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*NATO after the Brussels Summit. An optimistic
perspective*

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Centro de Investigação e Desenvolvimento do IUM

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NATO AFTER THE BRUSSELS SUMMIT. AN OPTIMISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at analyzing the results of the NATO Summit held in Brussels between 11 and 12 July 2018 by focusing on three major subjects, all of which are at the heart of the Alliance's concerns: first, NATO relations with Russia; second, the Alliance's defence and deterrence posture to face challenges and threats, whether on its eastern or southern flank; and finally, NATO relations with the European Union (EU). Following the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, relations with the Alliance and even political dialogue have deteriorated significantly, driving the Alliance to adopt a new defence and deterrence posture. Also, in the South, NATO faces several challenges and threats, having to adapt its defence and deterrence posture to another context. The NATO-EU partnership continues to be strategic for strengthening defence in the European continent but also for cementing transatlantic relations, and it is imperative for the strength of this relationship to fulfill the burden-sharing commitments by increasing the European Allies defence budgets.

Keywords

NATO; EU; Deterrence and Defence; Russia; Transatlantic Link.

RESUMO

Este ensaio inicia-se com uma caracterização do atual ambiente de segurança no espaço Euro-Atlântico para posteriormente tratar de analisar alguns dos resultados da Cimeira da NATO realizada em Bruxelas entre 11 e 12 de julho de 2018. Essa análise centra-se em três grandes áreas, todas elas no centro das preocupações da Aliança. São elas: as relações com a Rússia; a postura de defesa e dissuasão da Aliança para fazer face aos desafios e ameaças que enfrenta, quer no seu flanco Este, quer a Sul; e por fim as Relações com a União Europeia. Após a anexação da Crimeia pela Rússia em 2014, as relações com a Aliança e mesmo o diálogo político deterioraram-se significativamente, tendo como consequência a adoção de uma nova postura de defesa e dissuasão da Aliança. Também a Sul a NATO enfrenta diversos desafios e ameaças, tendo de adaptar a sua postura de defesa e dissuasão a este contexto. A parceria NATO-UE continua a ser estratégica para o fortalecimento da defesa no continente europeu mas também para cimentar as relações transatlânticas, sendo imperioso para a solidez dessa relação o cumprir dos compromissos de partilha do fardo incrementando os aliados europeus os seus orçamentos de defesa.

Palavras-Chave:

NATO; EU; Deterrence and Defence; Russia; Relações Transatlânticas.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

NATO Brussels Summit held on the 11-12 July 2018 created great expectations, whereby important decisions were to be made by the Heads of State and Government in order to address the following main questions: How to react politically and militarily to Russian aggressive actions? What kind of measures could be adopted to deal with threats and challenges from the Southern flank? Was the transatlantic bond really at stake? How to deepen relations between the Alliance and the European Union?

NATO is essentially a political organization, a great forum for consultation among its members, having the military as the most effective instrument for intervention. Despite being a regional alliance NATO is a global actor, trying to preserve a 360-degree perspective and to adapt itself to the complex challenges of the 21st century, being par excellence the guarantor of the transatlantic link. We can be provocative, considering it to be the preferred political-diplomatic instrument that the United States (US) uses to talk to Europe without having to go through the European Institutions.

The current Strategic Concept, approved in 2010 in Lisbon, states that, as the world changes, the essential mission of the Alliance remains unchanged: “to ensure that the Alliance remains an unparalleled community of freedom, peace, security and shared values” (NATO, 2010).

Within the Alliance, the plurality of perspectives on the Organization and the natural divergences of the different national interests are evident. Indeed, some Allies concentrate their concerns on the new risks and threats that are also global, others place emphasis on the need to preserve the capacity for territorial defence, seeking to emphasize the importance of geographic elements of diverse nature, that favor partnerships and/or enlargement. Nevertheless, the consensus remains on the intangibility of the Washington Treaty (signed in 1949), particularly the preservation of the indivisibility of the security of the Alliance and its Article 5 (which remains binding), as well as the decision-making process by consensus as NATO's founding pillars.

1. SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

We live in a dangerous world. Euro-Atlantic security environment is now more fluid, less stable and less predictable than ever. On a daily basis we face threats and challenges to the security of our citizens that come from all strategic directions, either from state or non-state actors; the constant attacks are present in diverse formats, ranging from military forces to malicious cyber activities, from terrorist to hybrid attacks, including disinformation campaigns.

