

NATO CHALLENGED BY THREE DICHOTOMIES: a view from Ukraine

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For many years NATO was an efficient security umbrella for transatlantic community and provided security guarantees for the countries of Western Europe in the time of the Cold war. Later on after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Iron Curtain NATO enlarged and even former Warsaw Pact states enjoyed the privileges of being under the protection of the legendary Article 5 of North-Atlantic Treaty. Being aware of the changing international environment and emerging challenges the Allies launched the process of rethinking its mission and defining the new role in the XXI century. However, despite the fact that the most brilliant strategic thinkers were drafting NATO strategic concepts some important threats were overlooked and this shortcoming now has a serious impact on both NATO itself and the international system in general.

To make a long story short the key challenges the Alliance has to face immediately belong not to the threats of technological character and to less extent to typical asymmetric threats like international terrorism. I would say they are rather rooted in metaphysical sphere of common values and core ideals. There are three key dichotomies that put into the question the prospects of Alliance.

Solidarity with the Allies vs Engaging the Rivals

The founding stones for this dichotomy paradoxically were laid by the Alliance members themselves. The euphoria was following the end of the Cold War. Idealists trusted in Kantian “Perpetual Peace” and Democratic Peace Theory, whereas realists were influenced by Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” threat. Under these circumstances the Allies did their best to engage traditional rival – Russia which emerged on the ruins of Soviet Union. The idea as it looks from today’s perspective was to convert Russian Federation into democracy and by these means into the new democratic ally.

At the same time cohesion within transatlantic community was weakened. The first strike was war on terrorism and launched by George W. Bush’s administration pattern of “ad hoc” coalitions. Further on it was accompanied by Wikileaks and Snowden cases and therefore transatlantic community faced new MAD epoch. In the age of Cold war it was “mutually assured destruction” between the US and USSR. In XXI century – it is “mutually assured distrust” between transatlantic allies. At some moments it appears that the EU had closer relations with Russia than with the US. The same was true in case of relations between Washington and Moscow – just to remind: famous “reload button” pushed by Ms. Clinton and Mr. Lavrov.

Nowadays it’s getting clear that rethinking of the aforementioned relations is desperately needed and hopes invested into engagement of Russia are vain. However, transatlantic split is significant and the remedies should be found promptly since it was solidarity which was the main strength of NATO.

Hard Power vs Soft Force

No doubt, NATO is the ever-strongest military alliance. Although some of the member-states do not meet the defense-budget requirements and the US is cutting down its military expenses North-Atlantic Treaty organization is still very strong in terms of hard power and military strength. However, recent changes in the international landscape proved that in the time of hybrid wars the military strength is much less important comparing to Cold War times. Romania's presidential

national security adviser Iulian Fota is right when saying that Article 5 does not protect member states against subversion, "that is, intelligence activities, the running of criminal networks, the buying-up of banks and other strategic assets, and indirect control of media organs to undermine public opinion."

Definitely NATO is limited by democratic standards and cannot apply the same tools in fighting the rivals. However, it should get adopted to the new reality and invent countermeasures not only in the field of military power but also in the other areas which are invisibly invaded by those defeated in the Cold War and thirsting the revenge.

Public Diplomacy vs Public Hypocrisy

The mentioned countermeasures can ground on a few founding stones: enhanced solidarity, hybrid responses to hybrid challenges and important message to the rest of the world: NATO's key objective is not fighting the enemies but fighting for peace. If such message is properly delivered the Alliance except for the formal allies will also win the hearts of in different parts of the world. However, the efforts of public diplomacy will only be effective and efficient if sincere. That might sound idealistic but indeed some portion of idealism is needed in the international politics to counterweigh hypocrisy which is gradually getting the dominating position in the corridors of international institutions. If NATO members get corrupted and hypocritical, if they substitute democratic values with the economic revenues and struggle for values by shadow agreements the public diplomacy would not help. The West will only remain the cradle of democracy if it grounds on transatlantic solidarity, awareness of old enemies who are operating the new tools and abstaining from hypocritical games that might lead to the new Munich-like betrayals that the world will hardly survive.