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НАТО 2022: В ПОИСКАХ ДРУЗЕЙ И ВРАГОВ

В статье анализируется положение Североатлантического альянса (НАТО) в меняющемся многополярном мире и особенно события, связанные с Украиной. Основное внимание уделяется предполагаемой внутренней сплоченности и перспективам после встречи на высшем уровне в Мадриде, состоявшейся в конце июня 2020 года. Основная предпосылка состоит в том, что НАТО находится в постоянном поиске (новых или старых) врагов больше, чем друзей, поскольку существование «врага» делает его функционирование законным и необходимым. «Новая» Стратегическая концепция в этом отношении расширяет список «врагов», добавляя Китай в качестве потенциального противника. С другой стороны, изменившийся международный порядок делает более очевидным, чем когда-либо, тот факт, что охват и миссия Североатлантического союза зависят исключительно от создавшего его гегемона, то есть от США. Риторика усиленного и объединенного НАТО по отношению к России пуста, поскольку трудно скрыть «трещины», которые она дает. Союзники расходятся во мнениях относительно идеи о том, чтобы НАТО (США) сосредоточилось на Европе, и предложения о «глобальной НАТО». Основное предположение состоит в том, что НАТО (и США) страдают от чрезмерно амбициозных планов глобального господства, что является всего лишь новой формой ремилитаризации мира. На бумаге это может звучать убедительно, по крайней мере, для широкой публики на Западе, но на деле таит в себе непосредственную опасность бумерангового эффекта на социальном и экономическом уровне. Следовательно, в свое время западная общественность должна будет определиться, хочет ли она больше масла (и тепла) или больше оружия и военной безопасности.

Ключевые слова: НАТО, Стратегическая концепция, Мадридский саммит, Украина, Россия, Китай.

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NATO 2022: A SEARCH FOR FRIENDS AND FOES

The article analyses the position of North-Atlantic Alliance (NATO) in the changing multipolar world, and especially the developments related to the Ukraine. The focus is on the alleged internal cohesion and the prospects after the Madrid Summit held in late June 2020. The basic premise is that NATO has been in a constant search for (new or old) foes more than friends, because the existence of an ‘enemy’ makes it legitimate and necessary. The ‘new’ Strategic Concept in that respect offers more of the same, by adding China on the horizon as a potential enemy (a systemic challenge, as it is said). On the other hand, the changed international order makes it obvious more than ever that the Alliance’s reach and mission depends solely on the hegemon that created it – i.e. the USA. The rhetoric of strengthened and united NATO vis-à-vis Russia is an empty one as the fractures is hard to hide. The allies are divided over the idea of having NATO (USA) focusing on Europe and the proposition of a ‘global NATO’. The basic proposition is that NATO (and USA) suffer from overambitious visions of global dominance, which is just a new form of re-militarization of the world. On paper it may sound convincing at least for the general public in the West, but in reality it bears an imminent danger of a boomerang effect on the social and economic level. Hence in due time the Western public will have to make up its mind if they want more butter (and warmth) or more weapons and military security.

Key words: *NATO, Strategic Concept, Madrid Summit, Ukraine, Russia, China.*

NATO in the Multipolar World: A Struggle for Preserving the Alliance’s Relevance. The multipolar world has been in making for quite some time. Yet NATO – “the mightiest military alliance in human history” (as it usually wants to dub itself) – has been lulled into the dreams of the West’s eternal superiority over the rivals. The Ukraine military conflicts (2) have been a wake-up call and a catalyst for the ongoing global re-arrangements. [4] They only display what has been ongoing for quite some time: the UN is paralysed and irrelevant, i.e. the global security governance is non-existent. The same (and even more) applies to the so-called European security architecture, which served as a façade for the US presence on the continent since the end of WWII.