After the annexation of Crimea, the Euro-Atlantic region of NATO faces Russia's provocative military activities and other aggressive actions. Beyond that, NATO needs to deal with the continuous instability and regional conflicts across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, mainly the Syrian war and the Libyan crisis; irregular migration and human trafficking; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and advanced missile technology, all of which are events that contribute to undermine Euro-Atlantic security environment.

Again, at Brussels Summit the Alliance ensured its commitment to further strengthening the transatlantic bond, and its determination to protect and defend freedom and the common values of the Allies, including individual liberty, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. According to the

Summit Declaration, NATO will take all necessary steps to provide the resources, capabilities, and political will required to ensure that it remains ready to meet any challenge, and will continue to pursue a 360 -degree approach to security and fulfil effectively all three core tasks as set out in its Strategic Concept: collective defence, crisis management, and cooperative security (NATO 2018a).

2. NATO'S RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

After the Cold War, NATO and Russia worked to build a strategic partnership through the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) mechanism. However, after Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, a spiral of distrust between NATO and Russia emerged (Wilhelmsen and Godzimirski, 2017), because Russia "has breached the values, principles and commitments which underpin the NATO-Russia relationship" (NATO, 2018a), as agreed in the 1997 NATO-Russia Founding Act, and the Rome Declaration of 2002, thus breaking the core of mutual cooperation.

We follow Wilhelmsen and Godzimirski (2017) to whom both have mutual and escalating convictions of the others party's assertive, aggressive and expansionist ambitions. Russia is carrying on a military posture and provocative military activities, including near NATO borders, by repeated violation of NATO Allied airspace, and the continued military build-up in Crimea; significant investments in the modernization of its strategic forces; irresponsible and aggressive nuclear rhetoric; large-scale, no-notice snap exercises; "and the growing number of its exercises with a nuclear dimension" or the "hybrid actions, including attempted interference in the election processes, and the sovereignty of our nations" (NATO 2018a). On the other hand, Russia complains about Allies activities, such as NATO expansion into the former URSS sphere of influence; a prospective NATO and EU membership for Ukraine and Georgia; and Western military campaigns in Kosovo, Iraq and Libya (Wilhelmsen and Godzimirski, 2017).

In Brussels, Heads of State and Government reaffirmed the decisions towards Russia already agreed on Wales (2014) and Warsaw (2016), and have decided to continue to respond by enhancing their deterrence and defence posture, including a forward presence in the eastern part of the Alliance's territory, and have also suspended all practical civilian and military cooperation between NATO and Russia (NATO, 2018a).

At the same time, in order to reduce risk, avoid misunderstanding, miscalculation, and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability, NATO maintains political dialogue and military-to-military lines of communications with Russia, although "there can be no return to 'business as usual' until there is a clear, constructive shift in Russia's actions that demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities" (NATO, 2018a).

NATO's policy towards Russia remains consistent, based on a dual-track approach of a strong deterrence and defence "complemented by a periodic, focused and meaningful dialogue" (NATO, 2018b) although some argue that the situation requires a "proper order of action: deterrence first, then dialogue" (Gniatkowski, 2016).

The dialogue should be carried out within the NRC. Since 2016, that Council has held seven meetings, three of them in 2017. At every single meeting the discussion was about the conflict in and around Ukraine, the importance of the implementation of the Minsk Agreements, but also on-air

safety in the Baltic Sea as well as the situation in Afghanistan and the regional terrorist threat (NATO, 2018 b).

In Brussels Heads of State and Government also reaffirmed their belief that this partnership, based on respect for international law and commitments, would be of strategic value; but, under the current circumstances, they also regret that the conditions for that relationship do not exist. Nevertheless, they will continue the strategic discussion on Euro-Atlantic security and the same approach to Russia's. For them "NATO will continue to be transparent, predictable, and resolute" (NATO, 2018a).

3. NATO'S DEFENCE AND DETERRENCE

3.1 EASTERN FLANK

Following Crimea's annexation, NATO Out of Area crisis management approach suffered a strategic stalemate, and the Alliance returned to its original foundations: collective defence and deterrence. In many respects it was a game changer for NATO.

Providing security to the Allies is not a single act. It is an ongoing process (Gniatkowski, 2017), so all the assurance measures and their elements of forward presence, as well as adaptation measures in response to a changed security environment, are intended to send a message: an attack against any Ally would be an attack against the whole Alliance, and met with a collective response.

