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**NATO-RUSSIA RELATIONS AFTER
THE CHICAGO SUMMIT**

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Abstract:

In spite of the fact that the recent Chicago Summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) did not coincide with a NATO-Russia Council Summit, in the final Declaration endorsed by the Chiefs of State and Government of the allied countries there are many references both to the Russian Federation and to several topics of common interest, something that, without any kind of doubt, will condition the bilateral relation in the near future.

Keywords:

NATO, Russia, frozen conflicts, antimissiles shield, Afghanistan.

INTRODUCTION

The NATO Chicago Summit took place on May 20 and 21st, and in it the Heads of State and Government of the 28 allied states adopted several documents¹ on the three main matters the Summit's program was based on: the calendar of the ISAF (*International Security and Assistance Force*) operation in Afghanistan and the support to be lent to the Government of Kabul beyond 2014; the “*Smart Defense*” initiative to obtain military capabilities in a restrictive budget scene; and the boost of the NATO associations to accomplish one of its basic missions, Cooperative Security (the other two are Collective Defense and Crisis Management).

As it was detailed in a previous Analysis Document of the IEEE², on this occasion the Summit did not coincide with a NATO-Russia Council Summit, and therefore there was not high level representation of this country in Chicago. However, there were many references to Russia, both explicit and implicit, especially in the “Declaration of the Chicago Summit” on which the analysis of this document will be focused.

THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The commitment of NATO to achieve a safe and stable Afghanistan, which will not turn into a terrorist sanctuary ever again, was reiterated in the Summit. Until December 2014 a calendar of progressive transference of security responsibility to the Afghan forces will be followed and after that date the combat operations of the ISAF will end and NATO will plan a new mission based on the support and training of the Afghan forces, for which the presence of foreign troops in the country and an international community funding of approximately 4,000 million dollars per year will be necessary to maintain the Afghan forces of approximately 300,000 soldiers.

(¹) See *North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Chicago Summit (20-21 de mayo)*, IEEE, May 2012, available at: <http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/ChicagoSummitDeclaration.pdf>

(²) See RUIZ GONZÁLEZ Francisco J., *Perspectivas de Rusia ante la próxima Cumbre de Chicago de la OTAN*, IEEE Analysis Document, 22/2012, May 15, available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2012/DIEEEA22-2012_Perspectivas_de_Rusia_ante_la_Cumbre_de_Chicago_de_la_OTAN_FJRG.pdf.

In the case of Afghanistan, the interests of Russia and NATO coincide, since a hurried exit of international troops and the Taliban regaining power in Kabul, or at least them controlling some areas of the country, would destabilize the whole of Central Asia and bring closer to the frontiers of the Federation problems such as religious radicalization and organized crime. One of Russia's main worries is the production and traffic of opiates in Afghanistan³, so many of its cooperation initiatives with the Government of Kabul have been based on this matter, such as a program of the "NATO-Russia Council" in which 2,000 Afghans have been trained to act against the cultivation of the poppy plant.



Figura 1: Asia Central como búfer de seguridad para Rusia

Although it seems unviable that Russia would deploy troops in Afghanistan, given the traumatic experience of the USSR in the 80s of the last century, it is almost certain that it will continue supporting the Government of Karzai, and that in the future it will contribute economically to the sustenance of its Armed Forces. It should be noted that Russia shares with Kazakhstan a 7,000 km land border in a steppe which is impossible to reinforce, so the

⁽³⁾ The number of drug-addicts in Russia is between two and three million people, mainly young people, of which 50,000 die every year. 20% of the world heroin consumption takes place in Russia, and 90% of what is consumed in the Federation comes from Afghanistan, approximately 35 tons per year. Figures obtained from the RIA Novosti Agency, <http://sp.rian.ru/>.

Central Asian republics are its first defense line against the instabilities from the Indian Subcontinent and Afghanistan itself.

NATO AND RUSSIA IN THE COMMON NEIGHBORHOOD

The coincidence of vision and objectives in Afghanistan between Russia and NATO is not produced regarding the security situation in Europe and the so called “frozen conflicts” which persist in the common neighborhood. In this case, NATO makes a clear distinction between the Western Balkans, where it supports without hesitation the independence of Kosovo although it has not been recognized by several of its members, and the post-Soviet space⁴, where the Atlantic Alliance dedicates the law of Moldavia (Transdniestria), Georgia (South Ossetia and **Abkhazia**), Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabaj) to its territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence.



