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# The new strategic concept of NATO and European allies

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## *Abstract*

Strengthening Europe as an active player in security and defense is paramount, because in order to be respected, you need to be strong. EU Member States are currently seeking a more constructive strategic process in the Union's development. Europe needs to unify its perception of threats and divergence in security priorities. The idea of a stronger Europe must become central to European politicians, no matter how much they have become accustomed in recent years to taking care of the continent's security. Relations in security and the implementation of the dilemma between Russia and the United States pass through Washington and Moscow, while Brussels does not have such a weight, which has been proven in the Ukrainian crisis.

**Key words:** Europe, security, Russia, USA, threats, crisis.

## *Introduction*

The strategic concept of NATO that is being discussed must be based on conclusions drawn from observations, both among European NATO member states and for Partner countries, against the background of European thinking. EU member states are striving for a more constructive strategic process in the development of the union. The EU cannot afford to choose its preferred threats, and the changing priorities of the United States, from Europe to China, must make Europeans take into account the direction of US resources to the Far East. US attention to Europe will gradually decline, but after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the United States has once again taken the lead in Europe. Russia's actions must be monitored very closely, because it remains a risky player in Europe's security. However, Europeans must not forget that they too must play an active role in security, and the main question remains whether Europeans want to devote resources to increasing their security or whether they will continue with the status quo.

## *Materials and Methods*

The materials for this article are publicly available in the Internet space. In such a manner, the subject of the research and the sources for its construction are the same, which is a good fundament for the recognizable position for the expecting results.

The main method of research is to review and analyze some publicly available expert points on NATO's security policies on the Internet. Their brief presentation in the article aims to achieve the main goals, namely much more active discussion and adoption of the new strategic concept and counteraction to current and future challenges facing the Alliance.

## *Results and Discussion*

The method proposed below for presenting the Internet resources is valuable for the following reasons – review and analysis of the information and projection of the response to the challenges facing Europe and NATO, as well as the visible specialization of the various electronic platforms.

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## **The New Strategic Concept of NATO and European Allies**

In many respects, European security has undergone significant changes since the adoption of the Strategic Concept in 2010. Discussing and adopting a new NATO Strategic Concept will lead the Alliance to the new realities and challenges of the 21st century. This includes broadening priorities, updating threats, including country-specific ones, and including cybersecurity and social sustainability issues. The new strategic concept will be adopted after years of debates on European security and the desire for European strategic autonomy, all after events such as the Arab Spring, the migrant crisis, the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the annexation of Crimea and the joint security approach to Russia. After the Trump administration, Europeans increasingly understood the need for a stronger and in some ways more independent Europe. The events in Afghanistan have also contributed to these positions. NATO's strategic concept must be based on the findings of observations, both among European NATO member states and in Partner countries such as Sweden and Finland against the background of European thinking. The first conclusion that can be drawn is that the United States is essential for the defense of Europe. The second conclusion that can be drawn is that one of the most important aspects of European security in the 21st century is finding a way to manage the various aspects of relations with Russia. Differences in the governance of this aspect of Russia are particularly evident in the Ukrainian crisis, which has not gone unnoticed by Putin. The final conclusion that can be drawn is that strengthening Europe as an active player in security and defense is paramount, and what it will be called does not matter, because to be respected you need to be strong. European politicians must convince their citizens that the security of the continent is at a crossroads and that very decisive decisions are needed, and new challenges are needed in the field of security in general. Therefore, NATO's new Strategic Concept should not be seen as an end point, but as an intermediate step in the overall process of reviewing European security. NATO's new strategic concept must be conceived as a step in the right direction and have a perspective far beyond 2022.

### **Work must be done to increase Europe's security capabilities**

The political will and work of Europe's leaders on the forthcoming Strategic Concept in the NATO context, to acquire security and defense capabilities, is key to gaining greater opportunities for Europe's security. After years of relatively fruitless debate on the European Security Strategy, there has been some recent convergence, but divisions and disagreements over previous cases still need to be resolved. EU Member States are currently seeking a more constructive strategic process in the Union's development. Greater coherence between objectives and means is needed, but so is the use of different Union defense and security instruments, and the Strategic Review should address the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). European security is inseparable, regardless of its institutional framework in which European countries cooperate, and the parallels with the formulation of a new strategic concept for NATO are obvious, especially when it comes to analyzing the strategic environment. That is why all the building blocks of European security must be coherent and compatible, from strategy to defense planning.