Since (the alleged) end of the Cold War, (1) [13; 19] NATO has been in quest for a credible mission. It is nothing unusual since all organizations tend to extend their existence by finding new legitimacy grounds. In a nutshell, it means that as a major organization (bureaucracy) NATO has been doing anything to prove itself indispensable in order to preserve its existence and regular financing (the so-called 'iron law of oligarchy'). Posen agrees: "organizations don't like going out of business, and NATO was a 'good brand,' making it useful for other projects. So NATO took on a new goal: banishing security competition from all of Europe and its periphery and bringing liberal democracy to former subjects of the Soviet empire. Instead of being re-evaluated, NATO got bigger." [11]

The quest for *raison d'être* was led on two tracks: the eastward democracy promotion (enlargement) and military interventionism, both with not quite successful fallouts. The first mission evolved around the idea of transforming NATO into a political organization and even a 'peace movement'. [1] Merje Kuus deconstructed brilliantly the practices through which military force and military solutions have been associated with moral good. [7] These processes normalized military institutions/NATO through narratives of global cooperation – a phenomenon that Kuus dubs cosmopolitan militarism. [8] NATO uses globalist spatial imaginaries to frame military approaches to political problems as enlightened and good (as well as necessary because the 'Others' are aggressive and malevolent). NATO's militarism has worked by promising cosmopolitan subjectivity and through the teleological narrative of a natural progression in which political actors gradually transcend their national contexts and come to see NATO as well as themselves as promoters of cosmopolitan peace. [8. P. 559] But despite all efforts, NATO's 'soft power' has shown its limits both within the NATO area and elsewhere. More importantly, the idea of a global NATO has been built at the expense of the UN system of collective security.

As for the second track, Washington-led NATO could never give up the interests of its military-industrial complex. Therefore, the new democracies had to equip better and more against the enemy (whoever it was/is). The issue of the enemy is crucial for a military alliance, so sometimes it was found in small dictators and their regimes, and in other times in a more elusive form (such as Al-Qaeda and the so-called global war against terrorism). In the latest case, the enemy was created against a US president (Trump and Russiagate). They are defined in terms of values: the Western ones against the Others who know of no values whatsoever or want to impose non-democratic ones. The enemy has always been portrayed as a villain and demon, i.e. dehumanized to such a degree to keep the mobilization spirit up and military shopping intensive. Eventually, the military interventionism accompanied by the alleged 'nation-building' endeavour exploded in NATO's face in Afghanistan. The situation is not much rosier in post-Saddam Iraq, a fractured and non-functional state. Libya is the ultimate proof of NATO's disastrous policy and behavior in the so-called rules-based order. The

enemies were always militarily and economically inferior states/governments (or even non-state actors), so USA/NATO leadership could boast its posture of an efficient military force. The war in Ukraine is the first war – albeit a proxy one – with a deserving rival. However, NATO witnessed its first real military defeat in Afghanistan in the summer of 2021. It is questionable what would be the result of a direct (conventional) fight with a mighty military. Formally, NATO remains on the sideway while Ukrainian forces are struggling for the “Euro-Atlantic values and defending Europe” (as the official narrative goes).

NATO’s eastward enlargement was promoted as an unquestionable march of peace and democracy. Until it reached a great power’s red line. Paradoxically, in the NATO’s and EU’s periphery (i.e. Ukraine), the membership prospects have directly led to a military and humanitarian disaster for the respective country, but also endangers international peace and security. Today NATO is being haunted by its own ghosts, especially the ones from the 1999 military intervention in FR Yugoslavia. All the precedents committed then and during the subsequent events (in the post-9/11 era and during the Arab Spring), are in place in Ukraine. Russia uses the same excuses as legitimization ground for its actions. The causes and the consequences of the Ukraine wars should be sought in the US geopolitical rivalry towards Russia and even more towards China.

On NATO’s Cohesion and Global Reach. The question of unity and internal cohesion has been on the NATO summits’ agenda for quite some time. There was a repeated need to prove that the Alliance is united and functional despite the internal disagreements and rifts (the USA vs other allies, Old Europe vs New Europe, etc.). It may sound paradoxical, but it is the US administration has needed NATO in place despite all grumbling over European allies’ lack of enthusiasm for military and financial investments.

