EIGHT POINTS FROM THE UKRAINIAN EXPERT COMMUNITY

ON THE NATO STRATEGIC CONCEPT 2030

April 2022

NATO OTAN

UKRAINIAN PRISM

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In 2021, the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism", with the support of the NATO Information and Documentation Centre in Ukraine, initiated a project "Ukraine-NATO: Enhanced Level". Within this project, numerous discussions among Ukrainian experts, between experts, members of parliament and governmental authorities, experts and representatives of NATO took place, to assess the current status of relations between Ukraine and NATO, Alliance policies towards the partner states, the role of NATO in the Black Sea region, existent and potential threats, as well as to elaborate a certain shared vision of the Ukrainian expert community regarding the new NATO Strategic Concept. In January 2022, in Kyiv, the first meeting between NATO officials and the expert community of the non-ally state took place, where some visions and proposals were discussed.

Introduction

Following the Russian military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, certain ideas and assessments needed to be revised. The security and political situation in Europe, as well as possible relations with the Russian Federation have changed dramatically. The Russian aggression has changed the existing security architecture, triggered the necessity to revise strategies and plans for defence in Europe, plus relations with partners, as well as a vision of the future security order.

The Ukrainian state, Ukrainian Armed Forces and the entire security and defence sector have proved their adherence to Alliance values and principles. Years of intense cooperation, reforms, and joint training have resulted in an augmented ability to defend and resist. Ukraine is not any more merely a security recipient. There is expertise, knowledge and skills that Ukraine can provide to NATO, especially at the tactical and operational levels. The defence and security forces of Ukraine possess unique combat experience, showing an unprecedentedly high level of efficiency. Gaining experience both in the military domain and hybrid warfare (including military intelligence, cyber and technology development, information warfare and energy), Ukraine should be seen and re-evaluated as an experienced, reliable, and justified partner to deal with.

Even if the war is not over yet, and the future of European security is not clear, we as an expert community consider it necessary to present an aspirant and an enhanced opportunity partner's view on the important elements that may be considered in the NATO Strategic Concept 2030.

The following is a joint vision of the representatives of various Ukrainian think tanks, universities, and journalists dealing with NATO and international security issues.

NATO STRATEGIC CONCEPT 2030: UKRAINIAN VIEW

1. Democracy and principles matter for world order

In 2022, democracy, human rights, respect for sovereignty and freedoms means no less than 70 years ago. These principles are fundamental to the North Atlantic security architecture, as NATO unites not only armies but nations. What Ukraine is currently fighting for is its sovereign choice to live in a democratic country where human rights and freedoms are respected and the lives of people matter.

European security and the international rules-based order were undermined by the unprovoked and brutal aggression of the Russian Federation. It appeared that those democratic principles and values are things we still need to defend, not only the territorial integrity of our countries. States' domestic and foreign policy are subject to people's free democratic choice. They should not be imposed from the outside.

In such circumstances, NATO should condemn and consistently oppose attempts of illegal coercive pressure against sovereign states, to participate or not to participate in any political, economic, military or other types of associations. NATO should be able, willing and ready to defend the principles of the democratic and rules-based world order, not only with words, but through deeds. Therefore, the NATO Strategic Concept 2030 should

- emphasize that any democratic European state that is subject to such unlawful pressure can count on the relevant support of the Alliance.

- clearly define that NATO relations with other states depend on adherence to democratic principles, but not only security needs, thus not allowing perpetrators to have their way.

- find ways to be active in defence of these principles and values if violated by third actors, minimizing the chances of politically-motivated blocking from within, or getting bogged down in discussions of possible actions.

2. Policy towards Russia cannot be ambiguous

The previous NATO approach to relations with Russia – dialogue and deterrence - demonstrated its incompetence, as this has been perceived by the Kremlin as Alliance weakness rather than an invitation for a joint search for solutions. NATO needs clear

conditionality in relations with the Russian Federation. Russia's unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine and disregard for international law pose a serious threat to Euro-Atlantic security, and will have geostrategic consequences. Setting the "red lines" is not enough if these lines are ambiguous and no resolution to oppose their crossing is attached. If open aggression against Ukraine and commitment of war crimes are not red lines, so what can be?

