NATO after Wales: Back in Business?

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The NATO Summit in Wales has clearly shown that the security environment of the Alliance is constantly changing and therefore also the Alliance needs to adapt itself on a regular basis to those changes. This could also be witnessed with regard to the agenda of the Summit. In the preparation period, it was expected that the Summit would focus on two main issues: maritime security and post-Afghanistan NATO with the aim of being less active in deploying forces and concentrating more on training and exercises. However, the world in 2014 is different from the one in 2013 when the preparations of the Summit had started. In 2014, the post-Maidan events followed by the Russian annexation of Crimea and the fighting in Eastern Ukraine, changed the agenda completely. Above all, Daish (Islamic State) took control over important parts in the Middle East and contributed to a further destabilization of Syria and Iraq, with direct consequences for many NATO members, especially Turkey in the case of Kobanê. Therefore, the Wales summit was held at a crucial period and thus not surprisingly became one of the most important NATO summits in history especially 25 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War. The paper identifies the main decisions of the Wales summit and analyses the impact of the summit on the future of the Alliance.

Afghanistan

With the end of ISAF (*International Security and Assistance Force*; the largest operation in the history of the Alliance which among other things helped Afghanistan make significant advances in education, health, economic development, human rights and fundamental freedoms, notably for women) in December 2014 after thirteen years of engagement, the nature of NATO's engagement in Afghanistan will change although the Alliance remains determined to continue supporting the Afghan people in their efforts to build a stable, democratic and united country. Three parallel and mutually reinforcing

strands of activity are envisaged: NATO Allies and partner nations stand ready to carry on advising, training and assisting the Afghan National Security Forces even after 2014, through the non-combat *Resolute Support Mission* (short term); NATO reaffirmed its commitment to contribute to the financial sustainment of the ANSF (medium term); and finally the unbroken commitment to strengthening NATO's partnership with Afghanistan (long term). NATO leaders pointed out the importance of advancing regional cooperation and support as well as good neighborly relations in order to further ensure the security and stability of Afghanistan. The initial goal to never again be threatened by terrorists from within Afghanistan remains unchanged.

Ukraine

As expected the Ukraine crisis and the NATO-Russia relationship dominated the agenda of the Wales summit. The NATO-Ukraine Commission strongly condemned Russia's destabilizing behavior and violations of international law, and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from inside Ukraine and along the Ukrainian border. Russia's annexation of Crimea was characterized as illegal and illegitimate and was therefore not recognized by the Alliance. NATO leaders required from Russia to stop the flow of weapons and money across the border to the separatists and urged President Vladimir Putin to engage in a more constructive dialogue with the Ukrainian government and to take concrete steps in order to allow for a diplomatic solution which respects Ukraine's sovereignty, territorial integrity and internationally recognized borders. They also pledged to provide strong support to help Ukraine (which was characterized as a long-standing and distinctive partner of NATO) improve its own security at a meeting with President Poroshenko and welcomed the President's so-called Peace Plan. The Alliance would continue to support Ukraine's implementation of wide-ranging

reforms through the Annual National Program, in the framework of their Distinctive Partnership and aim to promote greater interoperability between Ukraine's and NATO forces. A stable, independent and sovereign Ukraine, committed to democracy and the rule of law is of key importance to Euro-Atlantic Security and in this context the then acting NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced that the Allies have established *"a comprehensive and tailored package of measures"* to help Ukraine. NATO will focus its support mainly on four areas: rehabilitation for injured troops, cyber defense, logistics, and command and control and communications. NATO's assistance to Ukraine to boost cooperation will amount to around 15 million euros. Furthermore the Alliance is fully supporting the sanctions imposed on Russia by the European Union, the G7 and others, and is firmly committed to providing ongoing reassurance to its Eastern Allies. The United Kingdom for instance will contribute 3,500 personnel to exercises in Eastern Europe between now and the end of 2015 as part of NATO's effort to ensure a persistent presence on the Eastern flank. In other words, the Allies now decided to strengthen their support to partners under pressure from Russia. Therefore a package of measures was adopted not only in favor of Ukraine but also for Moldova and Georgia. The latter for example will have additional NATO officers in its ministries and more exercises with the Alliance will be conducted.