It is a bare fact that NATO’s founding mission (i.e. collective self-defence) has been replaced with unsuccessful misadventures thanks to the US hegemonic thinking and national interests. Posen was right in arguing that NATO helps make American military action abroad too easy. In other words, NATO may be seen as a legitimacy factor for the military interventionism and helps sell an operation to American voters. [11] In short, during the era of full Western domination, NATO itself did not need to engage directly but served as a pretence of “international community” when the Americans were marching across the globe. The issue of self-defence has been pushed aside to the degree of president Macron saying (in the already mentioned 2019 interview) bluntly: “I don’t know what Article Five will mean tomorrow.” A year earlier Donald Trump said that “the NATO mutual defense compact is confusing, particularly the question of why an American would have to defend a small country like Montenegro, which is more than 5,000 miles away.” [17] Turkey asked for activation of Article Five on the eve of the 2019 London summit but did not get support because the issue of

the terrorist threat was defined differently by Erdogan and the others (primarily, France).

John Cheriau reminds us that NATO plans to increase its military budget to \$240 billion by 2024. The alliance has pledged more missile deployments in Eastern Europe targeting Russia and increased surveillance on China. Already, NATO's military budget is 20 times that of Russia's and five times that of China's. He concludes that "the military-industrial complex has the most to gain from the continuing existence of NATO, not ordinary people." [2]

The latest NATO enlargement involved the Republic of Macedonia, a very unlikely ally due to its military incapability, territorial size and international irrelevance. Nevertheless, the USA needed to close the mosaic and include the last puzzle in the southern Balkan flank. Actually, it was at the onset of the so-called 'Second Cold War' (i.e. after the annexation of Crimea) in February 2015 that the US State Secretary John Kerry told the Senate's foreign affairs committee that 'Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Macedonia are the new front line between Russia and the West'. [3] Ever since, and especially after the increase of China's economic influence, the region has become a multipolar microcosm or one of the global fault-lines of colliding imperial interests. Having been on a front line has never been a particularly safe and pleasant position. However, the Macedonian authorities have been sticking to the official mantra about a safe haven in NATO and downplaying all regional signals. After the immense concession that the respective country made to its neighbour Greece (changing its name and losing constitutional sovereignty) in March 2020 Macedonia (now known as North Macedonia) joined the Alliance. [20; 21] Macedonia's membership fits the trend of intensified military build-up in the region as a part of a broader tug-of-war for strategic advantage around the Mediterranean Sea. Some authors believed that "hybrid war and military competition divides the region into two security zones: one under the Russian umbrella (Serbia and Republika Srpska) and the second with the Euro-Atlantic aspirations (Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro)". [12]

The Ukraine developments seemingly granted NATO (un)expected gift: in May 2022 both Sweden and Finland applied for formal membership in the Alliance. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg hoped that the applications of the two (so far neutral) countries from northern Europe could serve as a foundation for an atmosphere of strength and optimism amidst the war crisis. However, the Madrid Summit will not welcome two (potential) members due to the Turkish veto. The abortive membership applications however do not mean that NATO (or better, the US) influence has decreased. On the contrary. As many experts have been warning since long ago, the transformative influence of US neoliberalism and militarism has been in effect in both countries. According to a leading expert, the Nordic model of welfare capitalism and peace-oriented internationalism had started changing since the fall of the Berlin wall. It appeared however that Sweden

and NATO had already had intimate Cold War ties, a fact that became known in the 1990s. In the post-Cold era, Sweden was leading (and Finland following) a path that definitely drifted away from the original Nordic model. The process of getting on the 'winning (Western) side' was crowned by EU membership in 1995. De facto, both countries have been already under the NATO umbrella: they have participated in NATO's Partnership for Peace program since 1994; in the 2000s and 2010s, both countries have participated in NATO's 'peace-support' operations and concluded NATO host nation support agreements. The Finnish armed forces have been matched with the NATO systems, culminating in a recent decision to buy 64 nuclear-weapons compatible F-35 fighters from the US. In the. According to Heikki Patomäki, the formal request for joining NATO is just a logical extension of their previous defence policy shifts. [10] The shift toward NATO (for the sake of nuclear deterrence) spells the end to Nordic progressive internationalism, and instead of being "bridge-builders" between East and West, now both countries side with the US and NATO. The new frontline is now being drafted even though it is not officialised yet.

