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THE SYSTEM OF COLLECTIVE DEFENCE TOWARDS HYBRID THREATS IN EUROPE IN THE POST-BIPOLAR WORLD

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With the disappearance of the bipolarity of the world after the Cold War, the danger characteristic of that period became a thing of the past. The hope of building a world devoid of military rivalry and, as a result, of conflicts were growing. The experience of the Balkans, the tensions in the post-Soviet area and the continuing instability in the Middle East and North Africa region proved those expectations to be futile. The countries that are still on the road of confrontation at all costs want to avoid a direct collision. They look for and implement ways to achieve their goals on the verge of armed conflict. For this purpose, they use various possibilities, including technological ones. New hybrid threats are emerging. This article analyses the activities of the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union aimed at neutralizing the above-mentioned threats.

Key words: collective defence; hybrid threats; the North Atlantic Alliance; the European Union; the post-Cold War world.

СИСТЕМА КОЛЛЕКТИВНОЙ ОБОРОНЫ В ОТНОШЕНИИ ГИБРИДНОЙ УГРОЗЫ В ЕВРОПЕ В ПОСТБИПОЛЯРНОМ МИРЕ

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С исчезновением биполярности мира после холодной войны опасности, характерные для того периода, остались в прошлом. Росли надежды на создание мира, в котором не будет военного соперничества и, как следствие, конфликтов. Однако ситуация в балканских странах, напряженность на постсоветском пространстве и сохраняющаяся нестабильность в регионе Ближнего Востока и Северной Африки привели к тому, что эти ожидания оказались напрасными. Государства, которые все еще находятся на пути конфронтации, во что бы то ни стало хотят избежать прямого столкновения. Они ищут пути достижения своих целей в условиях вооруженного конфликта. При этом используются различные возможности, в том числе технологические. Появляются новые гибридные угрозы. В данной статье анализируется деятельность Североатлантического альянса и Европейского союза, направленная на нейтрализацию указанных угроз.

Ключевые слова: коллективная оборона; гибридные угрозы; Североатлантический альянс; Европейский союз; мир после холодной войны.

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As Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister in 1979–1990, said, "A sure defense is the foundation for everything". The North Atlantic Treaty, signed in 1949, was created with the idea of collective defence of its members. Collective defence was implemented at the very beginning of the organisation's existence as its statutory mission, resulting from Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. It plays three fundamental roles. It is an essential instrument of NATO's security policy, both as a conscious deterrent and as a real preparedness for active defence. It is the only undisputable plane of inter-conciliatory communication concerning the objectives of joint action and the members' own defence policies. And it is with it and its related military capabilities that the consideration begins other allied missions concerning collective or cooperative security – to be completed under the Pact. In all its tasks, with the exception of collective defence, NATO is being replaced by other international organisations operating in the global or regional space or loose coalitions of states [1].

The basis of NATO's collective defence is the assumption of active assistance which member states will provide for themselves in the event of an emergency. Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty specifies that an attack against one or more members of the Alliance shall be deemed by the others to be aggression against everyone. This will result in the activation of allied assistance to the attacked state, to the extent deemed appropriate by each NATO member – without excluding the use of armed force – in accordance with the principles of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter [2]. The questions about the kind of threat, who determines its level, how quickly to act and by what means remain open.

However, the provisions of the Treaty provide criteria for joint action, which should be taken into account in the decision-making processes of its signatories. The first was the assumption that the measures taken must be sufficient to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area. Admittedly, the Treaty did not define a measure of the "sufficiency" of these measures. It was then usually referred to in the defence planning process. There is no doubt, however, that they were intended to guarantee the credibility of the policy and the strength and effectiveness of action. Another factor in understanding the nature of joint action in the face of the threat was the expectation that the measures taken would be proportionate to the scale of the threat posed by armed aggression and to the defence capabilities of the individual states. Article 5 provides a solid point of reference for the preparation of collective defence, encouraging the pooling of forces and the solidarity of allies in this regard, as well as a deterrent policy [3].

