

Madrid NATO Summit

Towards a more pragmatic and decisive Strategic Concept

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ADAPTING to the future is an ongoing challenge that requires an open mind and a broad view on the trends that inspire the decisions and actions of any structure. And NATO, as an international organisation of sovereign democratic states, is not immune to this dynamic. After 73 years of history, with 30 member states and 40 partners, NATO is in the midst of a reflection process that should lead to the adoption of a new Strategic Concept in Madrid next June, thus paving the way for its actions in both its political and military dimensions. This will be a historic milestone, coinciding with the drafting of the EU's Strategic Compass and, in the case of Spain, with the 40th anniversary of our NATO membership and the 25th anniversary of the 1997 Madrid Summit. The geostrategic landscape has changed a great deal since then. The philosopher Isaiah Berlin said that "to understand is to perceive patterns" and every structure has patterns that allow us to analyse experiences and combine them with the skills developed since its inception in order to set new objectives. Indeed, the flexibility shown by the Atlantic Alliance since the signing of the Washington Treaty on 4 April 1949 has enabled it to overcome the demands of an ever-changing strategic environment based on common values, such as democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law, which are still the source of its strength.

This has been manifested in the various NATO Summits of Heads of State and Government and in the successive NATO Strategic Concepts, from the classified documents issued during the Cold War to those published when it ended, agreed in Rome (1991), Washington (1999) and Lisbon (2010), the latter currently in effect. Each and every one of them has reflected the parameters of allied strategy and its adaptation to the different strategic challenges, enabling significant internal divisions among allies to be

overcome thanks to the unique consultation mechanism that NATO represents.

Several key factors explain the importance of the current moment of reflection with a view to adopting a new Strategic Concept in Madrid. The volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and unpredictable nature of today's strategic environment increasingly requires a common will and effort to overcome a whole range of challenges, risks and security threats —not necessarily of a military nature— with ever more demanding human and material capabilities and resources. This has been evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and other traditional and new challenges, triggered primarily by the strategic competition between major powers, in particular in areas where their strategic interests converge. All the more so when the main ally, the US, has presented its Global Posture Review, placing the Indo-Pacific region as the primary focus of attention. This affects not only international security but also the Atlantic Alliance as a whole. Strengthening its unity and cohesion with a more global vision is crucial to anchor its political and military position in the present and future international system.

FROM LISBON TO MADRID

The main strength of NATO's Strategic Concepts is the clear and rigorous definition of the common aspirations of the allies to meet those goals together, bearing in mind their common interests, security risks, threats, theatres of action and key missions or

NATO must strengthen its political dimension by fostering cohesion and solidarity

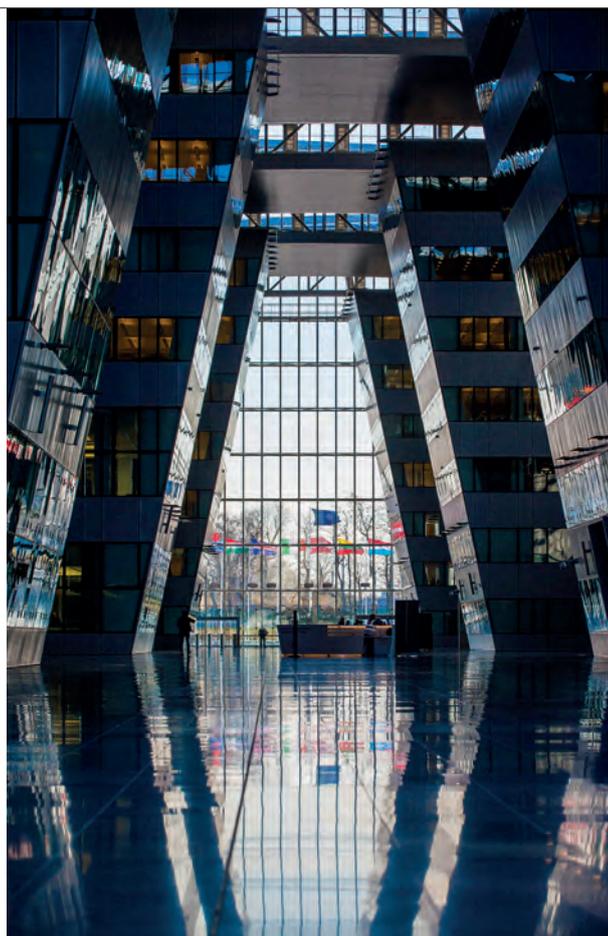
tasks in order to address them. This political document has changed its approach over the past decades, giving rise to new initiatives in response to the demands identified, while respecting the purposes and principles of the UN Charter as set out in the Washington Treaty and the motto that embodies its philosophy: *Animus in Consulendo Liber* - free spirit to decide.