On the eve of its allegedly historic summit in Madrid, NATO's internal cohesion has apparently strengthened and new states (Sweden and Finland) want to join the Alliance due to the Ukraine war. The narrative strongly supported by the Western establishment and the media is largely false. The fact that Turkey vetoed Sweden's and Finland's applications for NATO membership is just one aspect of the story of a failing alliance. Apparently, the door is now open, but Erdogan still leads the parade.

The existing fractures are deepening among the member-states and within the states (*citizens vs governments* with respect to the Ukraine war and stand towards Russia (3)). NATO has never managed to assist its own members' mutual disputes, and the Turkish-Greek conflict is the most visible example. However, behind the scenes there are other competing national interests (such as, for example, between USA and Turkey in Syria. Due to Turkey's veto, the Madrid summit won't celebrate the prophesied new enlargement to Finland and Sweden for quite some time. But in general, this fact does not change the fact that under Brussels' and Washington's influence the formally neutral countries that have become NATO's satellites for quite some time. The case of Sweden, but also Ukraine (to mention just a few), show that NATO has worked both on a formal and informal level. A country could be a part of the Alliance as a *de facto* member, i.e. through acceptance of NATO ideology, working on training and equipment of its military forces toward interoperability, etc. (4) On some occasions *de facto* members (with no formally determined status) proved to be more useful than formal NATO member states. For instance, it could be proved in the case of countries' contributions to the Afghanistan mission.

The overview of NATO's achievements since the 1990s could be judged only through the prism of the correlation between its wishes (spelled out in its strategic

concepts) and the factual outcomes. The democracy promotion project is to be evaluated through the state of democracy starting from the USA and its closest ally the United Kingdom (i.e. the core) to the Euro-Atlantic periphery (for instance, Hungary and Macedonia). Democracy and militarism do not go well together. In terms of 'out of area' operations, the rise of Islamophobia goes hand in hand with Russophobia and Sinophobia. The world is on the brink of nuclear disaster due to Western expansionism at all costs. For instance, according to the 2021 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending Report, the US spent \$44.2 billion, more than \$ 84,094 per minute, on nuclear weapons in 2021, more than all other nuclear-armed nations combined on its nuclear weapons in the same year, which is an increase of \$5 billion from 2020 (the pandemic year). [15]

What's New in the New Strategic Concept? The new Strategic concept has been announced for quite some time. Its basic features and elements are to be found in the 2020 expert report entitled "NATO 2030", an endeavor that followed the 70th anniversary and the gloomy NATO summit in London. [9] The expert group (made of former politicians, ministers and experts) envisioned its work as "Forward-Looking Reflection Process". The end result showed that while the Alliance would be looking forward, it would continue seeing enemies behind every corner. In essence, it seems that the world is changing but the Alliance remains a 'force for good' and tries to preserve the international *status quo*.

In 2019 the organization was in its deepest existential crisis ever. Even the French president Macron spelled NATO's 'brain death'. [16] Thus an urgent action was necessary to prove NATO's viability and usefulness. Bearing in mind that the Alliance was born out of fear (from the East) and that it has been preserving its legitimacy through fear-mongering and exaggeration of the security threats, it is no wonder that the main focus of the creators of the new Strategic Concept has been on detecting and defining new enemies. As said, NATO's 'math' does not take into account its own contribution to increased global insecurity – the enemy is always the 'Other'. The created security dilemma on a global scale produces unprecedented arms race and even nuclear risks. The new Strategic Concept is not being made out of honest soul-searching and self-evaluation but on the ground of the strategic projections (mirror images) of the expansionist West. There has never been a quest for peaceful coexistence and cooperation regardless of the rhetoric used by the officials or in the documents. It has always been about *Pax Americana* – i.e. the world according to the USA's liking and undisputed dominance.

