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About/Über

TWT

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NATO's new direction

The new NATO Secretary General will have to redefine the strategy of NATO.

For many years already NATO is struggling with its strategy. On the one hand there are the European members that probably benefit most from the security alliance but are junior partners when it comes to military matters. On the other hand there is the United States of America as the global superpower especially when it comes to military capabilities and abilities for international projection of power. Canada, Iceland and Turkey are somewhat in between. Since it's establishment in 1949 NATO has come a long way in an ever-changing global environment. The NATO Summit 1991 in Rome defined a modern and constructive strategy stating besides the maintenance of NATO's defensive capabilities focus on dialogue and co-operation. NATO's main mission is to be a defensive alliance, which obliges to peaceful conflict resolution and international relations based on friendship development. Problematic from the first moment after the downfall of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact is NATO's expansion policy in Eastern Europe which the NATO Summit 1999 has explicitly re-endorsed. Some countries concerned legitimately have sought the defense cover of NATO through new membership. NATO missed or even ignored on purpose however that it's expansion works against the interests especially of the Russian Federation and that the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact did not automatically meant a "Carte Blanche" for NATO to fill the gaps. It would be different if NATO had pursued an active and mutual beneficial dialogue with the Russian Federation regarding the expansion policy. This never really was done with the effect that at least NATO's image today is rather offensive then defensive

albeit integrating. Added to this has also the US post 9/11 trauma and subsequent military campaigning around the world independent if NATO as an alliance or individual NATO member states involved in such campaigns.

Most recently the Russian occupation and annexation of Crimea has tested NATO. On the one hand it would be unacceptable if Russia would simply invade another state without legitimation. On the other hand Russia basically did not do anything else but copy NATO's past behavior on other occasions with objectively good arguments very much in line with arguments often used from NATO when it comes to NATO's own military interventions. In any of the different cases only history will tell if the course of action taken was better or worse. With regard to NATO it appears that the position towards the Ukrainian revolution and the handling of the subsequent Crimean Crisis so far has been not very intelligent but rather offensive in itself. NATO in 2008 against the wishes of the United States for good reasons turned down Ukrainian membership application. In 2014 the same arguments prevail but this time it seems that the United States wants to seize the opportunity to further diminish Russian influence and power at all cost. NATO too readily has applied "Cold War" rhetoric in confronting Russia about its historic interests in Ukraine especially with its strategic naval base in Crimea. The United States foremost and also the other NATO members should have better weighed their options. Considering them the way they did is hardly in the true spirit of the NATO Treaty but appears more as aspirations for political power and expansion of spheres of influence. This might be legitimate but it should not come at the cost of less dialogue and friendly cooperation. The new NATO Secretary General will have a great responsibility to re-shape NATO strategies in again a more constructive way especially towards Russia. *Dirk P. Schneider*