

BOGDAN KLICH

Senator in the Polish Parliament, Chairman of the Foreign and EU Affairs Committee in the Polish Senate

Karl Kaiser, Senior Associate of the Project on Europe and the Transatlantic Relationship, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University

I turn to Bogdan Klich, former Defense Minister of Poland, who of course is particularly involved in organizing the security relationship between Europe and the US.

Bogdan Klich

Thank you very much. Karl, I will not concentrate on the history, even recent history between our meeting in Rabat and here, although so much happened that it would be necessary to mention it. I will concentrate on the current threats and challenges perception, without going too far and beyond the traditional Euro-Atlantic area. I will say a few words about Russia, NATO, and the response of the European Union.

Without doubt, Russia remains an aggressive and disruptive power that has challenged the international order in Ukraine, which we were talking about two and three years ago. It has shown that it is ready to use force overseas, then in Syria, now in Libya and also in the Sahel, where we should emphasize the presence of Wagner units. Russia is trying to re-integrate as big part as possible of the post-Soviet space and we are witnessing the soft annexation of Belarus, which is not recent but began before the Freedom Revolution there but accelerated recently. Russia will undoubtedly interfere with the political processes of the West, mainly with elections as it did in 2016 in the US and 2015 in my country, trying to deepen divisions in the West both in NATO and the European Community. I am convinced that Russia will try to establish a dominant military position in the Arctic, and we should take that into serious consideration, although this rivalry between powers and various actors is not so clear at the moment. We will also continue to set up new relationships in Africa, playing in the Middle East an important and influential role. On the other hand, one should be aware of Russia's disadvantages, in particular, the small size of its economy which creates only around 2% of the global GDP and its dependence on energy prices. Let us also take into account its advantages which include large conventional forces, modernized weapons of mass destruction, energy resources and aggressive foreign policy, as we can see especially over the last decade. While China is a big challenge for Europe, Russia creates a threat for Europe and especially for Central Europe.

What about NATO in these circumstances? Of course, we are waiting for a new Strategic Concept because the current one is outdated. I took part in shaping the Lisbon Strategic Concept in 2010 and we should remember that among its three essential objectives, the second, i.e. the crisis management, was put aside and will not be introduced in years or even



decades. The withdrawal from both the ISAF mission and recently the Resolute Support Mission, shows that there is crisis management fatigue, and the alliance will not easily return to this task. The third objective, the international cooperative security model, no longer exists because it was based on the assumption that dialogue and cooperation are better than confrontation. Frankly speaking, it was blown up by the invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops, in both the Crimea and Donbass, and it has not been replaced by any other security concept. From the current Strategic Concept only the first essential task remains, and this is deterrence and collective defense.

The next Strategic Concept has to be extended and must incorporate the current challenges and tasks, stemming not only from Russian but also Chinese foreign security policy, as well as responding to the current main threats, for example, energy or cyberthreats. The “NATO 2030” report is a kind of indicator of what could be and what, in my opinion, should be introduced to this concept and into the practice of the Alliance. First of all, that is real NATO political unity. During President Trump’s administration we witnessed very good military cooperation but with a bad political dialogue within NATO. Such political unity and improvement in the transatlantic political link should be the main task for the Alliance. Second, it is important to have a return to those values that are crucial for both NATO and the EU, which were presented in 1949 in the preamble of the Washington Treaty: democracy, the rule of law, human rights, political liberties, etc. That should create the real basis for cooperation between nations. Of course, I do not exclude national interests and they will be the driving force for the alliance, but this ethical basis should be reinforced. Third, cooperation with the European Union was an important part of the report, not only the political but also institutional cooperation. I will try to continue this in the discussion because inside the EU right now we are recovering from the crisis of political will. And the development of the Common Security and Defense Policy, with the creation of the European Defense Fund, the activation of PESCO, and a CARD mechanism, implementation of the Global Strategy of the EU is visible. However, we are also facing another possible crisis connected with financial challenges because of the consequences of coronavirus. Thank you.

Karl Kaiser

Thank you, Bogdan. We should really come back to this question of reconciling Atlantic and European approaches to deal with the security because it is absolutely central in the wake of the present crisis between the United States and Europe on the issues mentioned before.