

## NATO and the future of European security and defence policy -

### Panel Discussion on recent NATO summit

31. May 2017 | 19.00 – 22.00 Uhr  
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Brussels

**NATO as well as the European Union currently is facing various challenges and threats. Some of them are different, as these two organisations are different bodies with different aims. However, some of those challenges and threats are similar and interlinked. There are, on the one hand, external threats as countries and entities outside NATO's and EU's territories are questioning their existence and are trying to influence their policy making. And there are, on the other hand, interior challenges to both NATO and the EU. Having fulfilled their main historical purposes, many citizens do not see the necessity of those bodies and are questioning their legitimacy.**

**In order to address those threats and challenges, to take stock of them, and to find possible answers and solutions, the European Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, on 31 May, was hosting a high-level panel discussion. As speakers, we were happy to welcome Ambassador Dr. Hans-Dieter Lucas, the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the North Atlantic Council, as well as Prof. Dr. Christian Calliess, the Legal Adviser of the President of the European Commission in the European Political Strategy Centre. Our event was moderated by Rear Admiral Ehle, for his part Senior Political Military Advisor at the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU.**

As we are living in a more and more complex and in many ways insecure world, innovative answers to new challenges have to

be found. Having been close and indispensable partners for years or even decades, some members both inside NATO and inside the EU do not take this for granted anymore. We are observing serious dissents which are threatening the well-being and functioning of the two organizations. However, our speakers were pointing out that some recent initiatives by the European Commission such as its European Defense Action Plan and its welcoming by Member States, as well as the conclusions of the NATO summit in Brussels on 24 and 25 June, are giving hope that political decision-makers were determined to find common solutions.

By reference to three points, our speakers were highlighting the increasingly insecure environment we are living in. First, there are several countries, especially at the European periphery, which are threatening the Western political and geopolitical order. Second, NATO and the EU are facing insecurities at their Southern and Eastern borders, mainly due to instable states in the regions. And third, we have had to witness a number of terroristic attacks in Western European cities. Regarding these events, our speakers were arguing that NATO and the EU had to work together but that, at the same time, their different capabilities and expertise had to be respected and used in the most efficient way.

For NATO, an answer to the question of how a transatlantic burden-sharing should look like has to be found. US President Trump's remarks during the Brussels summit and the current struggle about the two percent target for spending on defense and security are causing some discomfiture inside the

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alliance. The EU, on its part, the argument by our speakers goes, with a new, authentic and trustworthy security and defense strategy should focus more on border controls, police, and intelligence services. Both NATO and the EU had to find their places and roles so that synergies in their relations become possible. To do so, some common proposals and initiatives by NATO and the EU have already been presented. It is important that both do not see each other as competitors and opponents, but as effective partners. There was no doubt on the panel that NATO will remain indispensable for European security, at least in the medium run.

To deliver on their promises and to produce positive outcomes, the two organizations depend on the political will of their leaders. The leaders, our speakers argued, should consider the shared values and common interests of both NATO and the EU. Especially in today's world of insecurity, they both have to deliver on results. This is difficult in times of spending cuts, as NATO and the EU have to do more with fewer resources. This having said, both NATO and the EU have to spend better and more wisely in order to create synergies, for example in research and equipment.

Security and defense on the European level have long been considered as the sovereign rights of the member states. However, regional clusters within the EU and traditional bilateral agreements in cooperation have reached their limits, according to the panelists. Due to the current challenges and threats, the EU should move forward by pooling and sharing its capabilities. Possible steps were outlined in the European Commission's recent White Paper. However, whether a common defense and security policy with the integration of national defense forces, a common military budget and common institutions really is realistic depends on the member states' political will. The Permanent Strategic Cooperation (PSC) – as stated in the Treaty of Lisbon –, in any case, allows some members to proceed without harming the union.

The statements by our speakers were followed by a session of Questions and An-

swers in which participants were again highlighting those recent developments, especially with regard to the new US administration, might represent a historical turning point, both within NATO and for the relationship between NATO and the EU. However, participants agreed that the EU still depends on NATO's capabilities. This is why European defense policy should be considered as a pillar of NATO, and should not be intended to replace NATO. A real European pillar inside the framework of NATO, one discussant was saying, could best deliver on the highly demanded burden-sharing.