The Lisbon Strategic Concept, officially called Active Engagement Modern Defence, expanded the Alliance's tasks well beyond collective defence —represented in article 5— in order to include crisis management across the whole spectrum of conflict and cooperative security, through new partnerships with “relevant countries and other international organisations”.

At the time, the Euro-Atlantic area was perceived to be more peaceful and to pose a low-level traditional conventional threat. Likewise, the Lisbon Concept expanded NATO's theatre of action to deter and defend against any threats to the security of its populations, even at strategic distances, as the allied mission in Afghanistan has done for the past twenty years.

Today, the situation is quite different from that of the past decade. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the emergence of the self-proclaimed *Islamic State* in the Middle East had a clear impact on NATO's strategy. On the one hand, it involved the return to new deterrence and defence measures with forward presences on allied territory and, on the other, the Alliance's contribution to the fight against terrorism, first by supporting and then by joining the US-led Global Coalition against *Daesh*.

However, while the Alliance does not recognise any country as an adversary in the Lisbon Strategic Concept (paragraph 16), tensions and concerns among Allies have increased due to Russia's revisionist tendencies, China's geostrategic and economic rise, and the military relations between the two. The current crisis in and around Ukraine and other factors related to the arms control regime, the modernisation of the conventional



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and nuclear arsenal with new hypersonic missile systems, the interest of both powers in cyberspace and the development of their space careers, can only confirm this.

In this context, actions by hostile agents that are difficult to attribute, whether of state or non-state origin, in the so-called “grey zone”, without even crossing the threshold of an armed aggression, lead to uncertainty and confusion in the country concerned, both in its institutions and population. Thus, in addition to the traditional physical spaces —land, sea and air— we need to pay more attention to new operational domains, such as cyberspace, outer space and maritime space. These are global commons that have a direct bearing on the security and well-being of citizens. Furthermore, the cognitive domain is also acquiring a more prominent

role, especially when it comes to maliciously influencing society's perception of reality through disinformation or manipulation, hence the importance of strategic communication in understanding and shaping the information environment.

This scenario comes hand in hand with a technological revolution resulting from the development of artificial intelligence, the internet of things and the use of disruptive and emerging technologies, as well as from the deterioration of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime, and the persistence of armed conflicts and instability in regional areas of special interest to Spain, such as the Middle East, the Mediterranean and the Sahel. In addition, other challenges of a transnational nature persist, such as terrorism, illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons, cybersecurity, maritime and energy security, mass irregular migration, human and drug trafficking, money laundering, the effects of climate change and, in the last two years, a global health crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic, which continues to have an impact at the political, economic and social level.

In light of these important developments, NATO leaders, meeting in London in December 2019, agreed to initiate a reflection process within the Alliance to adapt its roles and tools

to the challenges and threats of the 21st century. Thus, the NATO Secretary General appointed a group of ten experts, whose final report “NATO 2030: United for a New Era”, presented in November 2020, involved the participation of numerous institutions, young people, and representatives of civil society and the private sector. It includes 138 recommendations, which inspired the discussions leading up to the adoption of the NATO 2030 Agenda at the 2021 Brussels Summit, where it was announced that Madrid would host the next Summit of Heads of State and Government in June 2022 and that the new Strategic Concept would be adopted.

NEW PRIORITIES

The fact that NATO has been carrying out tasks well beyond those initially conceived in the Washington Treaty, evolving from a defensive alliance to a security provider outside the North Atlantic area (article 6), shows its flexibility, while also raising the need to adjust its priorities to the new demands of the strategic scenario described above.

What was global has now become local and vice versa, reviving concepts such as human security, which is now an integral part of national security as we, the people, realise that our well-being depends on what happens in other parts of the world, which requires greater international engagement to address global challenges that impact our way of life.

NATO is thus taking a new step forward and the allies must agree on the new challenges and threats it will face and, therefore, determine the security and defence tasks and how they should be carried out and with what means. Thus far, the Atlantic acquis and the new trends currently taking shape allow us to gain an initial insight into Madrid's new Strategic Concept.

First, NATO must strengthen its political dimension by fostering cohesion and solidarity among its members based on the principle of indivisible security. A renewed commitment to political consultations (article 4) on all issues regarding its security and coordination among allies is essential to link NATO's unity to the necessary consensus within the North Atlantic Council, thus preventing any potential adversary from taking advantage of division with regard to any individual threat perception. In this regard, coherence must be ensured between the instruments of civilian-military power at its disposal, of both its allies and partners willing and able to support the Alliance in the defence of their shared interests and objectives.

Second, NATO must strengthen its military toolbox by deterring and defending against any potential attack on its territory. While the Lisbon Strategic Concept eliminated any reference to the “armed” nature of the aggression and extended the preservation of peace and security to the Euro-Atlantic area, the Madrid Concept must be more explicit in its commitment to protect NATO territory, forces and populations from the full range of threats to its security with a 360-degree functional and geographic approach in all domains and at all stages (peace, crisis or conflict).

