

NATO on the eve of the Newport summit

Russian aggression on the Ukraine has dispelled doubts whether NATO is still needed. However, at the same time this situation poses the question whether the Alliance is able to effectively respond to crises in the neighbouring countries. In 1997 the leaders of the Alliance gave green light for the accession of Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary to NATO and made two major countries off its east borders – Ukraine and Russia – its privileged partners. When a conflict arises between these countries, NATO must respond. The coming weeks will decide about the future relations of NATO with Russia and Ukraine, and the summit in Newport will need to take strategic decisions on what they will look like in the future.

In this context the commitment to a collective defence must be strengthened in the NATO's practice. It is in our interest that there be more firm guarantees that the Alliance will respond effectively in a situation of a crisis and that NATO increases its presence in Poland. To make it happen we need to answer four critical questions.

The first of them is: how to keep USA in Europe? A year and a half of Barack Obama's presidency has showed a clear shift of the USA towards Asia and the Pacific region. As a result, the number of American forces in Europe has decreased and the character of their presence has changed. However, these changes cannot weaken the Alliance or affect its ability to respond quickly. The task of Europe is to convince the USA that the transatlantic bond should be maintained and cared for as it forms the basis for cooperation within NATO.

The second question is: how much Europe should be in NATO? The financial crisis from six years ago has decreased expenses on defence. European countries should allocate more funds to defence and undertake more political initiatives. Without it, the USA will not have enough motivation to engage in European affairs.

The third question is: how to define relations with Russia? In the current, new situation the privileged partnership between NATO and Russia seems outdated. This does not mean the resignation from the NATO-Russia Council, but a need for a through change in the policy towards this country. What matters most is not what's written on paper but actual politics that can confront Russia's aggressive attitudes, especially those attitudes which challenge the current international order and replace force for dialogue and cooperation. They lead to the restoration of the Moscow dominance over the majority of the post-soviet territories and subordination of Russia's neighbours. By outlining these goals, President Putin has started the process of transforming Russia from a regional power to a global power.

Finally, the fourth question is: how to strengthen the cooperation with Ukraine so as to implement the provisions of the Charter on Distinctive Partnership? And also, maybe most importantly, how to support Kiev in a situation which Ukraine is facing now? How to show

Ukraine that it is not alone or doomed to conflict and failure? However, before this happens, it is necessary to engage the West politically on the side of Ukraine in the conflict with Russia so that the pro-western course started by the Prime Minister Jaceniuk could be continued.

In addition to these four challenges that should be discussed in September in Newport, there are two more that need to be solved quickly. First of all, how to preserve the high level of interoperability of the Alliance after withdrawing from Afghanistan, not on the battlefield anymore but when the military deployment obligations decrease? This is where the following programs come in: the Connected Forces Initiative, which represents NATO's reformed policy on trainings, exercises and education, the NATO's new Training Concept for years 2015-2020, the program of exercises after 2016 and the preparation for the high visibility exercises in 2015. These tools can make the Alliance's interoperability increase and prepare it for new challenges.

Another important matter is the development of a new, global formula of a partnership, not only because the NATO-Russia partnership needs to be thoroughly revisited and the NATO-Ukraine partnership must be strengthened, but also because a lot has changed in the international security since the Partnership for Peace was signed. First of all, the cooperation with some active players on Antipodes, such as Australia has proved very successful, just like with neighbours that are willing of a broader cooperation in Libya in 2011. The Partnership for Peace should be replaced with a new network of partnership. It seems that after twenty years a new project should be developed that would recognize Alliance's global aspirations, which I understand as the need to stabilize the situation outside the Euro-Atlantic area in cooperation with Alliance's partners. Such Global Partnership Network could be considered during the summit in Network.

To finish, it is worthwhile to highlight that the NATO summit in Wales should also strengthen the implementation of the NATO's missile shield project. We were very happy to hear the declaration in Lisbon that this is the project of the entire NATO for the protection of the entire Alliance's territory and population against ballistic missiles. The implementation of this project provides, in addition to the policy on the cybersecurity, a new dimension to article 5 of the Washington Treaty. The Newport summit must show the determination of the allies to pursue a full implementation of this project. Considering the current circumstances, it is not possible to imagine this strategic undertaking to be stopped.