



IMPROVING *the NEIGHBORHOOD*



NATO AND THE
EU HAVE A JOINT
ROLE TO PLAY
IN STABILIZING
EASTERN EUROPE,
THE CAUCASUS
AND NORTH AFRICA

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Drastic security changes at Europe's eastern and southern borders are strong evidence that the peace and security of Europe as we know it cannot be taken for granted and require a strong involvement of all member states. Europe's immediate neighborhood is facing explicit challenges. In the East, problems include forcible change of internationally recognized borders, military buildup (especially in the Baltic and Black Sea regions) and the consolidation of the ring of protracted conflicts around the Black Sea, which also includes eastern Ukraine. In the South, the issues include porous borders, insufficient migration control, illegal trafficking, terrorism, nonstate actors, organized crime and lack of opportunity and institutional capacities. The crisis in Ukraine has just added a

new facet to a broader and deeper crisis, illustrated by the existence of protracted conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan, forming a ring of insecurity around the Black Sea. The Crimea episode wrecked a quarter century of efforts to build a consistent relationship between Russia and the West. The post-Crimea security environment poses long-term risks to Euro-Atlantic and European security by its lack of predictability and highlights the urgency to consolidate the eastern flank of NATO. Strategic challenges in the Black Sea region cannot be overcome without an increase in attention and engagement by the Euro-Atlantic community. A wide range of risks and threats, both traditional and asymmetrical, together with opportunities, make the Black Sea region a special case that requires a comprehensive analysis and a decisive response.

Shipwrecks in May 2015 line the coast of the northwestern Libyan port city of Zuwarah, where migrants leave the country in the hope of reaching Europe. Partnerships with NATO and the EU could help stabilize migrant fluxes. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

All these challenges impact our common security. They must be tackled with adequate instruments to solidify collective security, allowing both NATO and the European Union to adapt to the new context. Furthermore, appropriate measures should be taken to encourage positive transformation of our neighborhood into peaceful, stable, democratic and economically developed regions. This obviously requires a coherent, multidimensional response, because no single international actor is able to provide a complete answer to today's challenges. In addition, the current economic and financial situation reinforces the need to act in coordination to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Against this background, it is essential to adapt and strengthen both NATO and the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, to work together to develop adequate capabilities and effective synergies, and to invest more in partnerships and partners.

NATO'S ROLE

In this respect, trans-Atlantic relations remain key to ensuring the security of the allies by means of collective defense and therefore should be strengthened from a comprehensive perspective.

The decisions adopted at the Wales Summit on consolidating NATO's military capabilities and increasing the level of interoperability and the expertise of allied armed forces are highly important and prove the Alliance's ability to adapt. The allies have undertaken the responsibility of increasing defense budgets toward the 2-percent-of-GDP threshold over the next 10 years, as well as providing 20 percent of the money for investments in upgrading capabilities and military research. Romania is among those allies that have already announced plans to increase defense budgets.

Implementation of the Readiness Action Plan by the 2016 Warsaw Summit, for the whole eastern flank, remains the number one priority. It is a further testimony of NATO's commitment to increase the security of its eastern allies. The underlying principle remains "28 for 28," both for reassurance and adaptation measures, to certify allied commitment to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

THE EU'S ROLE

Whereas other relevant actors have equipped themselves with new strategic visions, the EU has continued to rely mainly on the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) and on some regional strategies. To uphold its ambitions and objectives of becoming a truly global actor, an updated, a comprehensive ESS, providing the EU with a coherent strategic identity, is needed.

This strategic document should project the image of a dynamic and relevant EU able to safeguard its own interests and promote democratic values, both as a capable leader and as a reliable partner. It must take into account the interests and concerns of all member states and foster cooperation and solidarity. The plan must focus on articulating an approach to our neighborhood — both eastern and southern. This must be our top priority, and our approach to it is a matter of security and global credibility.

NATO-EU COOPERATION

NATO-EU cooperation should be better reflected through systemic cooperation. More than a decade after institutional relations between NATO and the EU were established, there is still much to be done to strengthen them. In-theater cooperation, crisis management complementarity and joint capabilities development are just some of the areas where this partnership should develop its full potential. The EU and NATO must also intensify consultations on new threats from hybrid warfare, terrorism, the rise of nonstate actors with radical agendas and the exponential increase in cyber attacks. Hybrid warfare is a matter of concern, recognized as such by NATO. This affects both organizations and their membership, so there should be broader dialogue on the challenge it presents.

To keep member states free and their populations and economies safe from external shocks, we must equip ourselves with reliable and cutting-edge capabilities. Initiatives such as the EU's pooling and sharing, or NATO's Smart Defence, are making use of consultations within the EU-NATO group on which capabilities play a major role.

In a restrictive financial environment, it is all the more important to coordinate and avoid all duplication. In that sense, the European



Defence Agency plays a key role. Member states should shield cooperative projects from budgetary cuts under the agency aegis and place it at the core of their efforts to improve their capabilities. Equally, increased transparency among defense planning processes would increase mutual trust among EU states and lead to greater convergence and interoperability.

COMMON CAUSE

From a political perspective, given the current international security circumstances, two organizations sharing a majority of members, common values and interests must maintain an intense level of consultation and coordination with regard to their stance and policies toward neighboring countries and partners.

Relations with countries in the neighborhood should evolve based on their sovereign choices, depending on their respective needs, aspirations and achievements, with no outside pressure or interference. Because more predictability would serve both our and their interests, we need to be more

active in assisting them in their reform processes and bring their standards closer to our own.