Figure 2: Map of the “frozen conflicts” in the post-Soviet space

Therefore, in several passages of the Declaration Russia is urged to cancel its recognition of the Independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the war of August 2008, it is asked to comply with all the commitments of the ceasefire fostered by the European Union in 2008, or to reactivate the “FACE Treaty” of mutual confidence and conventional disarmament

⁽⁴⁾ See RUIZ GONZÁLEZ Francisco J., *Conflictos en el espacio post-soviético: situación actual y posible evolución futura*, Boletín de Información del CESEDEN, num. 319, available at: <http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasActividades/2011/BI-CESEDEN 319 Conflictos en el espacio post-sovietico.pdf>.

measures, suspended since 2007. For its part, Moscow considers that the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008 opened the door to similar processes in other countries, and that as a consequence South Ossetians or Abkhazians have the same right as the Western countries have recognized for the Kosovo Albanians, therefore it is unthinkable that it would reconsider its recognition of those Georgian regions as sovereign states.

Precisely, in relation to Kosovo, NATO mentions that its KFOR operation responds to the mandate of Resolution 1244 (1999) of NATO, in support of the development of a peaceful, stable and multiethnic Kosovo, but it later asks Serbia to support the efforts to consolidate peace and stability in Kosovo (what after the unilateral declaration of independence of 2008 is equivalent to accepting the loss of sovereignty over that part of its territory) if it wishes to continue its way towards European integration, and urges Belgrade and Pristine (in condition, therefore, of sovereign equality) to take advantage of the opportunities to promote peace, security and stability in the region. Paradoxically, this NATO Declaration coincides in time with the election of the nationalist Tomislav Nikolic as new President of Serbia, who has rushed to create closer ties with Russia in a meeting with President Putin⁵.

THE BILATERAL RELATION NATO-RUSSIA

Regarding the specific relation between NATO and Russia, it can be colloquially declared that the "Chicago Declaration" offers *the stick and the carrot*. On the positive side, it is mentioned that:

- NATO-Russian co-operation is of strategic importance and contributes to create a common space of peace, stability and security.
- The objectives, principles and compromises of the "NATO-Russia Founding Act" of 1997 and of the "Rome Declaration" of 2002, of which it is the 10th anniversary, are reiterated.

⁽⁵⁾ See "Rusia concederá a Serbia 800 millones de dólares para desarrollo de infraestructuras", RIA Novosti (26.5.2012), available at <http://sp.rian.ru/economy/20120526/153860963.html>.

- They have common security interests and are facing common challenges, which are shown in the active collaboration in Afghanistan, in the fight against international terrorism or in the actions against maritime piracy in the Horn of Africa.

However, and on the negative side, it is mentioned that:

- The differences in specific matters have prevented the use of the “NATO-Russia Council” in all its potential, so it is necessary to improve mutual confidence, transparency and predictability.
- NATO announces it will communicate to Moscow *“the worries of the allies concerning the intentions of Russia regarding military deployment near the borders of the Alliance”*. As the mentioned “Foundation Act” of 1997 established that NATO and Russia do not consider each other opponents, it is especially relevant this worry about what the Federation might decide to do inside its frontiers.

The reality is that the enlargement of NATO in 2004 to include seven new countries of the previous communist bloc also incorporated to the scope on the Alliance its security cultures, which in some cases consider Russia a threat even to their territorial integrity. Therefore, NATO always has to carry out an equilibrium exercise between some Western allies (such as France and Germany) which consider Russia a key strategic partner with which they want to increase cooperation, and some Eastern countries which demand that the Collective Defense mission of the Alliance protect them, above all, from Russia. This irresolvable dichotomy is expressed in Declarations such as the one of the Chicago Summit, and they are the reason of the apparent contradictions in their content.

Finally, a special mention should be made of the NATO missile shield. The Declaration of the Summit reiterates that this capacity is merely defensive, that it is targeted against threats from outside the Euro-Atlantic zone, and that it will not decrease the strategic capabilities of nuclear deterrence. Thus, it plans to continue negotiating with Moscow how the two independent antimissile defense systems, of NATO and Russia, can work together to strengthen European security, and it plans to create several “Coordination Centres” to transfer information and operation plans of antimissile defense.

Figure 3: NATO states which have confirmed their participation in the Missile Shield



CONCLUSION

There have been no surprises during the Chicago Summit concerning the position of NATO regarding Russia, so there will not be great changes, in the immediate future, in the bilateral relation.

In 2001 Michael McFaul, current Ambassador of the USA in Moscow, wrote that *“Developing policies to contain enemies or hugging allies is easy; configuring policies towards strategically important States such as Russia, which are neither friends nor enemies, it’s a lot harder”*⁶. This is still NATO’s dilemma in its relation with Russia: considering it a threat against which to articulate its collective defense or considering it a strategic partner with which it shares interests and values.

⁽⁶⁾ MCFAUL Michael, “Realistic Engagement: A New Approach to American-Russian Relations”, *Current History*, Vol. 100 No. 348, available at en <http://www.cdi.org/russia/johnson/5500-5.cfm>.

While this matter continues unsolved, the contradictions put forward in this Document will continue to prevail in the relations, and Russia will continue not to perceive an added value in cooperating with the Atlantic Alliance as a whole, in the framework of the NATO-Russia Council, prioritizing its bilateral relations with key Western States.

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