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Change in Security Architecture of Central and Eastern Europe in the Context of the Situation in Ukraine

Zmiana architektury bezpieczeństwa regionu Europy Środowo-Wschodniej w kontekście sytuacji na Ukrainie

• **Abstrakt** •

Agresywna i mocarstwowa polityka Rosji, wyrażająca się m.in. zbrojnym atakiem na Gruzję w 2008 r. i konfliktem z Ukrainą trwającym od 2014 r., uświadomiła państwom europejskim należącym do NATO istnienie realnego zagrożenia ze strony Kremla. Szczególnie kraje graniczące z Federacją Rosyjską muszą mieć świadomość, że w razie ewentualnego konfliktu zbrojnego Sojuszu Północnoatlantyckiego z tym państwem jako pierwsze będą narażone na działania przeciwnika. Dlatego zabiegają one o wyrównanie poziomu bezpieczeństwa militarnego wszystkich członków organizacji.

Istotna zmiana architektury bezpieczeństwa państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej nastąpiła w 2017 r. w wyniku praktycznej realizacji dwóch zasadniczych inicjatyw zwiększających obecność wojsk sojuszniczych w tym regionie: amerykańskiej Inicjatywy Wzmocnienia Europy (European Reassurance Initiative, ERI) oraz Wzmocnionej Wysuniętej Obecności NATO (Enhanced Forward Presence, EFP). Celem opracowania jest przybliżenie zasadniczych założeń tych koncepcji oraz działań podejmowanych przez NATO i USA w ramach

• **Abstract** •

The aggressive, imperialistic policy of Russia – expressed inter alia in the armed attack on Georgia in 2008 and the conflict with Ukraine that has lasted since 2014 – made the NATO countries aware of the existence of a real threat from the Kremlin. States bordering the Russian Federation must be especially aware that in the event of a possible armed conflict between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the latter country, they will be the first territories falling victim to a possible Russian attack. Faced with such risk, these countries strive for evening up of the level of military security for all members of the organization.

A significant change in security architecture of the Central and Eastern Europe took place in 2017 as a result of practical implementation of two major initiatives increasing the presence of allied troops in the region: the European Reassurance Initiative (ERI) and the Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP). The aim of the present study is to introduce the basic goals and principles of the two above initiatives, as well as the activities undertaken by NATO and the USA in order to fulfill their commitments re-

realizacji przyjętych zobowiązań. Aktywność ta jest wyrazem solidarności, jedności i siły Sojuszu oraz powrotu tej organizacji do jej pierwotnej roli, jaką jest obrona zbiorowa wszystkich państw członkowskich.

lated thereto. Such activities are a manifestation of NATO's solidarity, unity and strength, and mark the return of this organization to its original role – which is the collective defense of all member states.

Słowa kluczowe: bezpieczeństwo militarne; konflikt; NATO; USA; Rosja; inicjatywa; obrona zbiorowa

Keywords: military security; conflict; NATO; USA; Russia; initiative; collective defense

Introduction

After collapse of the bipolar world order and end of the Cold War, Europeans started to believe that the peace established on the Old Continent would last forever, without requiring efforts to sustain it (Harpen, 2014). The image of a safe continent has been formed in the consciousness of societies of many countries – a continent in which all international disputes are resolved by peaceful means and not by the use of force. However, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine started in 2014 showed how complex, unstable, and even unpredictable is the contemporary security environment. It also awoke Europeans to the fact that security does not last forever by itself, that it is a state one must actively pursue at all times and by all means.

The aggressive, imperialistic policy of Russia – expressed inter alia in the armed attack on Georgia in 2008 and the conflict with Ukraine that has lasted since 2014 – made the NATO countries aware of the existence of a real threat from the Kremlin. On the other hand, incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation has shown how delicate a construct is international law, and how limited is the real capacity for its enforcement. There are fears that the aspirations of Russia have not ended there and will grow. Russia, encouraged by its successes to date and the lack of effective response from the international community will continue to test the limits of tolerance for its aggressive behavior in the international arena. It is not impossible that Moscow may, as it did in Ukraine, once more resort to the method of fait accompli. Particularly worrying is the scenario of a take-over of Ukraine in its entirety, or of Russia gaining dominion over the territory of some of the NATO member states[1].