If in Wales NATO's response showed some military and psychological unpreparedness to deal with the challenge, in Warsaw "a much tougher set of forces goals reflects a return to thinking about deterrence and making collective defence NATO's first priority" (Larsen, 2017).

In a quest for stability in a time of uncertainty, with the implementation of the Warsaw decision, the Alliance showed that it is committed to strengthening its deterrence by bolstering its defensive presence in the eastern part of the Alliance. In just a year it established a rotational Forward Presence in the Baltic region and Poland and in the Black Sea¹, tripled the size of the NRF from roughly 13,000 to 40,000 troops and established a 5,000-strong Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF); enhanced air policing, adapted its maritime security posture in the Mediterranean and invested in supporting the security and stability of partners by training local institutions and forces to fight terrorism (NATO, 2018b).

In Brussels, Allies agreed to strengthen the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture in all domains, guarantying at the same time that NATO "retains its ability to project stability and fight against terrorism" (NATO, 2018a).

It is a premise and a strong belief that "a robust deterrence and defence posture strengthens Alliance cohesion and provides an essential political and military transatlantic link, through an equitable and sustainable distribution of roles, responsibilities, and burdens" (NATO, 2018a).

Deterrence in the Alliance is guaranteed by a mix of nuclear and conventional capabilities. Deterrence is based on credibility, and NATO's deterrence, in our opinion, is based more on US military power and determination to use force, than on NATO itself, with a slow and complex decision-making process.

¹Deployed four multinational battlegroups to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, and strengthening its presence in the Black Sea region.

The US military presence in Europe, mainly with nuclear weapons, continues to give the clear political indication that the transatlantic bond is the guarantor of “Extended Deterrence”, always leaving a negative political signal with its eventual withdrawal.

Nuclear weapons continue to play an essentially political role and are the basis for the Alliance's deterrent and defence posture. In the evolving security environment “NATO has taken steps to ensure its nuclear deterrent capabilities remain safe, secure, and effective” (NATO, 2018a). In Brussels, Allies in an explicit reference to the strategic concept, have reiterated that “As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance” (NATO, 2010), with the fundamental purpose to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression (NATO, 2018a).

In parallel with the nuclear presence, NATO developed a Ballistic Missile Defence capability as an element of its increasingly important defensive posture, thus adding an important element of deterrence by denial. An effective anti-missile defence system should be understood as a complement to “nuclear sharing”, and another military capability to keep the US engaged in European Defence.

In Brussels the Allies also showed their determination to maintain credibility, coherence, resilience and adaptability of NATO's deterrence and defence posture, including “an effective response to changes in the posture and doctrine of potential adversaries, and their significant investments to modernise and expand capabilities”, maintaining “a full range of capabilities necessary to provide the Alliance with a range of options to be able to continue to tailor our response to specific circumstances and to respond to any threats from wherever they arise, potentially from multiple directions in more than one region” (NATO, 2018a).

The 29 Member States remain deeply concerned by the proliferation of WMD, and the lack of respect for international regimes, and emphasize the example of the new Russian missile system, the 9M729, of which its existence has been recently acknowledged by the Russian Federation (NATO, 2018a).

NATO's strengthened forward presence, tailored or not, is only one of Allies' tools, but it does not exist in isolation. NATO's deterrence and defence posture are underpinned by viable military reinforcement, including from across the Atlantic (NATO, 2018a), but also through a culture of readiness with regular training and exercises, strategic awareness, advance planning and enhanced Allied resilience to the full spectrum of threats.

In Brussels, Member States reached agreement to launch a NATO Readiness Initiative, that will ensure that more high-quality, combat-capable national forces at high readiness can be made available to NATO. From within the overall pool of forces, Allies will offer an additional 30 major naval combatants, 30 heavy or medium maneuver battalions, and 30 kinetic air squadrons, with enabling forces, at 30 days' readiness or less. They will be organized and trained as elements of larger combat formations, in support of NATO's overall deterrence and defence posture” (NATO, 2018a). It will further enhance the “Alliance's rapid response capability, either for reinforcement of Allies in support of deterrence or collective defence, including for high-intensity warfighting, or for rapid military crisis intervention, if required. It will also promote the importance of effective combined arms and joint operations” (NATO, 2018a).