It is important to reject the Russian narrative of the "spheres of influence" and to limit Moscow's ability to establish strategic, energy, trade or political control over other countries and regions. Readiness to respond to Russian threats and restrict individual member-states' misuse of the consensus principle while being under Russian influence is crucial.

Confidence-building measures, especially to prevent possible military incidents, are important. The same level of necessity for cooperation exists in questions of nuclear security, the fight against terrorism and arms control. However, all measures should be taken to limit the Kremlin's ability to use such issues as a bargaining chip for returning to the negotiating table, while violating international peace and order in other countries. If NATO wants to be in the forefront of global security, it should reject the old approaches towards Russia.

3. Differentiation of partnerships

The previous NATO approach to partnership differentiation was predominantly based on a regional approach. While the Partnership for Peace, launched in 1994, has covered all interested states, the situation has changed significantly since then. The wide range of countries involved, including both neutral ones and adversaries, as well as those aspiring for membership, blurs the details of the programme.

Launching the Enhanced Opportunity Partnership framework was an important step; hence it needs better structuring and filling up with substance.

- First, a NATO-EOP Council should be established, to allow joint consultations and the elaboration of plans, so as to increase interoperability and enhance the strategic view of the format. As of now, each EOP state has their own agenda, without joint mechanisms that would improve cooperation, and amalgamate the efforts of the six partners and the Alliance.

- Second, it may well be important to establish an EOP Lessons Learned Centre of Excellence. As NATO aims to project stability to its neighbours and partners, it is also necessary to learn from their experience and identify best practices in operational and strategic domains. Such a centre may also help with better planning and interoperability in case of transborder challenges.

4. Open Door policy is not enough

The "Open Door policy" approach proved to be a passive rather than active policy. As a result, it allows for manipulations and misuse by opponents of the Euro Atlantic integration of the aspirant states. "Doors" can be opened, but you are not welcome - that is a rhetoric that is often used in propaganda and disinformation campaigns, which sometimes reflect the position of individual European politicians as well.

It is essential to underscore that the Euro Atlantic aspirations of the partner states may not be a question of negotiations between NATO and its member states and third parties. The NATO member states should consider the will of the state and its people, but not of any third party that may use force to manipulate the Alliance's ability to make decisions. Eligible countries should not be pushed into rejection of their aspirations under pressure.

Ukraine and Georgia deserve the same approach as Finland and Sweden. Tbilisi and Kyiv should not feel that Russia has a right to veto their membership by occupying their territories like Crimea, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia. For this reason, NATO might consider modifying an approach that limits Article 6 of the Washington Treaty to the territories under stable control of the government on the date of accession. In the absence of such a signal, Russia can effectively block the NATO Open Door policy.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces have shown their strength, their adherence to protection of the values and principles on which NATO is based, and their ability to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area. The NATO Strategic Concept should include a clear signal that membership for Ukraine is on the table when the hostilities are over.

5. The Black Sea is an integral part of the NATO space

NATO does not have a single official strategy towards the Black Sea region, still perceiving it mainly through the lens of bilateral relations with separate states. NATO evidently distinguishes the Black Sea region from its Eastern Flank policy (towards the Baltics and Eastern Europe) and the Mediterranean – Southern Flank. Moreover, the question exists as to whether the Alliance considers the Black Sea as a part of NATO or just as a neighbouring territory. These answers are important, as they will influence the next steps in constructing the reality of existing relations, identifying existent and potential risks and threats, and the greater application of its crisis management potential.