Concerning the Madrid document (which is not still publicly presented at the time this analysis is being written), one should keep in mind that the Strategic concept is just a framework of what will have to be operationalized. The experience shows that many elements may just remain empty rhetoric as things in reality differ from NATO's wishful thinking. Also, such documents are usually aimed at different audiences. Therefore the language used is rather vague, and

the phrases are meant to reach the general public, media, the expert community and power centers abroad. It also assumes the use of buzz-words. One of the most popular ones currently is the word *resilience*. It has repeatedly been used by various experts and officials but only a few honest ones admit that its meaning is unclear and maybe even misleading. It also shows that NATO oversteps its boundaries creating confusion with the EU's key missions (as the EU also refers to resilience as its priority).

According to US officials and pundits, the Strategic Concept is a 'big deal'. They find the old one from Lisbon 2010 obsolete, especially after the 2014 Crimea episode and seek new priorities far on the east. The new Concept is expected to widen the horizon in terms of geopolitical rivalry. What was already assumed in the "NATO 2030" Report is now to become official: Russia and China become rivals – and consequently, enemies. Allegedly the Ukraine war sent shock waves that awakened the brain-dead NATO, and made it clear to the general public that the Alliance is needed more than ever. The eastern flank of NATO is becoming a top priority vis-a-vis Russia but that's a piece of old news.

For some time, NATO has been criticized for doing nothing to fulfil the core missions. The acronym NATO was translated as 'No Action Talk Only'. In each new strategic concept, NATO has been trying to prove its legitimacy and efficiency. The Alliance has actually lost its compass trying to balance between military and non-military threats by adopting the so-called 360-degree attitude (meaning, an ambition to deal with all threats, to deter and defend at the same time – and from all sides of the world). It is hard to believe that it will abandon this approach but it is obvious that the collective self-defense (and deterrence, including the nuclear one) is coming back on the main door.

Despite the Alliance's wish to anticipate the regional and global developments and find adequate responses and solutions for the new threats, the Ukraine war intensifies NATO's frustrations. Instead of preventing military conflict(s), NATO is about to adopt a Strategic Concept amidst a war in which it is deeply involved. According to many analysts, most notably John Mearsheimer, Ukraine's war is the West's fault – and the famous Chicago professor anticipated it long ago. Such an alliance is incapable of detoxification from its addition from war (war for the war's sake). [22] It is militarism, both in mental and material terms, which pushes NATO to an extension of the war to the (expected) final defeat of Russia. The problem with the Western thinkers, even the ones critical to the US foreign policy and militaristic exapades, is that they still argue that China is the West's main threat. [6]

China will indeed be mentioned in an official NATO document for the first time (in a rather vague way, probably not as a direct military adversary). We agree with the scholars who argue that NATO is unlikely to play a substantial role in US-led efforts to balance China in the Indo-Pacific region, but disagree with the thesis that China would not be designated as a 'threat' in the North Atlantic

area. [5] The hostile language and mind-set have been unleashed in the Western public for a long time, and now in the wake of the Ukrainian crisis, it only gets more evident in the statements of the top US officials. [18] An eventual clear-cut geographic division of labour between the US and European partners would harm the Alliance through weakening its cohesion.

The Madrid Summit is going to be held amidst ongoing war, but obviously, the Alliance and its key players haven't had enough of it. Some experts argue that NATO should focus on better integrating the 'China factor' into its military planning, in anticipation of the knock-on effects that a crisis in Asia could have on the European theatre. [5] This kind of thinking raises the dilemma among the European partners: is NATO (USA) going global or should remain Euro-Atlantic even more than before? Europeans fear that in the first scenario the USA would pay more attention to its Indo-Pacific interests than to the European affairs. NATO is ill-suited to respond to what it defines as a 'China threat' although the puppet government wants to widen the war instead of putting the fire down at home. [14] Thus various security arrangements in Asia and Indo-Pacific region are expected to fill the gap. Obviously, the USA is the key player in both arrangements. The bottom line is, however, that the military drive and assertiveness come from Washington rather than from other Western power centres.

Not much differently from Donald Trump, US President Joe Biden expects Europeans to invest more in their security. In the US view, 'Europeans' means both European countries that are members of NATO, EU and candidate countries. The EU's militarization has been a long and gradual process since 1999. Namely, the US-led NATO carried out the military campaign against FR Yugoslavia and presented the European allies with their military impotence. Ever since the EU has been transforming from 'Venus' into a Tom-boy – but not strong enough to gain its strategic independence. As of today, the EU is more of an economic/financial department of NATO. It seems Europe will continue to do the dishes behind NATO/US' military mess is done.

