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**THE NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY FROM  
BUCHAREST  
A LANDMARK OF NATO STRATEGY CONTINUITY**

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**Abstract:** The NATO Parliamentary Assembly that took place in Bucharest between 07 and 10 October, 2011 and gathered 350 Parliament members from the 28 NATO countries was, in our opinion, a landmark event both for the allies and for the whole international community. Upon a careful analysis of the documents drawn up and of the participants’ interventions the conclusions are more than obvious. Thus, the NATO Strategy is a convincing and relevant reality with a future in place given its continuous update in line with the latest developments in the international security environment. As a result, the aim of this article is to argue in favor of the aforementioned idea by exemplifying it with recent events from NATO recent activities.

*Key words: NATO Parliamentary Assembly, smart defense, less defense, continuity, anti missile shield, concept.*

Between October 07 and October 10, 2011 the NATO Parliamentary Assembly unfolded in Bucharest and recorded both a great number of participants- 350 Parliament members from the 28 NATO countries- and a complex set of issues brought into discussion. The latter concerned the most important aspects of the international security environment, namely its volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity and, hence, its unforeseeable and unpredictable character. In this respect, Anders Fogh Rasmussen analyzed a wide range of intricate issues related to the aim of this article and, therefore, we will refer to his opinions every time they will be of relevance for the current endeavor.

Even though the 57<sup>th</sup> annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly took place in Bucharest, the issues tackled by the latter were insufficiently broadcast by the media. As a result, the new agreed concepts, the conclusions drawn by the participants have not been presented in extenso to the ones in charge of undertaking the accomplishment of the goals derived during this meeting. Therefore, in order to bridge this gap, as well as in order to underline the continuity of some of the Alliance’s concepts and long-term views I will focus on three relevant documents in this respect: the interview of Anders Fogh Rasmussen posted on the EP site in November 2009 (1); the Lisbon Summit Declaration of November 2010, and the discourse of the NATO General Secretary given during the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (2) that unfolded in Bucharest. I will not go into details concerning the new NATO Strategic Concept of 2010 since the latter was the subject of a previous article published in the *Journal of Defense Resources*

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*Management*(3). However, I will focus on some of its provisions that were also highlighted during the Bucharest meeting of the NATO PA by Mr. Rasmussen. Thus, the main concepts discussed were those of “Smart Defense” and “Less Defense”, the relationship with Russia, the situation in Afghanistan and its future development, the antimissile shield from Europe, the need for investments in defense on behalf of the Europeans, as well as some aspects related to the conflict from Libya.

First, I will focus on the concepts of “Smart Defense” and “Less Defense” in order to operationalize them. According to the NATO Secretary General “the concept of Smart Defense involves not just increasing defense expenditures, but their prioritization. The concept of Smart Defense is a workable through joint efforts. Smart Defense must not be an excuse to decrease defense budgets. Our choice involves both Smart Defense and Less Defense. We have to look for multinational solutions to common problems. A common defense means Smart Defense. If you think that security costs, then remember: it is cheaper that uncertainty.”

The arguments supporting the aforementioned ideas are provided by the decision made by 10 NATO countries, Romania included, to buy three C17 planes. If it had been just the effort of only one of these countries, the endeavor would have been an impossible one. This is a good example of Smart Defense. Smart Defense can work if it is approached from a joint perspective and therefore it is common sense not to view it as a reason for docking defense budgets. Therefore, the decision to be made is what to choose: Smart Defense or Less Defense. Moreover, the Alliance must develop its relationships with the countries that are interested in cooperation, regardless of their geographical positioning.

Referring to the same concept, the President of Romania, Traian Băsescu emphasized that “smart defense is about employing joint means in order to meet the increasing commitment of NATO in the current economic environment characterized by difficulties and austerity.”

The concept of “Less Defense” is self explanatory. In this respect, the Pentagon warned against the effects of the reckless budgetary cuts. Before his retirement, the former Defense Secretary Robert Gates underlined some possible consequences of the proposals for the current budget, namely the decreased investment level in defense and hence a higher risk of a “hollow force” and less defense outreach.

All three documents previously mentioned cover the attitude towards the relationship with Russia. Thus, in 2009 Anders Fogh Rasmussen said: “My long-term vision is to establish a strategic partnership between NATO and Russia. In my opinion, Russia and NATO allies share common interests in the field of security. I know that sometimes we do not agree. With Georgia, for example, our position is to preserve the country’s territorial integrity and sovereignty. But these disputes should not obscure the reality that we must face the same type of security threats in certain areas. A good example in this respect is Afghanistan. Russians know very well from their own experience that Afghanistan cannot be ignored and that if it becomes a terrorism center it is very easy for terrorist to reach Russia through Central Asia. Thus, terrorism is another example of a common interest since Russia has already been confronted with terrorist attacks. A third example is the proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction and in this respect we all know that Russia is within the range of the Iranian missiles. A fourth field of common interest and that raises security issues is piracy. When I will go to Russia in December (2009- a n) one of main tasks is to try and persuade the Russian political leaders that NATO is not Russia’s enemy. On the contrary, we share the same interests in certain fields”.

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In the Lisbon Summit Declaration it is stated that: “The NATO-Russia partnership has been conceived as a means to ensure security in the Euro Atlantic region. The Alliance is objectively committed to this objective. The main communication forum within the Alliance is the NATO-Russia Council. This communication means, that has not always been adequately used, was established to offer means to prevent crises, to analyze events and to make decisions on common actions.”