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[1] Already in 2014, general Phillip Breedlove, commander of the NATO forces in Europe, estimated that Russia had concentrated enough forces along the border with Ukraine to execute an invasion and accomplish its main objectives in the Ukrainian territory in three to five days. Gaining control over eastern Ukraine would open for Moscow a land corridor to the Crimea, and gives

Poland and countries bordering the Russian Federation – occupying the so-called left flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization – must be especially aware that in the event of a possible armed conflict between NATO and Russia, they will be the first territories falling victim to a possible attack of the latter. Faced with such risk, these countries have for many years strived for evening up of the level of military security for all members of the organization[2]. This type of security determines the chances of survival and development of the Alliance member states thanks to their joint capacity to repel a potential aggressor. Consequently, one of the most important strategic objectives as concerns military security of Poland, as well as Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Bulgaria and Romania is a greater permanent presence of NATO soldiers on their respective territories, which could deter a possible attacker. These countries also point to the need for greater consolidation, solidarity and military cooperation among the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This is undoubtedly a decisive factor in increasing operational capabilities of the Organization, and thus in ensuring a real increase in the security level on our continent. Therefore the security policy of NATO, especially in relation to the region of Central and Eastern Europe, should be agile, dynamic and adapted on an ongoing basis to changes taking place in the turbulent security environment, in particular to the level of threats emerging for members of the organization. The Alliance is after all a large "family" of Euro-Atlantic states sharing the same values, such as liberty, democracy, human rights and freedoms – and it must be prepared to defend them. The Organization is viewed as a fundamental component of the Euro-Atlantic collective security. However, one must be aware that the basis of NATO's operational capabilities, and at the same time the foundation for the "security umbrella" in Europe is the American army with its deterrence potential, conventional as well as – or maybe especially – nuclear (Czulda, 2013). Thanks to the US presence on the Old Continent, European members of the Alliance have access to the huge military potential of their American ally, which is in fact the most important guarantee of security, especially for the Central-Eastern Europe.

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the possibility of connecting to Transdniestria, which since 1992 has been de facto independent of Moldova. A similar corridor leading to the Kaliningrad District could be created as a result of Russia seizing a part of Lithuania.

[2] Military security is defined as (own translation from a Polish source): "a state obtained as a result of maintenance of properly organized and equipped armed forces as well as military alliances, combined with having a concept for the strategic use of forces at one's disposal, according to the developing situation" (*Słownik terminów z zakresu bezpieczeństwa narodowego*, 2008).

Threats to the Region's Military Security

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has exacerbated relations between Moscow and NATO. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization could not afford to once again show itself as passive and undecided the way it did in the case of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, when during the summit in Bucharest no decisions of significance were made. A repeat of this situation would be another failure for NATO, politically as well as prestige-wise – and at the same time an incentive for Russia to continue its aggressive policies in the international arena. Experts estimate that the lack of a decisive political or military reaction of NATO in 2008 could have contributed to a large extent to Russia resorting to the use of force in Ukraine, especially in the take-over of Crimea. According to Harpen (Harpen, 2014) by this action Kremlin violated international laws, trampled on the sovereignty of an independent state and has thus begun unprecedented campaign intended to rebuild the past empire – and the plan and pattern of the next moves seems to be known only to Russian autocrats. Such provocative and aggressive behavior is still used by Russia, also in Moscow's relations with some NATO members. It is manifested in, inter alia, frequent violations of the airspace of such countries as Lithuania, Latvia or Estonia. Their objective is not only to reconnoiter the respective anti-aircraft defense systems of these states, but also to achieve psychological impact. Another hybrid war, carried out according to the Ukrainian scenario, is possible in these countries due to the significant percentage of Russian minorities living in their territory (Lithuania – 8%, Latvia and Estonia approx. 25%). In addition, there are also other incidents of military encounters between Russian planes and boats, and NATO forces and allies.

According to American experts, the most serious threat to the eastern flank of NATO is the Kaliningrad Oblast and the militarization of Belarus. The critical area is the so-called "Suwałki Gap". An attack by a small force of Russian troops stationed in the Kaliningrad District through this 100 km section adjacent to the Polish-Lithuanian border would be able to completely cut off the Baltic states despite their NATO membership. In addition, it would create favorable conditions for launching an attack into central Poland. A report by the Atlantic Council think tank shows that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization would not be able to defend its eastern border in the face of increasingly aggressive Russia. The RAND Corporation think tank warns that Russian forces would be able to reach Tallinn or Riga in under 60 hours (Jones, 2016). In the opinion of General Waldemar Skrzypczak, former commander of Polish land forces and former deputy minister of defense, to seize the Polish capital Russian troops would need mere

2–3 days if the defense was carried out by Poland alone, without any support from its allies (Bartkiewicz, 2016).