The most important measures adopted in Brussels, due to their long term significance, were that Allies decided to reorganize NATO structures and instruments, starting to enable “Supreme Commanders to command and control forces to deal with any military challenge or security threat at

any time, from any direction, including large-scale operations for collective defence, as well as ensure adequate transformation and preparation for the future, in particular through capability development, education, and training". It was also decided to establish a Cyberspace Operations Centre in Belgium; a Joint Force Command in Norfolk, and a Joint Support and Enabling Command in Germany (NATO, 2018a). Cyber threats to security are becoming more complex, frequent, and destructive. In October 2018 at the Ministers of Defence meeting, "Dutch and British governments have exposed Russia's indiscriminate campaign of cyber-attacks around the world" (Stoltenberg, 2018c) with GRU (Russian military intelligence services) identified as being behind those cyber-attacks. To face those kinds of challenges and threats posed by malicious cyber activities, NATO needs to be as strong in cyberspace as it is in other operational domains. Cyber resilience and integration of national cyber capabilities into NATO missions and operations are paramount to strengthen deterrence and defence in this domain.

In Warsaw, NATO decided to make cyberspace an operational domain becoming a core task of collective defence. Since then the Alliance continued to strength its cyber defences, adapting to the evolving cyber threat landscape, affected as we all know, by either state and non-state actors (NATO, 2018a)

In Brussels, the Allies showed their willingness and determination "to deliver strong national cyber defences through full implementation of the Cyber Defence Pledge" (NATO, 2018a), a central tool to enhance cyber resilience and to raise the costs of a cyber-attack. Do all these policies and measures taken by the Alliance have any impact on Russian decisions? Are they effective to dissuade Russia? They should, but we have to wait and see.

3.2 SOUTHERN FLANK

NATO maintains a 360-degree perspective to collective defence, however its involvement in the south does not need to mirror its engagement in the eastern flank, but rather should be adjusted to the specificities of the security environment. NATO has indeed shown its ability to fight terrorism as well as its commitment to reassurance measures in Eastern Europe.

All 29 Member States are necessary to face both eastern and Southern flanks challenges and threats. States need to protect both territorial integrity and the social, political, and fabric of their societies. So, NATO states must determine how they can deter hostile state and non-state actors from destabilizing Europe through military and non-military means.

But for all these challenges and threats, against these enemies, traditional deterrence hardly works. We need conventional and nuclear deterrence to assure credibility, and also civilian deterrence and resilience. We also know that deterrence alone is unlikely to assure lasting peace and stability (Major and Molling, 2016); it requires the complement of the right vehicle to establish a productive dialogue, even with non-state actors, as the Alliance cannot afford to not talk to them.

For NATO, dealing with the Southern flank strategic threats poses the challenge of cooperation with other organizations, mainly partners, either form Mediterranean Dialogue, Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, African Union, the League of Arab States or Gulf Cooperation Council.

After long years of focusing on the eastern flank, NATO has finally decided to move forward with a more comprehensive strategy for the South. With a clear intention of deepening its focus on threats from the Southern flank, NATO has established a regional hub for the South in 2017, in Naples.

The hub aims at improving situational awareness and to enhance engagement with partners, which is now full at power.

At the Brussels Summit, NATO adopted a specific Package for the South. It outlines three core objectives: to strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence against threats emanating from the South; to contribute to international crisis management efforts in the region; and to help NATO's regional partners build resilience against security threats, including in the fight against terrorism². NATO actively projects stability and security beyond borders, mainly in its Southern neighborhood, being an active member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and by supporting regional partners' efforts to fight terrorism.

As Southern partnerships are set to be at the core of the new strategy defined in Brussels, it is worth considering the expectations of NATO's Mediterranean partners³. On a "practical level, partners are interested in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency training, intelligence sharing, border control, cybersecurity, civil protection, and access to NATO courses and Science for Peace and Security projects" (Brandsma, 2018). Those common interests to NATO and its partners do exist. However, many partners still distrust the real Alliance intentions. Some of them persist in the Cold War era perceptions that had been very present in NATO's intervention in Libya in 2011. As stated by Charlotte Brandsma (2018), to avoid misinterpretations or wrong perceptions, NATO should be sensitive to how its past actions have shaped present perceptions. Having a clear message for its partners today will help build better partnerships in the future.

NATO presence is also very important in the maritime domain, being well known in the Black Sea, an area where the challenges of the East and the South converge simultaneously; as well as in the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas. This presence is paramount for situational awareness, to the support on counterterrorism and to the combat of illegal trafficking.

