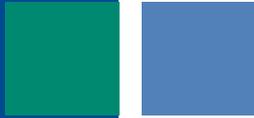


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# FACTS & FINDINGS



## **After the Wales Summit: An Assessment of NATO's Strategic Agenda**

Aylin Matlé | Alessandro Scheffler

Two weeks after the NATO Summit in Wales, which took place on 4-5 September 2014, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation invited a select group of experts and officials to discuss the results of the Wales Summit and the challenges that lie ahead. Apart from discussing questions related to implementation and the way forward, the participants provided concrete recommendations for German policy-makers regarding Berlin's role in influencing NATO's prospective strategic focus. Among the most pressing issues discussed were the current situation in Ukraine, possible ways of how to react to Putin's aggressive demeanor in the long run, and how to adapt NATO's tasks and capabilities accordingly.

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## **MOST IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS**

- The Alliance's united condemnation displayed towards Russia's aggressive behavior in Ukraine marks a success of the Wales Summit.
- The hybrid warfare observable in Ukraine will require more than symbolic reassurance of the Central and Eastern European member states and calls for an adaptation of NATO's military strategic posture and approach to collective defense.
- NATO will therefore have to step up its collective defense efforts, which were neglected during the past two decades. However, NATO's other two core tasks, crisis management and cooperative security, must not fall into oblivion. A simple "back to the roots" is not advisable.
- The upcoming political guidance will be critical as to establish the right capability requirements for a modern collective defense while preserving a proper balance between its core tasks.
- Though the value of existing partnerships has been explicitly acknowledged, NATO would do well to examine what exactly it expects thereof. The Alliance needs to explore ways how to establish closer partnerships with countries like Ukraine or Georgia as an alternative to membership.

## **THE AUTHORS**

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## SUMMIT RESULTS AND PROSPECTS

### NATO, Russia and Ukraine

The unanimous and strongly worded condemnation of Russian actions in Ukraine presents a first success of the Summit that took place on 4-5 September 2014. While the assessments of member states in the run-up to Wales diverged, NATO had become increasingly united – at least since the downing of a civilian airplane in Eastern Ukraine in June 2014 – and resisted the temptation to water down the language of the Wales Declaration. Moscow's current challenging of Europe's existing borders is only part of a consistent pattern of misbehavior, which stretches across multiple issues – such as arms control and abiding by its contractual commitments, for example the 1994 Budapest memorandum. Allies agreed that this behavior has severely damaged trust and that close cooperation will be nearly impossible in the near future. Russia's continued disregard of commitments also raises serious doubts about the reliability of any future agreements.

While member states are currently united, a possible softening of Moscow's approach could still cause new intra-Alliance frictions, in particular if some Allies with major economic ties to Russia were to argue for a return to a more conciliatory approach vis-à-vis Moscow. Cooperation with Russia is inevitable not only for particular member states. NATO as a whole will have to continue to work with Moscow on a number of significant security-related issues, which concern the Kremlin just as much as the Alliance, such as (Islamic) terrorism or the possibility of a nuclear Iran.

Thus, NATO has done well not to challenge the NATO-Russia Founding Act. First of all, there is no need for questioning it. *Permanent stationing* can be interpreted flexibly enough to accommodate the arrangements NATO outlined in the Readiness Action Plan. But more importantly, the NATO-Russia Founding Act provides an essential agreed-upon institutional framework for cooperation. Recreating such a structure in case of a future rapprochement, but also simply for matters of cooperation, would take a long time and would encounter almost prohibitive difficulties.

### Impact on the Balance of NATO's Core Tasks

The current crisis has already led to a stronger emphasis on Art. 5 and the related task of collective defense. With ISAF ending this year and new crisis management operations becoming less likely – due to both intervention fatigue and the improbability of achieving a Security Council mandate –

some nations might be tempted to simply do away with the other two core tasks, namely crisis management and cooperative security. But such a "return to the roots" would be flawed for three reasons: First of all, it would entangle NATO in an antagonism with Russia for years to come. Secondly, even while the Russian threat might appear as the most worrisome at the moment, the rest of the world does not stand still. Crises are emerging around the globe and, more specifically, in Europe's neighborhood – as the recent territorial gains of the "Islamic State" demonstrate. NATO must retain its ability to respond if called upon. After all, NATO had planned for none of the operations it is currently involved in. And thirdly, the three core tasks actually support one another, and none of them can be fully achieved without the other.

NATO should therefore strengthen its collective defense role, but keep a 360 view and remain prepared to assume all three core tasks as defined in the 2010 Strategic Concept. The current need to reemphasize Art. 5 is not based on its greater importance vis-à-vis the other tasks. Rather, it is because for years collective defense has been treated as a core task in name only, particularly with regard to the Eastern member states. Despite rhetorically classifying Art. 5 as the cornerstone of the Alliance, the necessary capabilities along with strategic contingency planning have been lacking.

