might be confused about NATO's global outreach. Accordingly, the new SC gives a chance to send a clear message about NATO's ambitions and its attitude towards other international players.

3. Protecting and Projecting

After the end of the Cold War, the absence of direct military threat to the territory of the Alliance led to the expeditionary operations as a new organizing principle. Accordingly, capability building and defence planning became directed towards the ability to "fight a distant war in difficult territory, a process accelerated by the demands of the ongoing operation in Afghanistan".⁵⁵

⁵¹ See: R. Cohen, "From Individual Security to International Stability". R. Cohen and M. Mihalka (eds.), *Cooperative Security: New Horizons for International Order*. Garmisch: The George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies, 2001.

⁵² NATO, "Highlights of Strategic Concept Seminar 3", Oslo, 14 January 2010. <http://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/pdf/highlights_of_the_strategic_concept_seminar3.pdf>, 26/4/2010.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Russian military doctrine approved in February 2010, <http://news.kremlin.ru/ref_notes/461>, 14/4/2010.

⁵⁵ NATO Parliamentary Assembly, "Protecting To Project: NATO's Territorial Defence and Deterrence Needs", <<http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=1781>>, 20/4/2010.

The war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 worked as a reminder of the importance of collective defence. According to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General J. Craddock: “For years there’s been an assumption that no nation ... had to worry nor should fear an invasion of their sovereign territory ... there’s change now. ... There are nations who are concerned. We should be responsive and understand that there are indeed legitimate issues here.”⁵⁶

After the Georgian events, many prominent analysts and officials have repeatedly emphasized the need to strike a proper balance between homeland defence and out-of-area activities.⁵⁷ According to Norway’s former minister of defence, “the Alliance has a mission ‘at home’ as well as ‘away’. For understandable reasons, the ‘away’ mission has dominated the agenda, not least because it has been perceived as more urgent than the long-standing commitment to collective defence. We think the time is ripe to readdress this balance.” The idea of striking a better balance between protection and projection is mainly based on the assumption that out-of-area efforts can be sustained only based on reassurance and real sense of security among the Allies.⁵⁸

3.1. Changing meaning of collective defence

The importance of collective defence was reflected at the highest political level of the Alliance – in Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Heads of State and Government agreed that “A strong collective defence of our populations, territory and forces is the core purpose of our Alliance and remains our most important security task.” They also committed “to improve and demonstrate more clearly our ability to meet emerging challenges on and beyond Alliance territory, including on its periphery, inter alia by ensuring adequate planning, exercises and training.”⁵⁹

Some prominent think tanks have further developed the concept of reassurance for the Allies and neighbours of NATO. According to the paper prepared by the Centre for European Reform, NATO needs to “boost political solidarity and make visible military preparations to deter all potential conflicts, not just from Russia.

⁵⁶ Roberts K., “NATO reviewing security post Georgia war”, interview with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General J. Craddock, Reuters, 10 October 2008; <<http://uk.reuters.com/article/idUKTRE4992P320081010>>, 23/4/2010.

⁵⁷ See, for example: Wittmann, (note 11), p. 80-81.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ NATO, “Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration”.

The response – reassurance – should consist of political, economic and military measures.”⁶⁰ The authors suggest to: 1) improve NATO’s crisis management mechanisms (credible response measures, regular planning, continuous monitoring of strategic developments, real time intelligence and early warning capabilities); 2) ensure engagement of the EU and national governments (enhancing EU’s role in diversification of energy resources, increasing crisis response coordination between NATO and the EU); 3) strengthen the defence dimension (conducting exercises in order to test the readiness of forces and command structure, improving NATO’s strategic communications).⁶¹

Such proposals have been reflected in the official level – NATO Secretary General, during his visit in Estonia, has highlighted the need of “a visible presence of NATO across the entire territory of our Alliance”.⁶² These ideas are also reiterated by the report of the Group of Experts, which calls for “reassurance on Article 5 commitment”, development of “adequate military readiness criteria to meet Article 5 commitments”, as well as “better contingency planning, preparations for crisis management, equipment assessments, and appropriate military exercises.”⁶³

At the same time, despite remaining importance of the collective defence, its perception is transforming.

Firstly, it is vital to understand that NATO needs mobile expeditionary capabilities not only for the distant out of area operations, but also for the needs of collective defence in the enlarged area of the Alliance. From the U.S., Canadian or U.K. point of view, the defence of Poland or the Baltic states would be an expeditionary mission.⁶⁴

Secondly, the difference between Article 5 and non-Article 5 operations is dwindling. NATO’s engagement in Afghanistan, which originated from Article 5 situation, well illustrates the tendencies of the “deterritorialization” of collective defence. According to NATO’s Secretary General A. F. Rasmussen, “we must also realize that territorial defence very often starts far from our own borders, like in

⁶⁰ Centre for European Reform, “NATO, new allies and reassurance”, 16/5/2010, <http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/pb_nato_12may10.pdf>, 17/5/2010, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁶² NATO, speech by Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen “On Alliance Solidarity in the 21st Century”, 22/4/2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_62699.htm>, 27/4/2010.

