



**Poland**

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(Photo: Polish MoND)

**NATO Evolution – “Back to the Future”**

“The best way to predict your future is to create it” – Abraham Lincoln

In popular saying during the Cold War, NATO’s three basic missions were obvious: “To keep the Americans in, the Germans down and the Russians out.”

In the beginning of the 1990s, historic changes in Central and Eastern Europe re-shaped the security environment in that part of the world. NATO, adapting to the new circumstances, started its internal evolution. As a result, a few years ago some were saying that the alliance was weakening in all three goals, leading to the situation when “The Americans are leaving, the Germans rising and the Russians coming.”

With the events in the Ukraine, this period has reached its end, bringing about a substantial change in the perception and assessment of the geo-

strategic environment. Suddenly many of us have realised that crucial historical dilemmas and security concerns, thought to have vanished with the collapse of the Soviet Union or living only as Polish phobias, have been dormant only for some years and now they seem to be re-awaken again.

It has become obvious - there is an urgent need to update the geopolitical thinking in NATO about European security. The alliance must respond to this “game changing factor” by reiterating and reinforcing its core mission stemming from Art. 5 – Collective defence of all its members.

Such an understanding was dominating during the Newport Summit in 2014. The Heads of State and Government clearly stated in the “Wales Summit Declaration” that *“Russia’s aggressive actions against Ukraine have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free and at peace.”*

To meet the challenges, NATO must respond by a process of internal evolution leading, at least in some aspects, to the well-proven previous posture and activities. It is why the RAP agreed in Newport is of particular importance. It will have a significant impact on the development of NATO capabilities to conduct its missions. NATO must be organised and prepared militarily to face this rapidly changing strategic and geopolitical situation.

Different measures adopted in the “Wales Summit Declaration” constitute four pillars of NATO readiness to face current and future global challenges.

- Visual Assurance: Declared *“... continuous air, land and maritime presence and meaningful military activity in the eastern part of the alliance ...”* will show the strength, unity and firm commitment of NATO. The Polish Armed Forces will contribute to the entire spectrum of undertaken activities and obligations – both, as a force provider and Host Receiving Nation.
- VJTF – “Spearhead Forces:” VJTF - consisting of a land component (battle group) augmented with appropriate air, maritime, Special Forces, and support elements – will be created from selected very high readiness NRF force packages, enabling the alliance to react timely and appropriately in case of crisis. Poland is ready to take on responsibilities as a framework nation for this so-called spearhead forces in the nearest future. The first exercises for initial VJTF will be conducted in Poland in the mid-2015.

*Polish and US soldiers ▷  
look at a PATRIOT  
missile defence battery  
during joint exercises  
in Sochaczew,  
near Warsaw,  
21 March 2015.  
(Photo: Polish MoND)*



- Command Structure: The Headquarters of the Multinational Corps North East (HQ MNC NE), located in Szczecin, due to its unique location, structure of personnel and regional knowledge should play an important role in planning and

executing tasks focused on collective defence in the regional context. Level of readiness of the HQ MNC NE will be raised from a Forces of Lower Readiness Headquarters to a High Readiness Force Headquarters by the end of 2017.

- Advanced Planning: In accordance with NATO procedures, advance planning should lead to the development of a Contingency Plan, Generic Contingency Plan, or Standing Defence Plan. For Poland, advanced planning should be a complete process - in the end producing a detailed contingency plan for a member country, or a group of countries. NATO, to retain planning capability at appropriate level, must conduct advanced planning and prepare fully-fledged contingency plans on regular basis. NATO must be in a constant process of their reviewing and revising.

During the Cold War, military posture of the alliance resembled a heavy fist - organised, structured, and prepared to defend its members against a Soviet threat and to punch the well-known enemy.

During last two decades, in the process of transformation, NATO's military capabilities started to look like an open and flexible hand, suited rather to make a subtle tweak and to play various instruments and tunes with different performers. A hand rather ready for a handshake than a blow.

In the future, at least in some areas, NATO should come back to its roots and resemble its previous posture and activities. While preserving its cohesion and flexibility, the Alliance must remain an open hand for friends and partners, but with a full capability to timely clench into a robust fist when the situation requires.