### Modern Collective Defense

Russia's now famous "green men" and its hybrid approach to warfare demonstrated in the Ukraine crisis require more than a simple reaffirmation of NATO's commitment to defend its Central and Eastern European allies. This pledge has already found expression in the Readiness Action Plan and the provision of increased air-defense and rotational troop contributions specified therein.

The threat posed by hybrid warfare will instead require an adaptation of NATO's military strategic posture and its entire approach to territorial defense. The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) will therefore have to be more than a rapidly deployable infantry brigade and has to be tailored to manage the complex threat scenarios the West is confronted with in Ukraine. The limited scope of NATO's civilian assets also means that the design of the VJTF and the adapted contingency plans will have to be integrated with the efforts of other governmental players in a truly comprehensive manner, particularly with the host nation state.



### **NATO's Capabilities and the Critically Important Upcoming Political Guidance**

NATO's commitment to maintain all three core tasks in an evolving security environment has led to a strong focus on capabilities at the Summit. All of this happens at a particularly important point in time: NATO has just finished the first cycle of its defense planning process and will prepare a new political guidance by June 2015. Given the significant change in the security environment since the last political guidance in 2011, this process provides an opportunity to determine the character of the Alliance's military capabilities. The new political guidance will have to take account of the capability requirements of several changes in the security environment and NATO's role in it:

- The reemphasis on Article 5, embodied most prominently in the Readiness Action Plan, while still maintaining the ability to perform the other two core tasks, requires squaring deployable capabilities in this regard.
- The distinctive capability requirements to counter hybrid warfare, including possible civilian components as well as an emphasis on a comprehensive approach need to be seriously contemplated.
- Similarly, contingency plans have to be adapted to include not only long-time, massive scale invasions but also quick in-and-out operations. These will need their own capability requirements, particularly in terms of readiness.
- The adoption of Defense and Security Related Capability Building as part of the Alliance's cooperative security task requires a distinct set of capabilities.
- The increasing over-reliance on the US as a strategic enabler, NATO's most critical shortfall, is particularly dangerous for Alliance cohesion. At the same time, in light of the heavy decrease in defense spending over the past years, general questions of burden-sharing such as the relative versus absolute shortfall debate need to be reconsidered in search of creating the best and most consistent set of capabilities.

In terms of military spending, the Wales Summit has reaffirmed the 2% principle. Yet the long time horizon for achieving this goal and the ambiguous language indicate that member states will not take this commitment more seriously than before. On the other hand, the defense investment pledge of committing 20% of each allies' defense budget to investment established at the Wales Summit

could prove to be a next-best alternative to encourage force modernization.

### **Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and Nuclear Deterrence**

NATO's BMD capability is now more robust than in 2012. A number of voluntary national and multinational contributions emerged at the Summit and will increase the burden-sharing with regard to this important task. NATO is also continuing to review Command and Control arrangements and the political oversight progress it witnessed over the past two years.

While the Summit Declaration signals ways of cooperation on BMD with Russia, both the work of the NATO-Russia Missile Defense Working Group as well as the political-military discussions are currently suspended. For most analysts, this does not make any difference: Russia had to be dragged into these talks from the beginning, and many have questioned the seriousness of its intentions. In fact, hardly anyone believes Russia's claim that it is worried about NATO's BMD undermining its strategic deterrent. Moscow's opposition to the program roots in a deep-seated Russian concern about global developments threatening its deterrence: global BMD, space capabilities, and prompt global strike. Much more than a player in its own right, NATO therefore remains a hostage of the lack of strategic dialogue between Russia and the United States, as evidenced by the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces treaty discussions.

Regrettably, the Summit declaration does not bring about any news on deterrence. In fact, the paragraphs on deterrence and nuclear issues have been simply copy-pasted from the declaration of the 2012 Chicago Summit. Given the degree of change in the security environment since then, this serves as a testimony of the general lack of strategic thinking with regard to deterrence. The hybrid nature of warfare evidenced in Crimea and the high value that Russia attaches to nuclear deterrence are worrisome aspects in this regard. The lack of strategic thinking results both from the contentiousness of nuclear deterrence inside the Alliance over the past year and the lacking knowledge of deterrence among a great many younger officials, which is a result of the study of deterrence gradually disappearing from universities.

### **Enlargement**

NATO remains deeply divided on the purpose of enlargement. While everyone can agree to former NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer's proposition that new allies should add value instead of problems, very different views



exist about what exactly that value translates into: stability, values, or military capabilities? The basic dividing line on this issue runs between those allies emphasizing the additional capabilities and stability created through enlargement and the opponents who worry about decreasing stability by deteriorating ties with Russia and forfeiting effectiveness and credibility through enlarging the Alliance.

The debate hinges on the interpretation of Art. 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which expresses NATO's interest in keeping the door open to any European state. The 1990s have revealed that NATO cannot enlarge without raising suspicion in Russia. This dynamic was perpetuated by the admittance of former Eastern bloc countries having strong concerns vis-à-vis Russia, encouraging further NATO enlargement in order to stabilize their immediate neighborhood. Since abolishing the open-door commitment is out of the question, the issue of enlargement should be banked on other criteria such as efficiency and credibility – ultimately, the “readiness” of an aspiring member – as well.