⁶³ “NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement”, report prepared by the Group of Experts, p. 32.

⁶⁴ Yost D., “NATO’s evolving purposes and the new Strategic Concept”, *International Affairs* 86: 2 (2010), p. 496.

Afghanistan.”⁶⁵ NATO has shifted from a static, reactive, and territorial concept of the collective defence to a functional approach. The operations in Afghanistan, as well as many other activities of the Alliance, are seen as a way to prevent a new Article 5 attack.⁶⁶

Thirdly, the nature of Article 5 threats is also changing, especially in light of increasing cyber threats. According to R. Gates, “it is not clear, what level of cyber-attack might be considered an act of war – and what type of military response is appropriate”⁶⁷. NATO has several times expressed its commitment to strengthen capabilities to defend against cyber attacks⁶⁸ and started creating institutional capacity to address this issue. The report of the Group of Experts states that “the risk of a large-scale [cyber] attack on NATO’s command and control systems or energy grids could ... possibly lead to collective defence measures under Article 5.”⁶⁹ It very well illustrates the changing perception of Article 5. The new SC will also face a challenge of increasing NATO’s ability to cope with various non-Article 5 challenges, such as piracy or climate change.

3.2. Call for a globally connected NATO

Despite continuous emphasis on defence and security as the core of NATO, the Alliance is increasingly emphasizing the need to develop its global agenda.

NATO’s Secretary General Rasmussen’s speech at the Munich security conference 2010 is a good example of the increasing global ambitions of the Alliance. Rasmussen proposed the idea of NATO as a hub of international security structure: “We cannot meet today’s security requirements effectively without engaging much more actively and systematically with other important players on the international scene. ... It has to be the way we do business. That is why, to carry out NATO’s job effectively today, the Alliance should become the hub of a network

⁶⁵ NATO, speech by Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen “New Challenges - Better Capabilities”, 22/10/2009. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_58248.htm>, 3/5/2010.

⁶⁶ Yost, (note 64), p. 507.

⁶⁷ U.S. Department of Defence, speech by Secretary of Defence Robert M. Gates, Washington DC, 28 Oct. 2008. <<http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1305>>, 16/4/2010.

⁶⁸ See: NATO, Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on 3 April 2008, Bucharest, Romania, 3 April 2008. <<http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2008/p08-049e.html>>, 16/4/2010.

⁶⁹ “NATO 2020: Assured Security, Dynamic Engagement”, report prepared by the Group of Experts, p. 45.

of security partnerships and a centre for consultation on international security issues – even issues on which the Alliance might never take action.”⁷⁰

Rasmussen presented a vision of NATO as a principal framework for security discussions among various countries, including China, India, and Pakistan. Making the Alliance “a clearing house for global security issues” and “globally connected security institution” would mean pooling various NATO partnerships in Northern Africa, the Gulf, Central Asia and the Pacific into one framework.⁷¹ The need to ensure NATO’s connectivity with other actors of international community was also reiterated by U.S. Secretary of State Clinton: “In an interconnected world, we cannot defend our people by crouching behind the geographic boundaries of the Alliance”.⁷²

However, it seems that the idea of global NATO should be seen only as a long-term declaratory political vision. Some allies, for example, Germany, have clearly stated that they do not see a global NATO.⁷³ Moving towards this direction is also complicated in the light of operational and financial overstretch in Afghanistan. Many allies consider NATO as a regional organization, which, instead of focusing on global agenda, should concentrate on the direct security interests of its members.

Moreover, other international players (most notably Russia) might oppose the idea of a globally connected NATO as it can be viewed as the ambition to expand Western influence throughout the world and subordinate other international organizations to NATO’s interests.

Conclusions: No New Beginning?

It is obvious that the new SC will not become a magic solution for all of NATO’s problems. No document itself can generate the missing capabilities or fill the shortfalls of defence budgets. The implementation of the new SC will be

⁷⁰ NATO, speech by Secretary General A.F. Rasmussen “NATO in the 21st Century: Towards Global Connectivity”, 17/2/2010. <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/opinions_61395.htm>, 16/4/2010.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² US Department of State, speech by Secretary of State H. Clinton “Remarks on the Future of European Security” (note 27).

⁷³ Gehmlich K., “Germany’s Merkel wants NATO to focus on Russia ties”, Reuters, 6/3/2009. <http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2009/03/27/Merkel-No-global-NATO/UPI-29571238184011/>, 16/4/2010.

determined by the political will of the member countries and level of solidarity within the Alliance.

