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**NATO READINESS ACTION PLAN – THE ASSURANCE MEASURES FOR THE
EMERGING THREATS**

NATO Borders Instability

NATO is an international organization claims to be the most important political-military alliance in the human history.

But less than within a decade global strategic trends changed drastically and alliance's dream to strengthen transatlantic security made way for a sense of incertitude.

Levant, Sahel and Ukrainian events shows the deep instability of European neighborhood. 2016 makes almost every member-state to face new forms of warfare based on the hybrid threats – the US Army [Hoffmann, 2014] defines of such threats as an adversary's activities that combine aggressive information and propaganda campaigns, social exploitation of Mass Media, cyber attacks, terrorism, smuggling, economic embargo, sabotage and exploitation of minorities discontents.

Lately NATO has to fulfill only one its major goal at once – either collective defense in Europe or crisis management beyond its borders. But now alliance faces with several actual threats both in and out of Europe, from the East and the South. Hybrid component is the basic factor of these challenges and threats. They are caused by the great number of actors, interconnections among them and their intertwined interests. That defines the huge importance of improving intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

US German Marshall Fund Analysts finds three roots [De Hoop Scheffer, 2014:3] of these threats:

- a resurgent Russia, that abandoned partnership with NATO and poses a direct threat to the alliance;
- escalating unrests (almost chaos) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), that made NATO rethink its partnership agreements with unstable states of the region;
- and rapid growth of jihadi-movements, that gain access to armament flows, control local economic resources and unbounded by the state borders.

Ukrainian conflicts proves the simple fact – Europe doesn't get rid of war in itself continent. Uncontrolled refugees influx from the Middle East make the crime level increase and leads to the horrific acts of terrorism in European capitals. Europe can't ignore crisis on its frontiers because they destabilize the cross border territory, affect homeland security and fraught with further conflict widening.

In July 2016 Warsaw will host the next NATO summit. The last one in Wales in 2014 redirect alliance back to roots [Flockhart, 2015:1] – to focus on traditional defense capabilities such as heavy armament, fighter jets and frigates. For this sake alliance improves its crisis management capability with its Readiness Action Plan (RAP).

However such policy doesn't prove to be effective in increasing alliance security. In that regard the revival of NATO – Russia cooperation let the alliance to cope with main security

challenges both inside Europe and in MENA. Moreover the NATO policymakers insists that such answer could be done only with the means of high technological and multifunctional capabilities [Shea, 2015:124]. Therefore the key point of NATO summit agenda should be the development of alliance's strategic communication capabilities.

NATO Parliamentary Assembly particularly notes the urgent necessity to strengthen coordination of strategic communication between allies and partners to develop NATO surveillance capabilities and get a sufficient answer to modern security threats [Policy Recommendations, 2015:33]. Such development could be done through the RAP adaptation to a new geostrategic reality.

RAP Insight

RAP consists of two phases: "assurance measures" to stress alliance solidarity and "adaptation measures" that is NATO reform.

Assurance measures

These measures are focused on the expansion and intensification of NATO exercises, mainly on the alliance eastern borders and in Baltic, and symbolic, basically, "persistent present" of NATO divisions just for joint maneuvers and trainings and not as integral units.

These measures include the increase of patrol flights of AWACS jets again over NATO eastern territories¹ and temporal alliance navy presence in Baltic and Black seas.

In 2014 NATO held over 150 exercises that exceeded the planned number twice. Furthermore almost half hundred of national ones should be added to this number. In 2015 the total amount increased twice as much and reached the point of 300 – half of which aimed to assure defense guarantees for Eastern Europe members [Clatx, Zapfe, 2016]. 2016 keeps on the same mode of maneuvers. Moreover NATO starts to group several exercises both national and alliance levels that are held nearby at the same time² to ramp up the number of troops and equipment to make them equal to Russian ones [Szary, 2015]. Also the recent innovation type of exercises aimed to reach better level of interoperability in cyber, IT and psyops capabilities and strategic communication. The latest ones were "Cold Response 2016" [Bender, 2016] exercises held in Norway in March and gathered 15 thousand troops.

Adaptation Measures

Concerning strengthening strategic communication capabilities NATO efforts in adaptation its structures and planning systems for the purpose of improvement its operation readiness is more important.