It should be noted that the prospect of a broader understanding of the context of collective defence already emerged in the Cold War period. A clear example of this is the dualism of NATO's mission stated in the report by the North Atlantic Council, written under the direction of Pierre Harmel, the Belgian Foreign Minister, in 1967, because on the grounds of collective defence he set the allied ability to fulfil non-military tasks of the organisation as a tool for the political stabilisation of its strategic environment [4].

However, this aspect of security was constrained over decades by the persistently high level of Soviet aggression threat and the clear freezing of international cooperation in the field of security. The breakthrough for this type of activity came in 1989 with the fundamental changes that took place in the balance of power in the global dimension. In the changed situation, NATO countries faced the dilemma of dealing with a wider range of external threats. There was a growing awareness that sooner or later they could worsen the security situation of their allies. Modes of action towards them in relation to the mechanisms and resources of collective defence caused the necessity to re-evaluate the allied priorities. It should be made clear that, after 1989, the context of collective defence changed fundamentally, freed from an unequivocally perceived threat and full of multidimensional challenges and risks. Without it, however, NATO would not have existed then and would not exist today. It was within the framework of collective defence, characterised as a "broader approach to security", that the Alliance referred to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time in its history, following the terrorist attacks on facilities in New York and Washington in 2001 [5].

Contrary to the expectations, the new century has brought enormous changes in the security environment. The challenges currently facing the Alliance are serious and complex. Europe's security is threatened both by Russia's destabilising actions and by instability of different kinds involving different countries in the Middle East and North Africa Arc. Russia is threatening European security, undermining the integrity of sovereign states and trying to expand its influence in the "near abroad". It is pursuing a policy that undermines the credibility of NATO and the EU. Furthermore, Europe is vulnerable to terrorist attacks and must bear in mind the serious prospects of terrorist acts committed by organisations, individuals or ISIS fighters in the near future. Europe must face immediate security threats from North Africa, including terrorism and religious extremism, drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings, and the proliferation of arms [6].

It is increasingly worrying that, in the face of the threats outlined above, NATO's internal unity is under a big question mark. The unpredictable nature of the US foreign policy under President Donald Tump creates uncertainty about the US involvement in NATO and the values of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Since January 2017, NATO's largest member state, which since its creation in 1949, has become the Alliance's most important political and military pillar, has unexpectedly abandoned leadership. Relations with a strategically placed NATO member, Turkey, are becoming increasingly difficult as President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan pays less and less attention to his NATO allies. The imminent departure of the UK from the EU as a result of the Brexit referendum has seriously damaged the EU's global position [7].

Against the backdrop of a new security environment, NATO has once again been forced to rethink collective

defence as the Alliance's main task. The current lack of the US leadership combined with internal differences of opinion makes it difficult to agree on a new strategic concept. The Alliance redefined its priorities in a new Strategic Concept of the Alliance, entitled "Active Involvement, Modern Defence", which defined the Alliance's core tasks as collective defence, crisis management and collective security, and was presented at the 2010 Lisbon Summit of Member States' leaders [8].

Worries are compounded by the fact that the European allies do not agree on NATO's priorities. The Baltic States and Poland are afraid of Russia's expansion. On the other hand, some members of the governing coalitions in such countries as Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey sympathise with Russia. Southern European countries are particularly concerned about security threats from the Middle East and North Africa [9]. Internal disagreement is not a rarity in NATO, but the current divisions are seriously testing the unity of the Alliance. In a new security environment, NATO is once again forced to rethink collective defence as the Alliance's main task. The current lack of US leadership combined with internal differences of opinion makes it difficult to agree on a new Strategic Concept.

The decisions made during the summits in Newport in 2014 and in Warsaw in 2016 were determined by the growing conflict in Ukraine and the increasing political and military aggressiveness of Russia [10]. In political terms, they were of great importance for the restoration of the Alliance's military credibility. They strengthened collective defence and, above all, ended two decades of NATO's self-execution from the eastern flank. It was important to halt the decline in organisational capabilities in terms of military availability. The optimistic forecast of the evolution of threats, shaped in the earlier period, was abandoned [11].