The perception of threats is at the heart of the strategic concept as well as the strategic direction, but in order to be one of the players in security, Europe needs to unify its perception of threats and divergence in security priorities. These discrepancies are at the root of Europe's failure to be a leader in security. The European Union cannot give priority to a perceived threat because it cannot afford to choose the threats it prefers. The Union must address all the security challenges it faces. In this situation, collective defense remains a key task for NATO, as well as identifying challenges, preventing crises and, if a crisis does occur, ensuring proper governance with minimal losses. We have key challenges and threats near Europe. For many years, Europeans and Americans have been unable to provide an effective and realistic answer to the fundamental question of European security, what should be the contribution to common security between NATO and the European Union, avoiding it in essence and focusing on political intentions. not on realities on the ground and realistic scenarios (Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, 2021). Given the changing

long-term priorities of the United States and in the light of the uncertainties surrounding maintaining its involvement in European security, defining this distribution in terms of security, both regionally and functionally, seems imperative. Europeans, from now on, must take the initiative and commit to security in the region – the Ukrainian crisis confirms this thesis. The EU must now prepare intellectually and materially for cooperation with the United States in a period of renewed readiness after the election of Biden, and not in times of confrontation between partners.

Strengthening EU-NATO cooperation must be at the top of their agenda, as must defining the distribution of security commitments between them. There is no alternative to the need for compatibility between the two contexts in light of the reluctance of some European partners to devote more resources to security. The emerging EU-US dialogue may be the solution to these difficulties. Non-EU NATO members must also remain part of the discussion, in particular the United Kingdom and Norway.

The pursuit of the idea of a stronger Europe must become central to European politicians, no matter how much they have become accustomed in recent years to taking care of the continent's security. It is their duty to convince Europeans of the need for more investment in security, but this should not be seen as just an investment in transatlantic cooperation in order to maintain the partnership with the United States. There are a number of reasons why Europe needs to reduce its dependence on the United States. Following the election of Joe Biden as President of the United States, some Europeans may think that the issue of independence and security is less urgent and it is better to maintain the status quo.

The changing priorities of the United States, from Europe to China, should make Europeans account for the direction of US resources to the Far East, because their focus on Europe will gradually diminish, despite the “return” of the United States in Europe during the Ukrainian crisis. Another reason for rethinking Europe's security action is US domestic policy, which is almost certain to remain volatile, with foreign policy issues at risk of being delayed, which may encourage some authoritarian states to Europe to try to resolve long-frozen conflicts. Unpredictability can inevitably arise, and Europeans simply need to prepare for the day when they need to make greater commitments to transatlantic security.

By no means does this mean the end of all US commitments to the security of the European continent. Due to Europe's missed years in security, unfortunately at the moment, even a reduction in US involvement would be a significant problem for European security, while Europe has the opportunity to take action on its own security and must not rely on US only. Europeans need to step up their own European security and defense priorities, setting the context for the EU's ongoing strategic direction. Europe must not underestimate the challenges posed by China's policies, seeing them as distant and somewhat of an intangible military threat. After all, we must not miss the fact that European security is our main concern.

### **A more careful and realistic approach towards Russia**

Despite the focus on China, relations with Russia will continue to be the most important factor in the continent's Euro-Atlantic security. In the security of the EU, Russia's actions must be monitored very closely, because it remains a troubled player and its actions towards former Soviet states confirm this. This is welcome and just in time for Europe, which as a result of Russian actions, realized that the policy of partnership with Russia is untenable and must abandon the illusions about the type of relationship that must be realistic with Russia (European Commission, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, 2021).

The approach of Europeans and Americans adopted after the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 with the imposition of sanctions did not yield the desired results and the imposition of additional sanctions is unlikely to lead to a solution unless they are extreme and related to the banking system. More than that, it is unlikely to improve relations and the end result of Europe's security environment will continue to deteriorate. In the context of the US-Russia and NATO-Russia dilemma, the collapse of arms control and development regimes and the deployment of more weapons is the result of mistrust among actors whose actions to increase their own security exacerbate the security