The analysis has shown that the new SC is likely to play several different roles:

1. In terms of the strategy towards Russia, NATO seems to have chosen an active engagement based on pragmatic cooperation and shared interests. Presumably, the new SC will try to combine reassurance for the allies with the intention to enhance cooperation with Russia, without changing institutional framework of European security architecture.

2. Providing or not providing guidelines for real action will substantially define the added value of the new SC. In the words of U.S. Secretary of Defence R. Gates, “unless the Strategic Concept spurs operational and institutional changes ..., it will not be worth the paper it is printed on.”⁷⁴ The Alliance faces urgent need for reform in the fields of developing necessary capabilities, ensuring effective military and civilian machinery of NATO and addressing the financial and technological gap between the U.S. and Europe. Of course, the new SC should not become a guide for micro-management issues. However, it has to be more than another political declaration.

3. The new SC could play a substantial role as a message to publics and external international actors. The relevance and importance of NATO have to be explained to the society, thus ensuring public, and in turn, political support for the Alliance. It is, therefore, important to ensure that the development and adoption of the new SC is strongly supported by active public diplomacy. NATO’s new strategy also gives a chance to dispel the misperceptions and stereotypes in the eyes of other major powers in the international arena, as well as clarify NATO’s intentions, goals, and expectations from various partner-countries.

4. The new SC is an opportunity to identify primary and supportive roles of the Alliance. It is obvious that NATO cannot do everything and has to share responsibilities with other actors. Defining NATO’s missions will be a challenging task for the new SC because of complex, unpredictable, and rapidly changing security environment.

The recommendations prepared by the Group of Experts can be regarded as an indication showing that the new SC is not likely to become a fundamental turning point in the history of the Alliance. NATO is likely to remain a structure of cooperative security based on the same principles, which have been the driving force

⁷⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, remarks delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates (note 43).

of the Alliance for the past decade. The main elements of the current SC, such as collective defence, the importance of transatlantic link or indivisibility of security are regarded as still relevant.

The core tasks of the Alliance, identified in the report of Group of Experts (deter and defend, contribute to broader regional security, serve as a transatlantic structure of consultations, enhance and strengthen partnerships) only slightly differ from the tasks in the current SC. Safety and security “at home” is still seen as a fundamental prerequisite for success of any external action. Therefore, reassurance on the Article 5 commitment is likely to be one of the crucial topics while preparing the new SC.

At the same time, NATO is facing the challenges of the deterritorialization of collective defence (Afghanistan as the most prominent example) and the changing nature of the Article 5 threats (increasing cyber insecurity). Though the new SC cannot change the wording of the Washington treaty, “armed attack” as the main trigger of Article 5 is going to be adapted to changing security environment. Accordingly, the Alliance is likely to further strengthen its ability to counter various asymmetric challenges, such as terrorism, proliferation of the WMD or cyber attacks.

The most important change, reflecting shifts in the international security landscape and driven by the operational experience in Afghanistan, is the increased NATO focus on a comprehensive civilian/military approach and cooperation with partners. In the long-term perspective, focusing on civilian (stabilization and reconstruction) capabilities might be a crucially important step in the evolution of NATO as a cooperative security structure. In this respect, the level of NATO-EU cooperation will be of key importance.

It does not seem, however, that NATO is on a track of becoming an international “Swiss knife”, i.e. multifunctional institution, capable of implementing very wide range of civilian and military tasks. Though NATO might have to use its instruments in such fields as climate change or humanitarian emergencies, its role is more likely to be supportive versus primary.

In terms of the debate about the global vs. regional character of NATO, it seems that Euro-Atlantic region remains the backbone of the Alliance. NATO enlargement to other regions is not likely in the upcoming years. At the same time, the new SC will have to reflect increasing importance of partnerships. Close

cooperation is a necessity in the era of global interconnectivity and transnational security threats. It is not likely, however, that NATO could soon become “the hub of a network of security partnerships”⁷⁵ – such an ambition might be opposed by other international actors, as well as some allies. The new SC will also have to make sure that NATO’s ambitions are compatible with the resources.

NATO remains in a sentiment of permanent adaptation to the changing security environment. The new SC will be just one more step in the process of ongoing transformation. On the one hand, the discussion about the new SC can be seen as the opening of a Pandora’s box, because many fundamental issues will have to be re-examined. On the other hand, it is a unique opportunity to forge a strategic consensus on the further directions of Euro-Atlantic security cooperation.

⁷⁵ NATO, speech by Secretary General A. F. Rasmussen “NATO in the 21st Century: Towards Global Connectivity”, (note 70).