On the other hand, a more integrated defence, with deterrent capabilities —conventional, nuclear, cyber and missile defence— ready to be deployed at any time and place, requires a flexible, agile and modern command and force structure, guaranteeing technological advantage and military superiority at all times.

NATO must cooperate with more partners and engage more stakeholders in promoting peace and security

Third, NATO must adapt its resources to the needs required and advance in the commitments made at the 2014 Wales Summit. Traditionally, the principle of “costs lie where they fall”, based on the allies' voluntary contributions, has been a disincentive for them to participate in NATO missions. The possible extension of the common funding of the military budget could favour more equitable burden-sharing to contribute to the costs associated with the deployment of personnel, forces, capabilities and

training devoted to the defence of the allies. This would contribute to a more balanced metric of allied contributions to the three Cs: Cash, Capabilities and Commitments.

Fourth, NATO operations, missions and activities should focus on prevention, management and response to crises, both within and beyond its borders, supporting civilian authorities in emergencies when so required —as has been shown by the pandemic— and promoting human security, local ownership, a comprehensive approach and regional engagement in conflict resolution.

Against this backdrop, NATO's mission in Afghanistan does not imply the Alliance's disengagement from this country's security situation. It is in the interest of all of us that this country does not once again turn into a sanctuary for terrorists and, therefore, NATO will continue working in this line. Likewise, missions in Iraq and within the framework of the Global Coalition against Daesh, as well as NATO's actions to reinforce its various flanks, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, will continue to be on the Alliance's agenda.

Fifth, NATO can cooperate with more partners and engage more stakeholders in promoting peace and security. Building peaceful and friendly international relations, as envisaged in article 2 of the Washington Treaty, is of utmost importance here. As the 2021 Brussels Summit Communiqué (paragraph 6.e) points out, a more global approach in defence of a rules-based international order can enable the establishment of new relationships with other relevant interlocutors beyond the Euro-Atlantic area, including Africa, Asia or Latin America, on a case-by-case basis and with each new partner deciding on its own level of interaction with the Alliance.

Beyond its relations with the UN, the work of the EU's *Strategic Compass* deserves special mention and, in particular, the future NATO-EU declaration to advance a strategic partnership that was born twenty years ago. Not surprisingly, their approaches to security and defence must be consistent and complementary, and at all times avoid duplication of efforts in the new areas of cooperation they decide upon together. Even more so when European strategic autonomy reaches its full potential, primarily in missions and operations in which NATO —and the United States— are not involved.

The current moment of reflection should also be used as an opportunity for NATO to be perceived by its citizens as an organisation that is open and responsive to their concerns, as this would improve its image in the eyes of national public opinion. In this regard, campaigns such as *#NATOEngages* or *#ProtectTheFuture*, promoted by the Public Diplomacy Division, can serve as a bridge for governments, national parliaments, think tanks and associations to help foster greater public awareness and trust in this institution, which protects and defends the security of one billion people. Although there is no institutional link between NATO and the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, its work is crucial to help build new consensus among democracies and bring NATO policies closer to the people. The Atlantic Treaty Association and other like-minded civil society organisations can, by collaborating as a network, turn the bottom-up approach to Euro-Atlantic security culture and beyond into a reality.

Finally, other cross-cutting issues, such as resilience, strategic communication, the impact of climate change on

security and the gender perspectives must be integrated into the future Madrid Strategic Concept, since they affect NATO's three core tasks under the existing Strategic Concept. These are national responsibilities and, at the same time, collective commitments, based on article 3 of the Washington Treaty.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The Madrid Strategic Concept will therefore be decisive in redesigning the NATO of the future, as a key player in a hyper-nodal world of the new digital era, more open and participatory regarding the contribution of new stakeholders. This is in line with the appeal launched by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in the report entitled "Our Common Agenda", presented to the United Nations General Assembly on 10 September 2021. In his opinion, alliances and partnerships can contribute a great deal at the regional and global level in promoting peace and security by collaborating with other stakeholders such as regional organisations, civil society, young people, international financial organisations, the private sector and academia.

Preserving NATO's essence as a collective defence organisation, the very backbone of the Alliance, can and must be complemented by working towards a more interconnected multilateralism, based on respect for human rights and the desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments, as stated in the preamble of the Washington Treaty.

We might be going through the worst period since the end of the Cold War, but the lessons of history invite us to continue with what works: the transatlantic link, which has enabled to preserve peace and stability in allied territory for more than seven decades. And, above all, to continue working to accommodate the positions of the allies and their partners on broader security issues as a community of shared values and interests, always open to the participation of new members.

The Madrid Summit will most definitely show that the Atlantic Alliance no longer sees the world through a single prism, but through a multifaceted lens open to the complexity and variety of the new international reality. Thus, as in Isaiah Berlin's famous metaphor, it has gone from being a hedgehog to contemplating the world as a fox.



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