A significant part of Wales Summit decisions is focused on NATO structure and its tools reorganization. The key RAP objective is a substantial improvement of NATO Response Forces (NRF) potential. As a result of it NATO Ministers of Defense at their annual meeting agreed to increase NRF amount up to 40 thousand. What's more, NATO "Spearhead Force" or Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) is created as a joint unit up to 5 thousand troops.

RAP enacts the formation of eight permanent multinational command and control bases – NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) in Baltic states, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, that are designed to be connected with the Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin (Poland)³. The issue of establishing such units all along NATO borders has been raising repeatedly.

NFIUs are created to make the early warning, surveillance and intelligence collection systems better, to organize and hold exercises and dispatch rapid reinforcement. One of the major goals of such small headquarters is to ensure the functioning of Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (JISR) system that guarantees the effective cooperation among allies by heightening the situational awareness and warning.

¹ However, in September 2015, the alliance reduced the number of these fighter-aircrafts.

² E.g.: "Brilliant Jump" series of maneuvers.

³ Its stuff reached the number of 400 officer.

Alliance demands its members and partners to continue improving interoperability, updating threats estimation and facilitate more close intelligence sharing with the help of the Initial Operational Capability. Exactly this milestone unites JISTAR⁴ in a broad interpretation that includes comint, elint, humint, masint⁵ resources and is necessary for a deepened and widened understanding of security environment dynamics. The NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre (NIFC) can be used to facilitate the intelligence sharing process, but not yet come into full operation.

The increasing of merely contingent in the headquarter on its own doesn't automatically leads to the betterment of the whole corps operational readiness.

It is useless to have troops that are able to be deployed within 48 hours while decisions are made in days or even weeks. With regard to the fact that 28 states rarely can decide quickly, one could consider it necessary to authorize the Supreme Allied Commander (Europe) to spread out e.g. VJTF. At least now member states realize the risks of such a step. There are no appropriate communication channels between NATO and Russia that will lead to a accidental escalation.

Ultimately the increasing of NATO operational readiness directly reflects the national operational readiness that originate argues that goes beyond NRF issue. NATO faces a dilemma that after all the decades of persistent reduction of armed forces, especially US troops in Europe, and defense spending allies have to reconsider this concept and analyze its pernicious influence on ensuring security capabilities. The "Smart defense" and comparable initiatives frameworks caused by the financial crisis are not effective covering qualitative losses.

According to US representative to NATO Ivo H. Daalder, most European allies not only cut their military spending but also can't consume the military budgets wisely [Daalder, 2013]. Extremely insignificant amount of budgetary funds goes to carriers, tanker aircrafts, ISR capabilities that are of a high importance [Heather, Leed, 2013] in locating and responding hybrid threats. As a result the spending gap reaches the unstable point [Mölling, 2015:2].

Warsaw Summit Agenda

At the dawn of Warsaw Summit we need to classify the core interests of various alliance members. Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal focus on Mediterranean security, terrorism threats and migration crisis. Poland, Baltic States, Bulgaria and Romania certainly put on the top of the agenda the border's security against "Russian threat". Turkey is both interested in its security from Middle Eastern hazards and rivalry with Russia on Black sea, Mediterranean and Syrian arenas – mostly after Russian bigger involvement in Syrian crisis through its air military campaign against terrorists.

The only way to preserve alliance unity is to find the balance in cooperating with Russia in order to focus on essential threats of Middle Eastern terrorism and jihadism [Drent, Hendriks, Zandee, 2015:28]. The last word in this discussion will be US, Britain, German and French – the median states.

South Threats

The NATO Southern Strategy should be the key issue on the agenda. The Mediterranean security became the urgent problem considering threat from the North Africa and Levant [Lesser, 2016] – terrorism, self-declared terrorist organization DAESH, Al-Qaeda with its cells in Iraq, Syria, Libya and Sahel, refugees and migrants flows through Mediterranean Sea cause a great amount of marine and humanitarian challenges. Also since the beginning of active phase of Russian involvement in conflict resolution in Syria, the problem of avoiding accidents, decreasing of the risks and on whole strategic stability between Russia and NATO states get the south aspect.