4. NATO-EU RELATIONS

It is commonly accepted that NATO remains the most important security mechanism in Europe. No other organization has the effective capacity to plan and coordinate the various military forces of all the contributing nations. EU and NATO share a strategic partnership due to their same values and interests and cooperate in a spirit of complementarity and partnership: the two organizations work together to prevent and resolve crises and armed conflicts in Europe and elsewhere.

In June 2016, in Warsaw, both organizations signed a Joint Declaration "to give new impetus and new substance to the NATO-EU strategic partnership" (EU, 2016). In December, the Council of the European Union and Foreign Ministers of NATO adopted a parallel and common set of proposals (42, for implementation in seven areas) for EU-NATO cooperation.

Warsaw Joint Declaration gives new impetus and substance to the partnership, and reports on progress in all areas are published every six months. But some of this new impetus is more rhetorical

² "Helping partners, upon request, to build stronger defence institutions, improve good governance, enhance their resilience, provide for their own security, and more effectively contribute to the fight against terrorism" (NATO, 2018a)

³ "We are committed to building a stronger and more dynamic relationship with our Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partners, including to help them modernise their defence and security institutions" (NATO, 2018a).

than substantive, but clearly, something new, different and significant was starting to happen (Howorth, 2017).

EU is a unique and essential partner of NATO, and Allies showed again in Brussels their determination, by signing another joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation, to continue to improve the strategic partnership, to achieve closer cooperation and greater efficiency, to avoid unnecessary duplication in a spirit of transparency, and always respecting the autonomy of the two organizations. Both organizations recognize the importance of a more capable and stronger European Defence that will, in the end, lead to a stronger NATO (NATO, 2018a).

The new US administration assertiveness policy serves as a wakeup call for European Allies. Many EU-NATO members have relied for far too long on US might, without living up to their own financial obligations to the military alliance (NATO, 2017).

To keep the US as a strategic partner, engaged in the Old Continent, and in order to guarantee the cohesion of the transatlantic bond, transatlantic partners need to share a common understanding of the changing and complex security environment and remind that the challenges in the transatlantic relations are also about values, culture and very much connected to economic questions (Nagy, 2016).

The new Joint Declarations and European leaders' commitment showed, with practical policies and tools, like the new European Defence Fund (5.5 billion euros per year) and the European Defence Action Plan, that it will help to develop new military capabilities, improve cooperation and reduce duplication. This will be a huge step to minimize the growing military asymmetry across the Atlantic (EU, 2017).

The Brussels Summit raised great expectations about the views of the US President, Donald Trump, and his broad statements about the need for Allies to fulfil their commitments at the Welsh summit and thus ensure fair burden sharing. To set the stage "While ministers and experts tried to keep the focus on the summit's impressive deliverables, all anyone wanted to talk about was Donald Trump" (Dereck and Sloat, 2018). In fact, Trump's statements at the Summit were very provocative, mainly for Germany, whom he accused of being captive of Russia, and for NATO countries concerning the need to increase defence budgets from 2% to 4% of their GDP. These statements "left some allies asking whether the US was on the verge of withdrawing from NATO" (Dereck and Sloat, 2018).

One of the key achievements in Brussels was the Heads of State and Government reaffirmation of their "unwavering commitment to all aspects of the Defence Investment Pledge agreed at the 2014 Wales Summit⁴, and to submit credible national plans on its implementation, including the spending guidelines for 2024, planned capabilities, and contributions" (NATO, 2018a).

There is a very practical side to the defence spending disparity between the Allies, mainly the US and their European counterpart. It is becoming increasingly difficult for US forces to work with other NATO forces because of an emerging technology gap and the related interoperability. At some point in the future, European NATO forces may not be able to work alongside with the US military forces (Oliver and Williams, 2016). But progress is visible, and in Brussels, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO's Secretary General (2018a), speaking ahead of the Brussels Summit, said "Allies will deliver on fairer burden-sharing (...) European Allies and Canada are expected to spend an extra \$266 billion on defence between now and 2024", and more recently, the Secretary General, ahead of the Fall meeting

⁴ In Wales Allies agree to reverse the trend of declining defence budgets. Allies whose proportion of GDP spent on defence is below 2% will increase defence expenditures in real terms and will move toward 2% guideline within a decade (NATO, 2014a)

of NATO's Defence Ministers in Brussels, also recognized that significant progress that has been made: "Last year, European Allies and Canada boosted their defence budgets by a combined 5.2%. The biggest increase, in real terms, in a quarter of a century. And over the past two years, the same countries have spent a cumulative 41 billion US dollars more on defence" (Stoltenberg, 2018b).

