

The future of NATO

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From the Polish perspective the future of NATO is good and certain. This is for one basic reason: **we all need NATO**. We need the Atlantic Alliance to ensure the national security of its member states, as well as security and stability in the transatlantic zone and in its immediate neighbourhood. No criticism directed against NATO questions this basic need. The criticisms mostly refer to what is not comprised in the initial mandate of the Alliance, i.e. operations which are not covered by Article 5, the so called *out of area* operations.

In its fundamental functions the Alliance did not fail during the cold war, nor afterwards. It did ensure security for its member states. And there is nothing to suggest that things would be different in the future.

This will continue to be the case provided the Alliance focuses on its primary tasks and **resists the temptation of "doing everything and everywhere,"** and only if it can learn quickly from its own mistakes.

The biggest challenges that NATO is now facing are connected with its **three tasks, in order of importance**: Article 5; partnership with non-member states, including further enlargement; and crisis reaction, peace enforcement, stabilization operations, etc. (out of area).

The issue of confirming the primacy of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is significant to Poland, considering that in recent years the Alliance has turned to other security issues and has taken so many upon itself that it has started transforming into a collective security system. In Poland, a country situated on the borders of NATO, we value its primary role as a collective defence organisation. What is needed is the confirmation of this role as the essence of NATO, not so much political, because there is already talk of this, but actual. The issue here is the continued updating of contingency plans as well as more even distribution of the Alliance's defence infrastructure in the territories of all member states, including those that joined NATO after the end of cold war.

The primacy of Article 5 is also necessary in the context of the tendency of extending the concept of security to non-military threats. The question here is whether and to what extent the Atlantic Alliance should get involved in issues like energy security, cyberterrorism or

climate change. NATO should not be an all-purpose Alliance, because, as a French saying goes, "he who grasps too much holds onto little." For the Alliance to focus on its essence, i.e. on "collective defence," it is necessary for NATO to acknowledge more of a significant and autonomous role for the European Union in the area of security. In its 1999 concept the Alliance still gave the EU only a subordinate and auxiliary role. In the meantime, the EU greatly developed its capabilities in this field (European Security and Defence Policy). In some situations the EU proves more useful and effective than NATO; see the Caucasian war in August 2008. Also regarding energy security, EU potential is incomparably larger than that of NATO. The new situation requires the acknowledgement of the complementary nature of both organisations and an improvement to the conditions of their collaboration. One country (Turkey) must not have the right to block the EU's access to the Alliance's resources, these being the resources of member states, that is also of those NATO members that are simultaneously members of the EU.

As for the **second challenge (partnership and enlargement)**, it refers to wisely combining the development of relations with Russia with the care for contributing to the security of other countries located to the east of NATO's borders. The Alliance does not pose a threat to Russia's security, but Russia must not threaten the security of other Eastern European countries, i.e. those that have emerged from former Soviet republics. It is in the interest of the Alliance to maintain close relations with Russia, to draw Russia closer to itself, to collaborate with it regarding various security issues (e.g. fighting terrorism or countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction). However, the Alliance should not tolerate Russia intimidating its smaller neighbours and forcing them into dependence as satellite states. Russia should observe civilized principles and international relations standards. We know that Russia has problems with this. Neither can we create the impression that we are giving in to Russia regarding NATO's future enlargement to the East. We cannot afford to accept Russia's objections. This would be harmful to everybody: to NATO, to candidate countries, and also to Russia itself since this would reinforce its anachronistic understanding of international relations and of its own role and policy. It is in the Alliance's interest to develop its partnership with Russia, but Russia's interest in tightening its relationship with the West, and with NATO, is even bigger – Russia has more to win or lose! When it comes to NATO's approach to European non-member states, the Alliance must pursue an open door policy. This follows both from the text of the Washington Treaty and from the spirit of the Alliance as an open community of free and democratic nations in our part of the world. This means that, one day, countries such as Ukraine or Georgia can become members of the Alliance. We promised NATO membership to these countries and although they are not yet ready, and while it even remains hard to determine when they will be ready, we have to

support them on their way, that is provide them with both financial and technical assistance so that they get closer to reaching membership criteria. Before this happens, the Alliance should offer them special relations in order to improve their general standard and sense of security in the face of the pressure put on these countries by Russia.