Tentative conclusions. Right after the Madrid summit of NATO, there is an impression that the new Strategic Concept does not offer any new vision of the Alliance. Its image is being embellished on the surface in order to reflect the enthusiastic narrative rather than to deal with the grim reality. NATO is a surrogate (alter ego) of the USA and it has never been clearer to any internal and external observers. The adopted framework that is supposed to allocate the next capabilities is work in progress, and its outlook will depend mostly on the developments on ground, i.e. on the military outcome in Ukraine. The latest view of NATO Secretary-General is that the war in Ukraine could last for years, so the Western countries should brace themselves to provide long-term support to Kiev. However, the European and American citizens are gradually showing impatience, while the media are also losing interest in the artificially prolonged and unnecessary (and devastating) war in Ukraine.

Regardless of the official rhetoric, NATO is internally split over its role in Ukraine and the following steps. Diplomacy has been ruled out, which makes this conflict a most dangerous end-game. Any peace proposal, i.e. proposal for a negotiated peace, is immediately labelled as a pro-Putin stand. Mearsheimer is right on one point: NATO (or better, the USA) is already at war with Russia, while China is next. What makes things highly explosive is that neither side in the current proxy war has the luxury of losing the war. The traditionally neutral countries (including Switzerland) and the ones that used to restrain themselves from military interventions due to their inglorious past (such as Germany and Japan) are on a fast-track militarization. The concept of non-military security and human security have already been abandoned. Military security dominates the debate and the scene.

Hence, the Madrid Summit has brought more of the same – more militarism, more weapons, more permanent military bases close to Russia and China, and weaponization of literally everything (from energy to finance, food and culture). NATO is de facto preparing for war – and puts the blame for it on the others who disobey the US hegemony.

Yet the original NATO is struggling for preserving its relevance. But instead of being a “military arm of liberal hegemony” in the multipolar world order, the imagined unipolar hegemony is unsustainable. The ambition is to keep Americans in, the Russians down and Chinese out. The West (or its leading power, the USA) is now trying to fight on different fronts, and new variants of NATO (such as QUAD, ‘Asian NATO’) or NATO surrogates are seen as a possible solution. At least on paper... NATO is not able to fight a war because it does not have ready troops or logistics, and even the Ukraine war has emptied the member-states’ military reserves. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the level of devastation for any warring party, as for instance shows the figure of death toll on the Ukrainian side as big as the total number of ground soldiers of a country like United Kingdom. NATO’s logic of rearranging military battalions is a logic of desperation: they are de facto losing war in Ukraine, and have lost credibility among its member-states and partners. As Scott Ritter correctly argues, the more Ukrainians will die and the weaker NATO will become. To keep Ukraine competitive on the battlefield, NATO is being asked to strip its own defence down to literally zero.

Many NATO member-states joined the alliance with a hope to be protected – and now they are expected to sacrifice their human and military resources for the sake of non-member state and its mentor (USA). The EU has totally lost its image of force for peace and good (soft power) because it is almost impossible to delineate where NATO ends and the EU begins, and vice versa. NATO is surrogate for USA, and the EU once created out of the US Marshall Plan is now being totally dependent on the falling Empire. It is a matter of time when the European citizens will wake up against their governments.

All powers are hawks, more or less, but some are more hawkish and dangerous than the others, to paraphrase Orwell. Therefore, one should not seek peace and coexistence on the side that is directly responsible for the current mess in Europe and elsewhere. The West and its institutions are rapidly becoming a pariah actor – but they are still unable to see the world that has just been re-ordered.

Finally, this world has a huge security problem – and the name of this problem is the United States of America. It is THE most violent state on earth, in all possible senses of the concept of violence: physical, structural and cultural. Having no alternative for a radical (positive) change from within, it seems that the others simply cannot live with a hope that the Americans themselves will transform their polity and demilitarize the society. Therefore, the responsibility for keeping the mankind safe is on the others.

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