Experts from the Atlantic Council predict that NATO's response to a possible aggression by Russia would only be possible after around two weeks, provided that the forces of Poland's European allies had been mobilized sufficiently early and prepared for relocation (redeployment). On the other hand, the support of American forces, taking into account the time necessary to transport them to the European continent would take even as long as 3 months to organize.

The above leads to the conclusion that due to the long reaction time of NATO to the potential military threat from Russia, the best solution would be to deploy permanent NATO bases on the territories of its Central and Eastern European member states.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is also concerned about Russia's strengthening of its military potential. It is estimated that by 2020 as a result of modernization the percentage of new ordnance in the Russian armed forces will be no less than 70%. Similar disquiet is caused by the scenarios played out with the participation of Russian and Belarusian armed forces during the periodic military exercises *Zapad*, which give off a Cold War impression scale-wise. For example, the Russian maneuvers organized in 2015 involved almost 100,000 soldiers and 7 thousand tanks and artillery guns. The number and scope of exercises carried out by NATO in Europe are much smaller – to compare, the largest allied exercises in 2015 (codename *Noble Jump*) were carried out with the participation of 15 thousand soldiers and about 300 tanks.

As part of the sanctions, NATO member states decided in April 2014 to suspend all practical civilian and military cooperation with Russia, including within the NATO-Russia council – with maintenance though of political contacts at the level of ambassadors and above (Przybyła, 2016). Thus some communication channels were left open so that the parties would be able to start a political dialogue, especially one intended to resolve the crisis situation in Ukraine. NATO seeks to avoid another "cold war", so it does not undertake careless actions that would paralyze all forms of cooperation with Russia. On the other hand, the Alliance, and in particular the USA, demonstrated the attitude of readiness to defend the European order. Strengthening of the collective defense and evening up of security level of all NATO members in the entirety of their territories, especially of those located on the eastern flank, had been announced right after the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict in 2014 by both the then US President Barack Obama and the NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. However, in the end a significant increase in the security of Poland, the Baltic states, Romania and

Bulgaria was achieved only in 2017 as a result of practical implementation of two key concepts:

1. US program of *European Reassurance Initiative*, ERI;
2. NATO's *Enhanced Forward Presence*, EFP.

Both these programs have similar objectives. Their goal is primarily to strengthen the defense of Central and Eastern European states, especially through:

– creation of military bases in which soldiers would be stationed in a rotational system (continuous presence based on a rotational principle);
– relocation of allied command centers;
– increased number and intensity of joint trainings and military exercises;
– increasing the Alliance's response capabilities by, for example, deployment of machinery and equipment and development of infrastructure;
– strengthening and realignment of the so-called contingency plans containing real NATO action plans in case of aggression.

It can therefore be concluded that 2017 was a breakthrough year as concerns the changes in security architecture of the southern and eastern parts of our continent.

US Program of European Reassurance Initiative (ERI)

In response to the so-called Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014, US President Barack Obama decided to increase NATO's response capabilities to possible further destabilizing actions taken on the European continent. He announced his concept of raising the level of European security during a visit to Warsaw in 2014. As part of the ERI, Americans decided also to increase their military presence on the Old Continent. This will be implemented through, for example, participation of units stationed in the USA in military exercises in Europe, development of infrastructure, permanent deployment of parts of the US fleet in the Black Sea and in the Baltic Sea, or closer cooperation with countries that are not NATO members, such as Ukraine, Moldova or Georgia (Pacuła, 2016). The initiative is financed from the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) fund of the US Department of Defense. In 2017, the amount of USD 3.4 billion was allocated for this purpose, compared to USD 789 million in 2016 (European, 2016). Thanks to considerable financial resources allocated for implementation of the concept, the United States can indeed boast growing capabilities allowing to respond appropriately to the new challenges and threats emerging in Europe. The US can, inter alia, continuously maintain additional forces on the European territory – up to 5,000 soldiers – or create new infrastructure

elements, such as, for example, airbases or military ports for quicker redeployment of American reinforcement forces.