It is already a tradition at all summits to come up with two extremely important declarations for the Alliance's cohesion. One that always reaffirms the close partnership with EU⁵ and another that reaffirms the importance of maintaining the transatlantic link⁶. The Brussels Declaration on the Transatlantic Solidarity (NATO, 2018c) was fundamental to calm anxieties of some European leaders who, within the US leadership of Donald Trump feel the Alliance weakened. To reassure US commitment with the transatlantic bond, U.S. Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Thom Tillis sent a strong message to NATO allies gathered on the sidelines of the Summit, that the US remains fully committed to the Alliance⁷.

In the current security environment, if Europe wants to deal with the myriad of challenges in its neighborhood, it will have to step up its defence capabilities in the future. Neither NATO nor EU had the full range of tools to address these security challenges on its own; cooperation between the two organizations is essential.

CONCLUSIONS

The Brussels summit of 2018, held at the new headquarters, has created great expectations. In the end, policy decisions formalized as a whole are impressive. Since the annexation of Crimea, NATO-Russia relations are under a spiral of distrust. In Brussels the Allies reaffirmed their common stance against Russia; they can't any longer maintain the status of "business as usual" and had expressed the rejection of any cooperation until there is a clear, constructive "change in Russia's actions that demonstrates compliance with international law and its international obligations and responsibilities"; however, channels for dialogue will always be maintained. The dialogue should be carried out within the NRC.

Also noteworthy were the decisions on the commitment to NATO's core mission: collective defence. Allies decided to continue to respond to threats and challenges from all strategic directions, by enhancing deterrence and defence posture, including a forward presence in the eastern part of the

⁵ Warsaw NATO-EU Joint Declaration (2016). In Wales we didn't have a declaration on EU, but on the Summit Declaration we have some paragraphs about NATO-EU relations.

⁶ The Wales Declaration on the Transatlantic Bond (NATO, 2014b); Warsaw declaration on Transatlantic Security (NATO, 2016).

⁷ Senators Shaheen and Tillis traveled to Brussels the day following a Senate motion reaffirming American commitment to the Alliance that passed with a bipartisan majority of 97-2. The senators' message was delivered at NATO Engages: The Brussels Summit Dialogue, held July 11-12 on the sidelines of the NATO Brussels Summit and organized by The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Atlantic Council, NATO, Munich Security Conference, and Women in International Security. The author of this essay was also there, invited by NATO Public diplomacy. "There is broad public support in the United States for NATO. There is broad support in Congress for NATO," said Shaheen. "We appreciate the importance that NATO has had to national security in the United States. We understand that we are stronger with allies working together than we are alone. We very much appreciate the fact that the only time Article 5 has been invoked was after the United States was attacked on 9/11." Senator Tillis emphasized U.S. support for the Alliance, "It is the most important military alliance that has ever existed," he said. "I am very proud to be here, and to tell you all that you have Congress on a bipartisan basis — we have your back." For more details see <http://www.gmfus.org/press-releases/us-senators-reaffirm-bipartisan-american-commitment-nato-summit-event>.

Alliance. They also agreed to increase military capabilities, including in the cyber domain. Nuclear weapons and missile defence will continue to play an essentially political role in Alliance's deterrence and defence.

After long years orienting its efforts on the eastern flank, NATO decided to move forward with a more comprehensive strategy to the South, adopting a specific package: Southern partnerships are set to be at the core of the new strategy defined at Brussels.

As we face a more uncertain world, a close partnership between NATO and the EU is essential. However, NATO and the EU share a strategic partnership; their relations are heavily constrained by shared responsibilities, especially in the area of budgets. The new US administration assertiveness policy serves as a wakeup call for European Allies as it calls for greater involvement and greater burden sharing.

Progress is visible. The new Joint Declarations and European leaders' commitment, shows with practical policies and tools the will to develop new military capabilities, improve cooperation and reduce duplication. This will be a huge step to minimize the growing military asymmetry across the Atlantic.

NATO and EU need to work more closely together and in the same places, to make any intervention strategy effective. But the misunderstandings and misgivings on both sides of the Atlantic have to be overcome, and a clear sign of cohesion has been given by the Brussels Declaration on the Transatlantic Solidarity, a fundamental document to calm anxieties of some European leaders who, within the leadership of Donald Trump feel the Alliance weakened.

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