In this context, cooperation between the EU and NATO in the security sphere has begun to gain a particular dimension. The collapse of the bipolar agreement had serious consequences for the transatlantic security architecture. Experience in the Balkans and Afghanistan has shown that the use of military means alone can be unsustainable. As a result, the NATO summit in Riga in 2006 adopted the concept of a comprehensive approach, under which the Alliance's actions were to use a combination of political, civilian and military instruments. At the same time, at the turn of the century, the process of political integration of Europe was intensified [12]. One of its elements was the growing conviction of Alliance members from Western Europe that the security interests of the European Union were separate from, but not necessarily contradictory to the transatlantic identity. In deciding to form the foundations of its own security and defence policy, it naturally fell within the remit of the North Atlantic Alliance, although not without resistance, as differences in terms of interests and strategic objectives emerged among the EU member states [13]. This state, taking into account the limitations of funds allocated for defence, posed a real threat to the Alliance and the EU's rivalry rather than cooperation.

This problem was solved at the North Atlantic Council summit in Berlin in 1996. At that time, the Alliance supported the development of a European identity in the field of security and defence within NATO, known as European Security and Defence Identity. The next step was the announcement in 2002 of the NATO – EU Joint Declaration on European Security and Defence Policy. It laid down the basic principles of cooperation within the framework of the EU – NATO strategic partnership [14]. It included respect for the decision-making autonomy and interests of both organisations, but also the mutual reinforcement of the development of military capabilities common to both organisations. Further rapprochement was ensured by the Berlin Plus agreement signed in 2003 under which the European Union took over responsibility after the allied mission *Allied Harmony* in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia under the *Concordia Mission* [15]. This allowed the creation of the NATO Permanent Liaison Team at the European Union Military Staff in 2005. A year later, an EU post at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe started operating. Cyprus' accession to the European Union in 2004 resulted in Turkey blocking the signing of an agreement on the exchange of classified information with NATO. In response, Cyprus blocked Turkey's accession to the European Defence Agency [16]. This created a serious impasse in the cooperation between the two organisations.

The joint declaration of the Presidents of the European Council, the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO, adopted in July 2006 in Warsaw, gave new impetus to cooperation. Due to that declaration, cooperation in selected areas was ensured. Its manifestation is the Alliance's support for the Union's actions to reduce human smuggling in the Aegean Sea [17]. Soon a decision was taken to support NATO's activities in the Mediterranean Sea as part of the *Sea Guardian* allied operation [18]. However, the mistrust between Turkey and Greece in the context of Cyprus and the supposed Brexit discrepancies regarding the degree of autonomy of the EU's actions in the sphere of defence, should also be noted. Thus, the cooperation between the two structures will consist in careful selection of the areas of interest. One such forward-looking area is the so-called hybrid threats.

The term "hybrid threats" became widespread in the public debate on international security after the annexation of Crimea by Russia. The concept of "hybrid wars" appeared in American military and analytical circles and was a part of the broader context of reflections on the nature of future armed conflicts [19–20]. The authors of this doctrine indicate the occurrence of irregular activities, acts of terror, criminal activities, elements of propaganda and disinformation activities in conflicts of a conventional nature [19, p. 13]. The National Security Bureau, an advisory centre to the President of the Republic of Poland, defines "hybrid war" as "combining at the same time various possible means and methods of violence, including in particular armed activities, regular and irregular operations, cyberspace operations and economic, psychological activities, information campaigns (propaganda), etc." [21].

Hybrid actions by their nature combine different, seemingly incompatible methods and means of combat. These activities are usually kept below the threshold

of war and direct military confrontation, constituting a key obstacle to the mobilisation of the means of military response, within the limits allowed by international law. An additional element that poses a serious challenge in the case of such threats is the problem of attribution of activities to specific actors. Typically, using hybrid methods, they take concealed, secret actions that affect state structures through third parties. At the same time, they carry out disinformation activities on a large scale. Countries with internal difficulties, weak state structures, internal divisions and thus sensitive to attempts at external destabilisation are particularly vulnerable to such impacts. The example of Russian activities in Ukraine and the ISIS strategy in Syria and Iraq underlines the importance of building state resilience as a key element in preparing for hybrid threats. This means that it is up to each country to address such challenges. However, the complexity of the civil-military nature, the dynamic nature and practically unlimited possibilities of extending the crisis beyond the territory of one country, make hybrid threats a challenge for the European Union and NATO.