Practical implementation of the ERI took place as part of *Atlantic Resolve* operation, the largest US operation in Europe since the end of the Cold War. Its aim was to increase the US military presence by deploying US troops in Poland and in other flanking states. This applied in particular to additional Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) sent to Europe on a rotational basis. Their primary function is to deter Russia from a potential attack on NATO member states.

The main US military forces arrived on the European continent in January 2017. Over about three weeks, a total of over 4,000 troops and 2400 pieces of equipment were relocated. The core was the American *3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team* (*3rd ABCT*), created on the basis of the 3rd Armored Brigade of the US 4th Infantry Division. It was initially stationed at Fort Carson base in Colorado. Heavy equipment was transported by sea and unloaded in the German port of Bremerhaven, from where it was moved by road and rail to Poland. Soldiers with personal equipment were flown over by air. Sub-units were deployed in garrisons in the west of Poland, such as: Żagań (the largest forces), Świętoszów, Bolesławiec, Skwierzyna and the surroundings of Drawsko Pomorskie. The *3rd ABCT* is known as the "iron brigade". It is the best trained and equipped unit, and thus has also the largest operational capabilities – it numbers about 3.5 thousand soldiers and is equipped with 400 tracked vehicles and over 900 wheeled ones, including: 87 M1A2 Abrams tanks, 18 self-propelled Paladin howitzers, 144 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles and 419 Humvees (Glińska, Kowalska, 2017). Some of the sub-units were transferred from Poland to the Baltic countries (one battalion) and to Romania and Bulgaria (another battalion). American troops stay in Europe on a rotational basis; the contingents will be changed every 9 months.

As part of the ERI, the security of Central and Eastern European countries was also strengthened by American airmen. The transit of 10 heavy transport helicopters Chinook, 50 Black Hawks and approx. 2,000 soldiers from the *10th Tactical Aviation Brigade* from Fort Drum, New York to Europe began in February 2017. At the same time, about 400 soldiers and 24 Apache helicopters were transferred from the 18th Battalion of Combat Support from Fort Bliss in south-west USA. One of the aviation task teams was deployed in Poland as an advanced air base. Its task is air support for the activities of the 3rd ABCT. The team is stationed in Powidz and uses the infrastructure of the Polish 33. Transport Aviation Base, with which it closely cooperates. Other units were deployed in Latvia and Romania.

The US also decided to transfer its tactical command at the division level – *Mission Command Element*, MCE – from Germany to Poland. It was established

in 2015 in Baumholder near the border with France, as a so-called "intermediate" command element. The MCE operates on the basis of command structures of the 4th Infantry Division stationed permanently in the United States. The relocation of command from Baumholder to Poznań is the result of exercises and war games conducted as part of Operation *Atlantic Resolve*. Reducing the distance between the command center and the US troops from 1,200 to about 400 km will undoubtedly increase the command operational capabilities as concerns the eastern flank defenses, and thus the overall efficiency of the operations. It also means that the actions of over 6,000 American soldiers deployed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania or Bulgaria will be coordinated from Poland, what testifies to the key role of our country in the entire system.

NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP)

After 2014, the NATO leadership also changed its policy relating to strengthening the security of its members, especially those bordering on the Russian Federation. During the Alliance summit in the Welsh city of Newport in 2014, many decisions were made regarding the strategic directions of NATO's development. The most important achievement of the summit was the adoption of a new strategy, which as the very core and fundamental duty of NATO sees the collective defense of its members, in agreement with article 5 of the Washington Treaty. This is a clear signal to any potential aggressor that an attack on any one of the member states will be treated as an aggression on all countries belonging to the Organization. One can say that in 2014 NATO has returned to its roots, to its original, traditional function of ensuring security for all states within the Alliance.

Reinforcement of the eastern flank was indicated as a priority objective. Despite the postulates of Poland and the Baltic countries, the Alliance leadership did not decide to deploy permanent and significant forces in their territories – the obstacle was the lack of unanimity in the council, with countries such as Germany and the Netherlands disagreeing[3]. Both states expressed concern that this could be perceived by Russia as a violation of the *Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security* signed between NATO and Russia in 1997. In the

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[3] During the meeting in Weimar on March 31, 2014, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Radosław Sikorski asked the NATO leadership to deploy two 5,000-troops strong brigades of NATO forces in Poland. He stated that this would be a manifestation of the Alliance's readiness to protect all of its members. Germany and the Netherlands were not enthused by the idea.

said Act, in exchange for Russia's agreement to NATO's extending its membership to new countries, including Poland, the Alliance had agreed to refrain from deployment of nuclear weapons or significant conventional forces in permanent bases in the territories of the new member states. Consequently, it was anticipated that strengthening NATO's military presence in the countries neighboring Russia could lead to retaliation by that country. In the end it was decided that the optimal solution would be to strengthen the NATO Response Force (NRF) by increasing the number of soldiers from 13,000 up to 40,000. Units participating in the NRF are rotated by member states every year, and their main task is to serve as quick-reaction forces for collective defense until full mobilization of other NATO units.