To sum up, although several NATO governments were ready to abandon the 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act, which provided the framework for cooperation between Russia and the Alliance, some leaders (notably the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who has been the West's principal interlocutor with Russia during the Ukraine crisis) pushed through a more restrained line and therefore NATO's decision to suspend all practical military and civilian cooperation with Russia remains in place but political channels of communication remain

open since a partnership between NATO and Russia based on respect for international law would undoubtedly still be of important strategic value.

ISIL

During the Summit in Newport it was highlighted that the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or Daish poses a severe threat not just to the people of Iraq and Syria but to the entire Middle East region. With its recent advance into Iraq, ISIL has become a transnational threat and therefore a coordinated international approach is now required. NATO strongly condemned ISIL's violent acts and pointed out that if the security of any Ally should be threatened, the Alliance would not hesitate to take all the necessary steps in order to ensure its collective defense. Peace and stability in the Middle East are of essential importance for the Alliance and thus, among others, the continued commitment to the NATO-Iraq Partnership through which NATO will revitalize its efforts to help Iraq build more effective security forces was reaffirmed.

Regarding the ongoing crisis in Syria, the Alliance remains greatly concerned and condemns the campaign of violence against the people of Syria by the Assad regime. NATO leaders called on the Syrian government to comply with the provisions of all relevant UNSCRs and a negotiated political transition is regarded as essential in order to bring about the end of the bloodshed.

Reforms and changes within NATO

At the Wales Summit the Allies reaffirmed their unbroken commitment to fulfil the core tasks set out in the Strategic Concept namely collective defense, crisis management and cooperative security. During the Summit it was also emphasized that NATO needs to become even stronger. It was pointed out that Britain is one of only four countries that currently spends 2% of its GDP on defense and therefore it is regarded as essential that the other members now do more as well. According to the Wales Pledge every NATO member not spending 2% will halt any decline in defense spending and aim to increase it in real terms as GDP grows, and to move towards those 2% within a decade.

But it is not just the amount of money that matters; it is also about spending on equipment that can actually be deployed and so the Allies agreed that a fifth of defense budgets should be dedicated to major new equipment.

In order to ensure that the Alliance is able to respond swiftly and firmly to new security challenges the *NATO Readiness Action Plan* was approved. Its aim is to enhance readiness through shorter response times in case of crises or threats against a member state and thus provides a coherent and comprehensive package of necessary measures to respond to changes not only in the security environment on NATO's borders but also further afield that are of concern to the Allies. The Plan strengthens NATO's collective defence and responds to the challenges posed by Russia and also to the risks emanating from the Middle East and North Africa. Furthermore, deeper political and practical cooperation between NATO and the African Union is being encouraged so as to support the AU in establishing a more stable African peace and security capacity.

Moreover the decision has been made to establish a new Allied joint force (the so called *Very High Readiness Joint Task Force*) that will be able to deploy within a few days to respond to challenges that arise, particularly at the periphery of NATO's territory. The VJTF is planned to consist of a land component with appropriate maritime, air and special operations forces available. Additionally the Allies decided to launch a so called *Defense and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative* in order to reinforce their commitment to partner nations and to further help NATO project stability without deploying large combat forces, as part of the Alliance's overall contribution to international security and conflict prevention.

The Summit also endorsed an enhanced *cyber defense policy* stressing that ,*cyber defense is part of NATO's core task of collective defense'*. A cyber-attack will henceforth be considered as having as much impact as a conventional armed attack and it is up to the North Atlantic Council to decide on a case-by-case basis if and when a cyber-attack will lead to the implementation of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.

Partnerships and Framework Nations

During the Wales Summit the Allies underlined the importance of partnerships as being, *essential for the way NATO works'* and therefore decided to maintain the Euro-Atlantic Partnership, the Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialogue as well as the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative unchanged (the PfP and the MD already celebrate twenty years, and the ICI ten years of existence). Especially regarding the Western Balkans NATO expressed its ongoing commitment to the security and stability of the region and their continued support of the Euro-Atlantic aspirations of countries in this region.

NATO leaders also pointed out that the Alliance will continue to work closely with the European Union, especially in crisis management operations in order to ensure that NATO's Smart Defense and EU's Pooling & Sharing initiatives are mutually reinforcing and complementary, and support interoperability as well as capability development in order to avoid unnecessary duplications. NATO recognizes the importance of a more capable European Defense which will also lead to a stronger NATO and therefore enhance the security of all Allies.