In this process, interaction with the neighbors of our neighbors is vital for building confidence and strengthening the prospects for regional cooperation in sectors such as transport infrastructure, development assistance, trade, humanitarian aid, energy, migration, environmental protection and human rights.

In this respect, Romania has proposed to establish and develop a belt of trust and security around the partners encompassed by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), geographically contiguous, from the Atlantic through the northern shores of Europe, and continuing through the Middle East. The concept aims to build trust at the borders of the EU while broadening

Pro-Russian armored military vehicles approach Donetsk, Ukraine, in April 2015 in preparation for the Victory Day parade in May. Russia has denied accusations that it has deployed more air defense systems to Ukraine. Security risks in Ukraine call for greater EU and NATO cooperation. EPA



Romanian Special Operations Forces train at the Capu Midia training center with personnel from Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Poland, Turkey and the United States. EPA

participation, starting from a platform of dialogue — the security trust — that is inclusive, informal and predictable.

Three security trusts could be envisaged: one for the Black Sea region, one for the Persian Gulf/Middle East and one for Sub-Saharan Africa. It should begin with a comprehensive package of sectors attractive to each region, beginning with economics, because the EU's prosperity represents its main attraction. These security trusts could be formal or informal, but participation should be high to facilitate decisions.

The concept of security trusts is designed to enrich and improve the ENP with features that could prevent or reduce possible harm from security developments near EU borders. These dialogue platforms can focus on the EU's immediate neighborhood and on the neighbors of our neighbors, with the potential involvement of other global actors interested in resolving crises in the region.

However, this dialogue will not include a military dimension, but should consider a range of multidimensional formats with stakeholders in the region. The aim is to bring all interested stakeholders (regional and global) transparently to the same table to address issues of divergence and convergence.

STANDING FIRM

To maintain a functional relationship with Russia based on principles, commitments, common interests and, above all, respect for international law, NATO and EU policies toward Russia have to be realistic and consider Russia's concrete actions. Respect for internationally recognized borders and the territorial integrity of states is a minimum requirement for further engagement. Russia's use of the Baltic and Black seas as a testing ground for allied cohesion and persistent aggressive rhetoric is unacceptable and highlights that, despite the visible effects of coordinated sanctions, the Kremlin is reluctant to take a constructive stance. The crisis in Ukraine undermined drastically the trust between the West and Russia, and the healing process, if any, will take time and, in some cases, will be painful. But lack of action is not an option. Now more than ever in the past 25 years, we need vision and political courage to make good decisions.

Adaptive measures should be taken with North Africa and the Middle East, as well as with the Balkans. Supporting the development of partner states' capabilities is an essential step in adequately addressing the dangerous spread of radicalism and terrorism, but could also pertain to the

flow of refugees or illegal trafficking. Close coordination and enhanced cooperation are needed in security sector reform, including the defense sector. Once national authorities have an agreed vision or understanding of their needs, we can provide guidance and training for police and courts, support defense reforms and offer train-and-equip missions to build these countries' institutional capacities.

Without engaging in competition with Russia, the aspirations of partners such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia for deepening relations with NATO and the EU should be supported. Our eastern partners see this opportunity not geopolitically, but as an honest engagement toward common values, democracy and achieving stability and prosperity. It would be a strategic mistake to disregard their commitment and their desire to become part of Europe, whole and free.

From an EU perspective, the Eastern Partnership proved its relevance in maintaining the partners' engagement in the economic and political reforms so necessary for their societies. For Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, implementation of their Association Agreements/Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements plays a cornerstone role. Accordingly, increased attention should be given to those willing to pursue a European path, making use of initiatives such as Train and Equip, supporting security sector reform, and deepening involvement in the missions and operations of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy.

Relations with eastern partners must remain a priority for NATO, too. Against this background, we should reflect more upon developing a NATO eastern policy and work closely with the EU in implementing it. By the two organizations taking a concerted approach, we will be better positioned to provide the eastern partners with meaningful support.

POSSIBILITIES OF EXPANSION

We should not be reluctant to keep the door open for agreeable partners, because the European Treaties clearly foresee all European states becoming part of EU. This change will not come overnight, but European countries that embrace European values and undertake necessary reforms should share in this prospect.

At the same time, a NATO open door policy remains increasingly relevant in this context. Aspirants are waiting for a clear message. Montenegro, as a NATO aspirant, has made tremendous efforts and achieved significant results. Georgia's aspirations should also continue to be on NATO's agenda, because Tbilisi is contributing extensively to the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and the EU operation in the Central African Republic. At the same time, we should continue to support partners in the Western Balkans to meet integration criteria: Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina remain key to ensuring the security of the allies by means of collective defense.

Alongside NATO, the EU is an integral part of European security at large and Romania remains keen that the EU maintain a high profile in solving crises, as part of further increasing the relevance of the Union in issues pertaining to regional and international security.

Nevertheless, member states of both organizations must understand that providing adequate funding has become imperative in this fast-changing and volatile security environment, and nations are reaching the limits of doing more with less.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Follow through with commitments made at the 2014 NATO Wales summit for increased defense expenditure and modernization.
- Develop a coherent, updated strategic external action framework for the EU.
- Improve systemic cooperation within the privileged EU-NATO relationship.
- Urge NATO and the EU to act strategically in their immediate and extended neighborhood.
- Take a firm stand against violations of international law and encourage the EU and NATO to jointly make full use of their evolving instruments to support their partners' development.
- Maintain an open-door policy for potential EU and NATO partners.
- Keep previous international commitments as a prerequisite for building trust with neighbors. □