As part of the NRF, a contingent of the so-called *Very High Readiness Joint Task Force* (VJTF) was created, which includes about 5,000 soldiers (equivalent to an enhanced brigade fighting group). It is known as a spearhead force, in constant high-readiness and therefore able to be quickly deployed in the territory of a threatened NATO member state – from a few hours to 2–3 days of receiving the relevant order. VJTF became fully action-ready at the end of 2016. The main troops of this spearhead force are detachments from the British 20th Armoured Infantry Brigade, but its composition includes also soldiers from 13 other countries, including Poland. However, there remain many questions that NATO commanders were not able to give a concrete answer to, concerning not only the methods of transporting soldiers and heavy equipment to distant operating theaters within such a short time. The most important doubts center on whether a force the size of a brigade provides adequate protection against the threat posed by the current potential of the Russian army? It must be objectively stated that the key strength of this spearhead force is more of a political rather than operational nature.

An important decision taken during the summit was to strengthen the command of the Multinational Corps Northeast headquartered in Szczecin and increase its readiness level. Thanks to this decision, the command now has the capacity to prepare and coordinate a collective defense operation on the eastern flank, undertaken by forces up to 60,000 soldiers.

NATO also decided to intensify its military activities to strengthen operational readiness and mark its presence in the east and south of Europe – the fact that over 300 different types of military exercises (*Declaration*, 2016) were carried out only in 2015 serves as evidence of this ambition.

To sum up, the NATO summit in Newport was a manifestation of unity among the allies. The agreements made there are undoubtedly important for increasing security of the south-eastern region of Europe, though in no way should they be

considered as groundbreaking. The key decisions which can indeed be termed as such were only taken during the next summit of the Alliance, in Warsaw in 2016. The aim of the summit was to diagnose the current security environment, assess the degree of implementation of conclusions from the Newport summit, and define the directions of NATO's transformation to adapt to new challenges and threats. Additional determinations were also made, the most important of which was the adoption of a new concept of NATO's *Enhanced Forward Presence*. It was decided the Organization would deviate from the arrangements adopted at the summit in Wales, according to which the defense of the member states located on the Alliance's eastern flank would be based on rapid strengthening of their defense with NFR forces in the event of a real threat. This concept was replaced with the initiative of enhanced presence of military allied forces in this region. This meant a fundamental change in NATO's approach to the defense of the Central and Eastern European countries. However, it was recognized that in order not to provoke a conflict with Russia the presence of allied troops would be of a defensive nature, in line with international agreements, especially the *Founding Act* of 1997, and aimed at shaping a stable environment outside the Alliance territory. It was decided to strengthen NATO's capabilities in the field of deterrence and defense using the entire range of resources at the disposal of the Organization (*Declaration*, 2016). The above is a key element of the concept of collective defense, and consists in ensuring the ability to respond to threats from different directions. Consequently, NATO has shifted its policy from that of reassurance of its allies, as was the case at the summit in Newport in 2014, into the policy of deterring Russia. Such change is a big achievement of the summit in Warsaw, especially in light of misaligned vision of various NATO member states as to the correct course of policy towards that country.

According to the adopted concept, the defense of the flanking states was strengthened by the deployment of four so-called battalion Battle Groups, one each in Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia. They are of a non-specialized nature, are independent and number about 1,000 soldiers from various Member States. Each group is therefore multinational, but has a so-called framework state, responsible for providing the command element and the majority of forces. The role of the framework state for the battalion Battle Group in Poland is played by the Americans, for Lithuania – by Germany, for the Battle Group in Latvia the lead nation is Canada, and for the one in Estonia – Great Britain. The groups are a tool intended to deter and stop a potential opponent that has now to reckon with the fact that by attacking any member state, they are attacking the entirety of NATO and must suffer the consequences.