The accurate intelligence and situational awareness in the region could allow NATO to

⁴ Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition & Reconnaissance

⁵ Comint: communications intelligence; Elint: electronics intelligence; Humint: human intelligence; Masint: measurement and signature intelligence. Mostly all used to describe both the actual intelligence as the gathering of that.

secure its communication routes, prevent cyber-attacks, support local communities and resist propaganda and terrorist disinformation.

NATO Ministers of Defense at their annual summit decided to dispatch forces of Allied Joint Force Command (Naples) to help refugees which is not a typical task for such forces at all. Since the end of the Cold War alliance navy that have AWACS and MPA air jets, the complete set of ISR tools, were aimed to guard, escort, deter or patrol but not render humanitarian aid. That is why it might be supposed that right now their actual goal is to deter Russia especially its A2/AD capability.

The cooperation with Russia [Ivanov, 2015:14] should be of the highest importance in NATO Mediterranean strategy. The significant step could be the putting on the Summit agenda the issue of crisis management mechanisms and strategic dialogue on the central regional security challenges. Instead of considering Russia one among many partners, NATO should acknowledge Russian key role in Mediterranean strategic dialogue. This will facilitate softening the differences in attitudes towards the region starting with Syria.

Russian active role in solving Syrian crisis shows the significance of Mediterranean peace for Moscow.

East Threats

Poland and other Visegrad Group states wait for Warsaw Summit strategic decisions about NATO troop's deployment along the eastern flank. Eastern Europe States see existential threat in Russia.

In May 2015 Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia Ministers of Defense officially asks the Supreme Allied Commander (Europe) to deploy tactical brigade consists of the three NATO states troops (US, UK, France). Poland President A. Duda stressed the necessity of the permanent NATO bases and UK already supported this idea [Pifer, 2015; Rathke, 2015]. The president declared NATO permanent presence as the main task of his foreign policy and call alliance to stop seeing Poland as so called "buffer state" [Foy, 2015]. The Eastern European states insists that such presence must be supported with the best ISR capabilities and developing of more powerful warning, surveillance and retaliatory measures potential. The first step is again increasing AWACS air jets patrol flights and establishment of the Forward Operating Base to operate Global Hawks – remotely piloted aircraft systems or drones in Poland.

RAND Corporation [Shlapak, Johnson, 2016:4] claims such measure to counteract Russian A2/AD strategy and prevent Russia to occupy Baltic States. The reason of such Russian activity is determined by the desire to demonstrate the alliance inability to defend its most vulnerable members and divide NATO.

Germany and France oppose such measures [Politics and Strategy, 2016], fear of Minsk agreements frustration while they put so much political efforts and it eventually began operating. Moreover Berlin and other European capitals are afraid of crossing the point of no return in relations with Russia.

Right now even after NATO-Russia Council recommencement, Russia and NATO activities still result in worsening image and motives perception from outside. In 2015 the total amount of incidents between Russian and NATO members reached 60 [Kearns, Raynova, 2016]. Such dynamics can lead to escalation and the situation will get out of hand whereas existing tools of crisis management and communication routes within NATO-Russia Council will be unable to manage them effectively.

As a result NATO members close to Russian border will be persistent seeking guarantees and practical demonstrations of NATO commitments, while those who are more distant will worry about possibility to provoke Russia and will try to shift NATO focus to Southern threats. Those who support permanent bases face the dilemma – if they succeed in persuading sceptic allies whether the security gains will outweigh the anxiety of ending with impartial political scandal [Kowalik, 2015], that will blow up the alliance strategic unity in relations with Moscow.

Warsaw Summit will pave the way for a longstanding NATO adaptation in the world that will be unstable in the near future. So alliance future cannot be determined by the prospect of the tensions with Russia.

Getting over contradictions inside NATO should become the prior goal and will demand to review the long-term alliance strategy.

Whereas some alliance capabilities have a limited range of application, intelligence, cyber-security, surveillance, special forces, logistics, drones are essential in every little operation and often they are not sufficiently developed.

Ignoring these shortage could make alliance inconsistent to XXI century requirements.

NATO-Russia interaction renewal and elaboration of joint responds on Southern threats will make the decisive importance for alliance future.

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