Even though the Alliance is not a military threat for Russia and does not view Russia as a military threat, both parties are still in doubt about the other party’s intentions and policies. Therefore, the new NATO Strategic Concept must reaffirm the Alliance’s willingness to contribute to the ensurance of a new Euro Atlantic order characterized by cooperation and, inherently, by cooperation with Russia. In this respect, NATO should pursue a policy of strengthening its relationship with Russia by reassuring, at the same time, its member states that their security and interest are safeguarded. Moreover, the pragmatic collaboration opportunities should be pursued in order to accomplish common goals such nuclear nonproliferation, armament control, counterterrorism, antimissile defense, crises management, peace operations, maritime security and combating drug trafficking.

The NATO-Russia relationship is presented in Bucharest as follows: “The Alliance must have an important relationship with Russia. We already discuss about Afghanistan, about countering terrorism and piracy. I look forward to a future when we will cooperate even more by tackling missile proliferation challenges. I hope that at the Chicago Summit in 2012 we will discuss with Russia about the problem of the antimissile defense. We must send out the message that NATO is still greatly interested in the stability in the Mediterranean and Middle East.” Thus, as it is obvious the similarities among the three approaches already presented in this article render any further comments redundant.

The approach to the situation in Afghanistan is also similar to the 2010 position on the issue: “The NATO mission in Afghanistan is the most complex one ever undertaken by the Alliance. The experience NATO has gained from this is a precious source of lessons. Among the important aspects yielded by this mission are cohesion, efficient planning, public diplomacy, the necessity of a coherent civil and military approach, the necessity to deploy forces at a strategic distance for a longer period of time, 2011 included. The Afghan Security Forces become more and more capable. Quantitatively and qualitatively there are almost 300,000 soldiers and Afghan policemen. By the end of 2012 there must be 350,000 of them. The quality has improved. The Afghanistan mission is not an impossible one. We will win. Transition should begin this year and should be ready by 2014. The Afghans have already taken over control of seven provinces and districts, which is 25% of the Afghan population. President Karzai will announce the next transition stage the month to come. The Afghan forces have proven their ability to solve problems.”

In conclusion, as we may notice upon the analysis of all of the information above the ideas presented are the same, while incorporating the evolutions of the past two years. The same coherence of the message can be noticed when it comes to the antimissile shield. At the end of the Lisbon Summit one of the statements issued underlined that the defense against a ballistic missile attack threat from Iran has led to a military mission essential for NATO. Moreover, Barack Obama’s decision to mount an antimissile shield grants a more efficient and faster security deployment, while the antimissile defense is viewed as an integral part of NATO and as a means to ensure open participation on behalf of all members. Thus, antimissile defense is efficient when it is a joint action and the cooperation between NATO and its partners, Russia included, is a desirable event.

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At the Parliamentary Assembly from Bucharest Rasmussen indicated that: “I congratulate Romania’s, as well as Turkey’s, Poland’s, Spain’s and Netherlands’ decision to host elements of the antimissile shield. I also expect there will also be other countries that will show their willingness to make the same decision. The shield is a commitment to security and solidarity among allies. First, mobile interceptors will be mounted on AEGIS ships and afterwards the interceptors will be supplemented with terrestrial bases. More than 30 countries all over the world have or are purchasing missiles and the necessary technology. The threat is real and we need a real defense. I have not mentioned any specific countries that may pose a threat because we are talking about an evolving situation. Our defense system is easily adaptable to the needs of the moment. However, the threat is real. I have always maintained that as long as there will be nuclear weapons NATO will be a nuclear alliance.” In addition to this, Rasmussen underlined that the tests that undertaken were successful and hence, the system is an efficient one and worth the investment: “From the European Union’s perspective it is good investment. The USA give us their antimissile systems and for the future the European states will also mount their own antimissile systems. All of these will be cooperating.”

Another statement of interest for the purpose of this article refers to the Europeans’ obligations: “Even though Europe has powerful military forces, the gap between the USA and the allies has enlarged more and more. In Libya the European allies and Canada used their own forces but we have counted too much on the USA’s command capabilities and units. The success in Libya depended on the USA despite the economic challenges of the European states that participated in the conflict. That is a positive thing since the USA has been asking for a greater involvement on behalf of the European partners. It is no news that we count on the USA and that is not a weakness but the very purpose of an alliance. An alliance is formed to provide mutual support. For example the Europeans do not have the necessary units for air refueling, nor strategic air transport of troops and technique.”

Taking into account that the situation in Libya has radically changed I will only emphasize that NATO has been extremely successful with this mission and therefore it could conclude operations on 30 October 2011.

Before concluding, it is my pleasure and honor to quote the NATO Secretary General’s opinion on Romania that acknowledges our country’s performance before and after its accession to NATO: “Romania has been an exemplary ally”.

It is obvious that the complex issues approached during the NATO Parliamentary Assembly from Bucharest could not be tackled in an in-depth manner in a paper of this length. However, I have done my best to present to all those interested and mostly to the specialists the main aspects that contribute to a better understanding of the high importance associated to the 57<sup>th</sup> annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly that unfolded in Bucharest between 7-10 October 2011.

### Endnotes

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- [4] NATO Summit – Washington, 3-4 April 1999
- [5] NATO Summit - Prague, 21-22 November 2002
- [6] NATO Summit – Istanbul, 28-29 June 2004
- [7] NATO Summit - Riga, 28-29 November 2006
- [8] NATO Summit – Bucharest, 2-4 April 2008
- [9] NATO Summit - Strasbourg, France / Kehl, Germany, 3-4 April 2009
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- [14] <http://m.rfi.ro/articol/stiri/politica/romania-conceptul-smart-defense>