Moreover, the Allies decided to extend Ocean Shield- the counter piracy naval operation off the coast of Somalia until the end of 2016 and endorsed the Framework Nations Concept. The Summit statement gives a definition of the aims pursued: ,*The NATO Framework Nations Concept focuses on groups of Allies coming together to work multi-nationally for the joint development of forces and capabilities required by the Alliance, facilitated by a framework nation. Its implementation will contribute to providing the Alliance with coherent sets of forces and capabilities, particularly in Europe. It will help improve the balance of the provision of capabilities between the United States and European Allies as well as among European Allies themselves'.*

Furthermore, the fact was highlighted that as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance and that deterrence, based on an appropriate mix of nuclear, conventional and missile defense capabilities, remains a core element of NATO's overall strategy. The Alliance

also reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to conventional arms control as an important key element of Euro-Atlantic security and emphasized the importance of full implementation and compliance in order to be able to rebuild confidence and trust.

The Alliance will keep terrorism and related threats high on the security agenda and will therefore enhance its intelligence and strategic awareness and place renewed emphasis on advance planning. Regarding the specific challenges posed by hybrid warfare threats, the Allies expressed their determination to address them more effectively, emphasizing that it is essential to possess all the necessary tools and procedures required to deter and respond to those threats, and also the capabilities to reinforce national forces.

NATO's *Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance* (JISR) initiative, launched at the Chicago Summit 2012, is expected to reach operating capacity as of 2016. The initiative aims to give the Alliance a mechanism allowing data and information to be collected as well as coordination of the collection, processing and sharing of that data and information at NATO level.

On NATO's Open Door policy, the Allies agreed to offer Georgia an extensive package of measures to help it advance in its preparations towards membership. They also agreed to open intensified talks on Montenegro's candidacy and will assess by the end of 2015 at the latest, whether to invite Montenegro to join the Alliance.

The Way Ahead

The NATO Summit took place at a time in which there was consensus among the Allies that NATO has to play an important role in confronting the West with the security challenges posed. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Summit came up with lots of declarations and intentions of how to strengthen NATO and to contribute to security and stability in Europe's neighbourhood. Despite many declarations and promises decided upon, two major questions facing the changing strategic environment were not answered by the Summit. First, the question about the overall strategy and approach of the

West towards Russia and secondly the question to what extent the West, especially Europe, is ready to pay a price for the policies they want to pursue in the East. It seems therefore of utmost importance of engaging in a transatlantic strategic dialogue to properly assess and address those questions and to come up with a more coherent and clearer position of how to react to the new security environment.

The Summit nonetheless made a remarkable decision to hold the next NATO summit in 2016 in Warsaw, in exactly the city where the former counterpart, the Warsaw pact, was founded in 1955 should be more than just a symbolic gesture. It should also demonstrate that the commitments with regard to its Eastern European members are still valid and taken seriously by the Alliance. Especially in the current situation, such a message was well-received by those partners. Nonetheless, the Alliance missed the chance to clarify its position and actions in a clearer and more precise way, but also the aspect of how to deepen the cooperation with other international organizations, that are involved in the Ukraine crisis, such as the EU, was neglected.

For the Europeans, one of the key messages was the fact that the United States stopped their trend of reducing its presence in Europe. Nonetheless, the Summit has shown clearly, that Europeans need to do more, especially with regard to defense spending. Although the declaration's intent to commit the member states to come closer to the 2% margin seems to be unrealistic in times of budgetary austerity, it is at least a political signal to the American partners, to take defense issues more seriously on the other side of the Atlantic.

The Wales Summit also helped in setting up and deepening the cooperation amongst the US-led coalition of willing to fight against IS/Daish. Contributing to the stabilization of the Middle East will definitely become one of the key priorities for the transatlantic partners. The actions taken by IS/Daish also demonstrate that the Allies have to adapt to the new security environment including non-traditional adversaries using both counter-insurgency as well as employing heavy capabilities. This needs to be

kept in mind especially with regard to defence planning in the years to come.

The Summit in Wales has been clear in stating the Alliance's leading role as a security guarantor in the world. However, the test of the pudding is in the eating. It is now the time for the new leadership of NATO to show that the commitments on paper will be implemented in practice and put into a more strategic transatlantic framework. If that happens, NATO will definitely be back in business in a stronger position than it used to have in the more recent past.

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