Another challenge facing the Alliance is the **redefinition of its involvement in operations outside the area covered by Article 5**. Since the end of the '90s the concept of a "global Alliance" able to carry out crisis response missions, stabilization missions and even peace enforcement missions in any part of the world has been popular within NATO. The issue here was the possibility of carrying out operations that involved the use of force without the UN Security Council's authorisation, as in the case of Kosovo. The Alliance was, in a sense, to replace the United Nations in its global security system role. This kind of thinking stemmed from the optimism connected with the strategic and economic enlargement of the West after the cold war. However, this optimism did not take into account the fact that our resources are limited and that our military presence would not be given a favourable reception everywhere in the world; on the contrary, it could stir up animosity and resistance. The policy and strategy of G.W. Bush's administration finally discredited the idea of a "global Alliance". As if still driven by inertia, the "global Alliance" idea reached its peak during the last NATO summit in Bucharest, in April 2008, an event of truly imperial spirit and ambitions. It is enough to look at the final document, which not only imposed numerous tasks on the Alliance but also mentioned its collaboration with countries as distant as Australia, South Korea or Israel and Egypt. However, just after the summit, harsh realities needed to be faced. In the empirical sphere, the slogan suffered scathing defeat during the war in Afghanistan, and during the events in the Caucasus in August 2008. The year 2008 was marked by the heaviest losses in Afghanistan, both among civilians and among NATO soldiers. Let us remind ourselves that the American armed intervention in this country started in 2001, and NATO's operation in 2003. Independently of a misguided operations strategy and a lack of readiness on the part of the West to look for a political solution, problems arose from the impossibility of allocating more financial resources and more soldiers and civilian staff to this operation. As for the Caucasus, regardless of the evaluation of the causes of the conflict, the Alliance was not able to react in a significant way to Russia's ostentatious abuse of force against its weak neighbour, which NATO had promised membership. This was, among other reasons, because the Alliance relies on Russia's help with the transport of supplies for the war in Afghanistan. Limitations on the idea of a "global Alliance" proved to be both of a political and of a financial nature. One can say that we had reached the limit of our strategic capabilities.

All of the above points to the **imperative of strategic restraint**. In some situations the Alliance can intervene outside of the mandate determined in Articles 5 and 6 of the Washington Treaty, but only when driven by necessity, not a "global mission". Necessity here meaning a real threat to peace and security, including the security of the West, the threat requiring a military response authorised by the UN Security Council. Selective involvement in security issues (and only security issues, not those of democracy or nation building), based on clear criteria and not on global voluntarism, must find its place in the Alliance's new strategy. The Alliance was not created to establish political order in foreign countries or to conduct new Opium Wars.

These new challenges, which will be reflected in the further transformation of the Alliance, must be taken up in the process of creating the **new strategic concept**, which will start after the NATO summit in Strasbourg-Kehl. One can say that the mere preparation of a new concept, combining conclusions drawn from the experience of the past decade with a vision that responds to new threats and to the direction of changes in the international order, already poses a considerable challenge to member states.

Poland wants to see the Alliance accurately establish the hierarchy of its objectives and tasks. Let us reiterate: firstly, the credibility of Article 5; secondly, stability and security throughout Europe (including Eastern Europe), and partnership, in justified cases directed at future membership; and thirdly, a redefinition of out of area operations – from a "global Alliance" towards "selective and prudent engagement". Such an Alliance will serve the West, its member states and Poland well. Poland wants to participate in shaping and strengthening such an Alliance. It will invest in its political and strategic credibility. Such an alliance must remain "our alliance," because no alternatives can be seen on the horizon.

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