The core of the battalion Combat Group deployed in Poland is made up of American soldiers. The group is quartered in the Land Forces Training Center at Bemowo Piskie, and trains on the training ground in Orzysz. It is thus stationed near the eastern flank, in the so-called Suwałki Gap, about 85 km from the border with the Kaliningrad Oblast. The Battle Group troops are included in the training system of the 15th Mechanized Brigade in Giżycko, with which they implement joint activities to improve operational capability.

The NATO battle battalions operate as independent divisions and are under control of the Multinational Division North East Headquarters Command in Elbląg, which coordinates the training process and commands the groups both during peacetime and real combat operations. In case of a threat, the groups will be supported by the NRF, of which the unit in permanent high-readiness – the spearhead – will be the first to take action. With the deployment of NATO battle groups in Poland and in the Baltic States, one can speak of creation of an early warning system of sorts, which if necessary will ensure a quicker response from the Alliance.

Countries on the eastern flank of NATO also count on intensified expansion of their infrastructure, including in particular seaports and military airports, training bases and railway lines. Such facilities are of strategic importance, as they allow for easier relocation and deployment of the NATO reinforcement forces into the relevant territory and create improved conditions for future combat operations.

Increased presence of NATO troops, and especially of US soldiers, in the CEE countries caused a sharp reaction of Russia, which claimed right away that it jeopardizes its interests and safety. In addition to the aggressive rhetoric of the leaders and politicians of this country, specific retaliatory actions were also taken. At the end of 2016, Russia deployed in the Kaliningrad Oblast the tactical missile systems *Iskander* with a range of 500–700 km as well anti-ship missile systems *Bastion* with a range of 300 km. The Russians also announced the strengthening of their western military district, through inter alia relocation of three new divisions on its western border. There are fears that the country will also terminate the Treaty on Elimination of Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles (INF), which may lead one more to an arms race. Russia also conducts cyclical offensive exercises near the border with Poland or/and the Baltic countries, including with simulated nuclear strikes. Some of them commence without prior notice (*snap exercises*). The exercises involve significant military potential, up to 150,000 soldiers (Dyner, 2016). All of the above actions may destabilize European security and lead the global community towards a next "cold war". However, it should be stated that the policy of continuous concessions to Russia's demands and wishes proved

to work contrary to expectations, and instead encouraged this state to continue its aggressive actions directed not only towards Ukraine, but also with respect to its other neighbors, including Poland.

Conclusion

To summarize the above discussion, one should start with the statement that the key determinant of security of all NATO members – and especially those in the most restless region of Europe – is solidarity within the Organization, which translates to exercising joint efforts and sharing responsibility by all of its members. For the Alliance to remain credible and fulfill its obligations it is also necessary for NATO to have at its disposal and in readiness military capabilities sufficient to ensure its ability to respond quickly and flexibly to new challenges and threats. Currently, such a threat to the countries in the south-eastern region of Europe is posed by Russia – and NATO should redefine its relationship with this state accordingly. Only strength, determination and firm attitude of all allies can deter a potential aggressor and thus prevent an outbreak of war. The policy of continuous concessions to the imperialistic aspirations of any given state has not worked in the past and will not bring the desired results also now and in the future.

Actions undertaken recently by NATO, and in particular by the US, to strengthen the eastern flank by increasing the presence of allied troops undoubtedly affect the security architecture in Europe, especially in its south-eastern part. They are a demonstration of solidarity, unity and strength of the Organization, and contribute to evening up of the level of security enjoyed by NATO members, a desire expressed explicitly by Poland and the Baltic states. They can also be viewed as a manifestation of NATO having returned to its traditional, primary role of ensuring the collective defense of its member states, in accordance with provisions of Art. 5 of the Washington Treaty. All this may prove to be an effective factor in deterring the potential aggressor – a light in which Russia is undoubtedly now considered. An attack on countries neighboring the Russian Federation would be at the same time an attack against the American, British and German troops as well as forces of other allies stationed in their territory – and thus also an armed attack on the entire Alliance.

When assessing the NATO-Russia relations in the near future, one can assume that they will not change fundamentally. Russia will continue to see NATO as a potential opponent (Juszczak, 2014). However, mutual relations should be based on a cold, realistic diagnosis, not negative emotions arising around events, such as

the situation in Ukraine. Both Russia and the NATO states must calculate which is more beneficial – escalation of mutual hostility and pursuit of confrontation, or a quick transition into negotiations mode and start of cooperation. A new "cold war" would not benefit anyone – it can only lead to a security threat for not only the European continent, but the entire globe.

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