dilemma, such as make the other party feel less secure. The result of mistrust is that these actions lead to even less security for both sides (JSTOR, 2021). This requires a differentiated approach to the application of the security dilemma, which distinguishes between issues related to the dilemma, which must be managed very carefully when it comes to resolving foreign policy issues in particular. Russia engages NATO allies in the “gray zone war”, developing and implementing kinetic actions of so-called “green men” carried out below the threshold of aggression to avoid triggering a NATO Article 5 response (NATO Defense College, 2021). The 2021 NATO Summit recognizes that “our nations continue to face threats and challenges from both state and non-state actors who use hybrid activities to target our political institutions, our public opinion and security of our citizens” (NATO Defense College, 2021). According to the concept developed by the Chief of the General Staff of Russia-Valery Gerasimov, this war is an integral part of the so-called “full spectrum of conflict”, and this doctrine conceptualizes the various possible phases of escalation to full war. Russia initially limited its attacks to countries in the former Soviet Union, such as Georgia and Ukraine. But since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, NATO countries have suffered numerous attacks from Moscow through non-military means, including: disinformation, interference in elections, covert operations and the manipulation of Russian-speaking minorities as destabilizing actors (Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2021). Europe must not turn a blind eye when Russia violates human rights, such as incidents such as the poisoning of Alexei Navalny. The lives of Russian opposition politicians and the integrity of the national borders of European countries are not negotiable from a European point of view in any way, and the Paris Charter for a New Europe of 1990, which reaffirms the principle of territorial integrity, cannot be violated. The differentiated approach means that foreign and security policy is not conducted in a vacuum. Moscow perceives some actions of NATO member states and partners as a threat. Demonstrating its superiority with its high-precision systems, the Alliance must recognize that some Russian concerns cannot be easily dismissed, such as the deployment of high-precision weapons systems (For example, Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed both the matter of high-precision long-range non-nuclear weapons and ballistic missile defense in his 2015 speech at Valdai (Valdai Discussion Club, 2021). Official Russian doctrine considers “deployment by states which consider the Russian Federation as a potential adversary, of missile defence systems and means, medium- and shorter-range cruise and ballistic missiles, non-nuclear high-precision and hypersonic weapons, strike unmanned aerial vehicles, and directed energy weapons” as being among the main military risks (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2021). This position must be taken very seriously by European leaders in the interests of Europe’s security, because the deployment of these high-precision systems will be likely targets for Russian attacks in the event of an armed conflict. There is not enough mutual trust between Europeans and Russia for both sides to believe that they have no bad intentions towards each other. The management of the security dilemma has historically been left to be decided between the United States and Russia, which is why Europeans must be directly concerned. Issues related to the strategic stability of the continent must be addressed in the form of a dialogue, but this is not necessarily related to a disarmament dialogue. Communication with Russia is not in itself incompatible with deterrence. In order to pursue a policy of deterrence, Europeans must have the strength to do so, and working towards a more stable security environment on the continent is, in fact, a key European interest. The debate over Russia’s actions in Europe must be taken seriously as a security threat, but unless these threats are discussed, they cannot be resolved. The Biden administration has taken some steps in the right direction, but there must be more (NATO Defense College, 2021). In order to solve the problems of the continent, Russia must also have a constructive attitude towards them. Relations in security and the implementation of the dilemma between Russia and the United States pass through Washington and Moscow, while Brussels does not have such a burden, which has been proven in the Ukrainian crisis.

However, Europeans must not forget that they too must play an active role in security. Not only the development and acquisition of their own weapons systems, but also how they develop their own capabilities, which also affect the security dilemma. Europe’s demands to the United States to step up deterrence against Russia are also relevant in this broad context, but it is still time for Europe

to take more care of its own security (For example, Sweden, Finland and Poland decided to procure long-range precision cruise missiles). Europe's demands to the United States to step up deterrence against Russia are also relevant in this broad context, but it is still time for Europe to take more care of its own security.

Europe must see the process of discussing the strategic concept as an opportunity that allows it to refine its security policies on the continent as a whole. Europeans need to look at the overall picture of the security environment and think ahead after the adoption of the strategic concept (NATO Defense College, 2021).

European security is facing many challenges and their number is constantly growing, many of these challenges have the potential to seriously challenge the Alliance. Many of the reasons that led French President Emmanuel Macron to call NATO a “dead brain” in November 2019 are still there (The Economist, 2019).

## Conclusions

The strategic concept is one of the opportunities for Europe to completely change its vision and actions to acquire defense capabilities. It is therefore necessary, in the context of in-depth consultations within the Alliance, to be able to compensate for all divisions, taking into account all the challenges looming over Europe. It is good that each NATO member state can realize its own capabilities, which do not require consensus with the Alliance, but the main question remains whether Europeans want to devote resources to increasing their security or will continue with the status quo.

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