Thus NATO must first solve its internal disagreement and achieve consensus before it can further consider a possible membership of countries like Georgia and Ukraine. Accepting any of these countries merely for the sake of punishing Russia would increase no one's security. While Membership Action Plans are a great tool to promote change in a country, NATO should also be careful not to try to bureaucratize inherently political questions. Rather, NATO should try to build the relationship through the current partnership mechanism. Here NATO needs to develop new creativity in offering an attractive alternative to membership to these countries.

The situation in the Balkans is very different in this regard. In 2015 a decision will be made about the accession of Montenegro, and Macedonia would long be a member if the name issue with Greece were to be settled. Countries in the Balkans primarily join NATO because of its cooperative security pledge. As a consequence, enlargement provides stability for the region and serves as a tool to promote change in the respective country. If the situation is already different for the Western Balkans, this holds even truer for eventual requests of a Nordic partner to join NATO.

#### **NATO's Partnerships**

The end of the ISAF engagement in Afghanistan and the renewed emphasis on collective defense pose the question of the future role of NATO's partnerships, which have been a veritable success story thus far. The significance attributed to partnerships (and cooperative security in extension) in the Wales Declaration signals that member states recognize

the value of these partnerships. Several initiatives in support of these partnerships have been announced. The first one can be endorsed without hesitation: The Interoperability Forum Initiative marks an important mechanism to maintain the interoperability with key partners for crisis management across the globe.

While the declaration praises all of NATO's partnerships, it remains difficult to grasp the purpose of some of these partnerships. The design of the partnerships – especially the regional ones – appears to be more legacy of the past than asset for the future. Furthermore, it is often unclear how they contribute to achieving not only NATO's, but also the partner country's security. While a restructuring of its partnerships along hierarchical or functional lines will remain difficult from a public diplomacy point of view, NATO should nevertheless contemplate and clearly communicate what it expects of these partnerships.

A potentially major change is the creation of the Defense and Security Related Capacity Building Initiative and the designation of the Deputy Secretary General as Special Coordinator for Defense Capacity Building. While it remains to be seen if this is anything more than the repackaging of already existing partnerships, it could signal the adoption of Capacity Building as a prominent permanent function of the cooperative security task. A more distinct separation of crisis management partners and capacity building partners would also contribute to the necessary differentiation between different kinds of partnerships.

#### **NATO and the Asia Pacific**

Many common security concerns challenging both Europe and the Asia Pacific – such as nuclear and ballistic missile proliferation and the danger of maritime piracy – suggest close cooperation between NATO and its partners in the region. At the same time, member states are divided on what role NATO could and should play in the area, and particularly how it should position itself in the relationship between the United States and China.

Possible ways to strengthen ties between NATO and its partners in the Asia-Pacific are of rhetorical and practical nature: The Alliance should take a clear, supportive stance towards its partners in the region. Secondly, the establishment of a permanent mechanism for NATO's Secretary General to participate in ASEAN meetings in order to ensure a more regular exchange on a high-level should be considered. At the same time, the most important role that European members of NATO can play in Asia is to relieve the US in Europe by providing more of its security on its own.



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the workshop a number of explicit policy recommendations emerged, both for the Alliance and for Germany in particular:

- Germany should strongly support NATO's ambition regarding the Defense and Security Related Capability Initiative. Germany should ensure that corresponding capability requirements find their way into the political guidance and assess its own possible contributions. Germany should also explore possibilities to integrate this effort in the German Enable and Enhance Initiative and its proposal on the use of one of the EU battle groups in a similar function.
- The work of the Rühle Commission is of crucial importance for the success of pooling and sharing and smart defense. Perceived German unreliability – with the withdrawal of AWACS surveillance planes in NATO's 2011 Libya campaign serving as the most salient example – is used as a prominent example of why such concepts are doomed from the outset. Reducing the perceived German unreliability would therefore have large second-order effects on the level of the entire Alliance.
- The Framework Nation concept is seen by allies as a positive German step in this direction, and has been even referred to as "German self-therapy". The reliability of Germany as an Anlehnungspartner will be the essential condition for the broader adoption of the concept by the Alliance.
- Germany should make sure that the VJTF will be tailored to address the particular challenge posed by Russia's use of hybrid warfare, and will be able to integrate with other actors in a comprehensive approach. As a major player in the European Union's Common Security and Defense Policy, the German commitment will be particularly important.
- The Alliance is in desperate need of reviving its strategic thinking on deterrence. While it is highly unlikely that Germany will take on a leading role in this regard, Berlin should not stand in the way when it comes to increasing NATO capacities.
- The successful adoption of the Defense Investment Pledge entails a strong commitment for Germany, which has been one of the key proponents of this pledge vis-à-vis the 2% commitment. Given the current problems in the German defense acquisition, a quick solution will be required if Germany does not want to undermine this concept from the outset.