Lying between the Eastern and Southern Flanks, NATO could not decide where the Black Sea belongs, so the region remains in strategic limbo. However, the Black Sea is

a region that can unite the two flanks, as most of its challenges are interconnected by strategic theatres. While limiting the Black Sea region only to the Eastern Flank will result in the dominance of the Russian-centred approach to threats and perspectives, so a comprehensive individual vision for the region will allow for a complex, future-oriented approach, and development of NATO's active role in it.

NATO should develop a comprehensive Black Sea strategy that will consider strong cooperation with aspirant states, will focus on maritime security, resilience building, confidence-building measures, joint deterrence and defence, and naval cooperation, as well as include issues regarding respect for maritime law, the safety of navigation, and readiness to respond to such asymmetric activities as "war of exercises", etc.

It will involve developing the capacities of both littoral member-states and aspirant countries, using all the possibilities of the Enhanced Opportunity Partnership. A NATO Trust Fund for naval capabilities development, both for Ukraine and Georgia, will be a benefit. Establishing a NATO standing maritime group in the Black Sea will also be an advantage.

6. Smart security concept

The "Smart Defence" concept can become a new paradigm of NATO activities in the Black Sea region, allowing better use of all capacities, and formulating effective but not aggressive defence policies. The main idea is to find a joint effort implementation for allies and non-allies. This can include the following elements:

Shared A2/AD. Given the geography, cooperation between Ukraine and Romania may be of particular added value in this sphere. An A2/AD area in the north-western region of the Black Sea, or extending NATO's air policing mission from the Romanian airfields may be an option. Ukraine can be invited to contribute to NATO's air policing mission over Romania, Bulgaria, and the Black Sea.

Maritime security. Joint efforts for patrolling the Black Sea, joint reconnaissance and surveillance systems and maritime awareness, which will unite Ukrainian, Romanian, and Turkish capacities and be in constant information sharing mode with forces in the Mediterranean and the Baltics. This will also allow for the monitoring of Russian manipulations with the international mechanisms of maritime notifications, and guarantee the safety of navigation, to overcome provocations and "war of exercises".

Multi Domain Operations (MDO) are one of the prioritised areas for NATO Supreme Allied Commander Transformation. Ukraine has gained unique experience in conducting MDO during the current warfare, and can contribute to strategic development in this field, including the necessary changes to the corps' structure, to make them capable of holding operations in the air, on land and sea, in space and cyberspace at the same time, within the Euro-Atlantic area.

7. Cyber is the fifth domain of warfare

Growing cyber-security threats, which are extremely dangerous not only to the military but also to critical civil infrastructure and the economy, necessitate new strategic and operational approaches. Considering the growing use of transnational cyber-attacks and their implications, a collective cyber-defence is needed. Due to the interconnectedness and interdependence of the global cyber-infrastructure, a successful cyber-attack against one state could lead to significant problems in other states' critical systems. So, a cyber-attack on one of the NATO states should be considered an attack on the whole Alliance, and have an immediate, comprehensive and drastic response.

In addition, cyber security and defence should become one of the priorities in relations with the partner states, some of whom have greater experience than other allies; thereby, they should become an integral part of strategy and protocol elaboration, to counter cyber threats and to be involved in rapid response mechanisms.

The NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence should also have a rapid informing and response mechanism, and build up strong cooperation and live sharing of experience with those states which are on the frontline of cyber-warfare.

8. Resilience priority

While the resilience concept has steadily been incorporated into official NATO documents, it still remains predominantly a national responsibility of the member states and partners. While many of the elements are purely of national interest, nevertheless, such challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters or risks to nuclear facilities are of transnational relevance, so they should be addressed collectively.

Protection of critical infrastructures like nuclear reactors, communication facilities, power stations, ports and airports should be the top priority. Supply chains and fuel storage protection are important both for the military and for civilians, and are one of the main targets during attack, as the 2022 Russian actions have demonstrated. The space dimension should be considered, including the stability of already operating satellite systems, space missions, and infrastructure (considering already declared Russian threats against the operability of the space missions).

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