In 2008, the North Atlantic Alliance drafted the first policy document in this area, following a series of cyber attacks on public and private institutions in Estonia. Since then, specialised structures dealing with cyber security have been set up, such as the NATO Communications and Information Agency and the NATO Computer Incident Response Capability and most recently the European Center of Exellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki. During the summit in Newport in 2014, a decision was made to adapt these threats to the sphere of collective defence under the Readiness Action Plan [22]. During the Warsaw Summit, the Alliance recognised cyberspace as a domain of operational activities. Within the framework of the allied actions in 2015, Poland adopted its own Cyber Security Doctrine of the Republic of Poland, the aim of which is to ensure the safe functioning of the state in cyberspace, including an adequate level of security of national information and communication systems, especially information and communication critical infrastructure [23].

However, the activities of the Alliance are not limited only to threats in cyberspace. Following the Newport agreement in December 2015, the NATO strategy against hybrid threats was adopted, which set out the Alliance's key capabilities and adaptation directions in terms of preparedness, deterrence and defence. These included strengthening collective defence, crisis management, resilience building and civilian preparedness of Member States [24]. It was stressed that such threats are also the reason for triggering the Alliance's response on the basis of Article 5 of the Washington Treaty [25]. These issues were addressed by the Alliance leaders at the Warsaw Summit. The Communiqué of this meeting drew attention to the Member States' responsibility for building resilience, pointing out the Alliance's supportive role at every stage of hybrid action against them [26]. The possibility of activating the collective defence clause in Article 5 in the event of such threats was confirmed. At the same time, the need for closer cooperation and coordination with other partners was highlighted, with particular reference to the European Union [26].

Similarly, at the beginning of 2016, the European Communities outlined a common framework to counter hybrid threats and strengthen the resilience of the European Union, its Member States and partner countries and to strengthen cooperation with NATO to counter these threats. These decisions became necessary after the EU and its Member States were increasingly confronted with hybrid threats in previous years, including hostile action to destabilise the region. The adopted framework defines the concept of hybrid threats and points to the need for a flexible approach that takes into account the changing nature of such threats. A combination of repressive and subversive actions, conventional and unconventional methods (diplomatic, military, economic and technological), which can be used in a coordinated manner by state and non-state actors to achieve specific objectives, have been identified as hybrid threats. Typically, the vulnerability of a target to threats and the creation of ambiguities are used to hamper decision-making processes [27].

According to Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, there have been radical changes in the security environment in recent years due to the increase in hybrid threats at the borders of the European Union. It is necessary to further strengthen the links between internal and external security [28]. Elżbieta Bieńkowska, Commissioner for the Internal Market, Industry and Entrepreneurship, took a similar position, pointing out that the European Union must become a guarantor of security, able to adapt to common hybrid threats. Built on strategies such as the European Agenda on Security, the European Cyber Security Strategy, the Energy Security Strategy and the European Union Strategy for Maritime Security, the adopted framework includes twenty-two operational actions aimed at: raising awareness of hybrid threats, strengthening resilience, preventing crises with a response and overcoming them, and enhancing cooperation between the EU and NATO and other partner organisations [28].

Coordinating the activities of the European Union and NATO in the field of counteracting hybrid threats should be considered a natural process. In December 2015, during the North Atlantic Council meeting, Jens Stoltenberg and Federica Mogherini agreed on areas of potential cooperation between the two structures. Among the many areas of closer cooperation, cooperation against hybrid threats was identified [29]. Concretisation of the framework for cooperation between the two organisations was undertaken during the NATO summit in Warsaw in July 2016. The Joint Declaration indicating the key areas of cooperation was signed. The ability to combat hybrid threats was indicated as one of the seven priority areas of cooperation between the Union and the Alliance. Another area of cooperation was the preparation of cooperation procedures. In subsequent years, the results of mutual cooperation were presented at various levels. Particularly with regard to the possibility of hybrid threats, joint action taken should be considered satisfactory.

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