Implications of NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept on its Enlargement & Partnership Policies and Türkiye's Position: Challenges and Opportunities

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Introduction

NATO's strategic concepts are official documents that define the current international conjuncture, the security environment, current and potential threats against NATO and methods for combating these threats. In short, strategic concepts describe how NATO perceives the current international security environment and how this environment will shape its future. NATO's strategic concepts can be considered in two separate historical periods: the Cold War and the post-Cold War. During the Cold War, NATO published four strategic concepts based on defense and deterrence (1950, 1952, 1957 and 1968). Their military features were particularly intense and no special effort was made to introduce them to the public. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO has published four strategic concepts (1991, 1999, 2010 and 2022). Their details have been publicly discussed as they are unclassified documents. Based on NATO's first three post-Cold War strategic concepts and their associated, updated objectives, NATO set new tasks for itself, such as crisis management and providing a cooperative security understanding, while continuing its mandate of collective defense specified in the North Atlantic Treaty. Through these three strate-

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gic concepts, NATO diversified its tasks and expanded its area of responsibility, previously limited to the Euro-Atlantic region.

In its June 29, 2022 meeting in Madrid, the North Atlantic Council adopted its fourth post-Cold War strategic concept, "NATO 2022 Strategic Concept."[1] While the wording regarding NATO's core tasks has changed, the core tasks remain broadly the same: defense and deterrence (previously collective defense), crisis prevention and management (previously just crisis management) and cooperative security. Unlike NATO's previous three post-Cold War strategic concepts, however, the 2022 concept marks a considerable shift in discourse, acknowledging that the Euro-Atlantic area is not at peace and highlighting the Russian Federation as the most significant, direct threat to NATO members' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area. Thus, the document reprioritizes NATO away from crisis management and cooperative security, and toward defense and deterrence.[2]

As the NATO member that has arguably suffered the most from terrorism, Türkiye places great significance on NATO's statement in the 2022 document that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations represents "the most direct asymmetric threat to the security of the citizens of NATO member countries and to international peace and prosperity." It is also highly significant that Türkiye, Sweden and Finland signed a trilateral memorandum at the Madrid Summit. Accordingly, the main purpose of this study is to evaluate the possible implications of NATO's new strategic concept for its main post-Cold War policies, its enlargement and partnership policies and Türkiye's position within the Alliance. After outlining the international conjuncture and explaining how the new concept was prepared, the paper evaluates the basic elements of the Strategic Concept and its implications for NATO's enlargement and partnership policies.

The Way Toward the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept

Initially established as a regional, collective defense organization, NATO had to transform its interests, capabilities and activities as a global security organization after the Cold War ended. This transformation included many policies, concepts and projects designed to give NATO a permanent presence in the new security environment, keep its transformation dynamic and increase internal solidarity. These initiatives took various forms, such as the enlargement (open door) policy, partnership policy, missile defense policy, comprehensive approach, centers of excellence, multiple futures projects, global partners and smart defense.[3] These initiatives were designed to address new threats and risks, and to ensure NATO's continuation in the absence of a threat from the Soviet Union—which had been NATO's original raison d'être. These concepts and policies were supported by missions to expand NATO's sphere of influence, such as peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Libya, operations against maritime piracy in Somalia and a training mission in Iraq. NATO's transformation was supported by decisions regarding its strategic concepts, published in 1991, 1999 and 2010.

The 2010 Strategic Concept was significant in several respects.[4] First, it aimed to prevent disagreements and strengthen cohesion within NATO in response to differences of opinion between the U.S. and other members, especially France and Germany, which were revealed by the 2003 Iraq War. Second, the document considered Russia as a collaborative partner. Third, it identified the following main security concerns for the Alliance: proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; instability and conflict beyond NATO's borders; terrorism, arms and drug smuggling; illegal international activities like human trafficking; and increasingly organized cyber-attacks. Thus, the document greatly expanded the scale of threats to the Alliance, which were now

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generally identified as originating from non-state actors. Finally, the concept itself and its associated official documents aimed to harmonize NATO activities in areas of struggle and intervention, which proliferated in the 2000s. However, although NATO expanded its list of threats, this did not mean that all member states were equally determined to combat them.

Since the Lisbon Summit strategic concept was published in 2010, various significant international regional developments have changed security perceptions and required a reevaluation of NATO's security and defense policies. These include the Arab Spring, the Syrian crisis and resultant refugee problem, and the war between Russia and Ukraine. These developments are also significant in terms of revealing differing security perceptions among NATO member states.

The 2019 London Leaders Meeting is important because it was held after French President Emmanuel Macron claimed in an interview on November 7 that NATO was "brain dead" and criticized the lack of strategic coordination in NATO decision making.[5] Thus, the reiteration in the Summit Declaration's first Article that the principles of "solidarity, unity and cohesion" are NATO's cornerstones was more significant than similar expressions at previous summits.[6] The Summit Declaration also stated that there would be a reflection process to strengthen NATO's political dimension. In March 2020, the NATO Secretary General selected a group of ten experts to spearhead this process.

The resulting NATO 2030 Report, published on November 25, 2020, offered a new perspective on NATO's security perceptions.[7] This report, which aimed to increase NATO's political role and strengthen its internal solidarity, made 138 recommendations under 20 headings, which led to various decisions being announced at NATO's 2021 Brussels Summit. These included ways to strengthen unity, broaden NATO's security approach, contribute to main-

taining the rules-based international order and prepare NATO for current and future challenges, such as Russian aggression, terrorism, cyberattacks and disruptive technologies, China's rise and the impact of climate change on security. However, achieving these goals and ensuring NATO's survival as a defense organization remain dependent on NATO members being able to provide clear and coherent answers to questions about NATO's goals.

The 2022 NATO Strategic Concept

At the Madrid Summit, held on June 28–30, 2022, NATO's new Strategic Concept was adopted. It consists of four chapters and 49 articles covering NATO's purpose and principles, the current strategic environment, the Alliance's core tasks and the requirements for ensuring continued success. The chapter titled "Strategic Environment" points to a significantly different international atmosphere and security environment than that of the 2010 Strategic Concept's adoption, which is a cause for concern for the Alliance. The document declares that NATO will continue to work for "a just, inclusive and lasting peace" and will remain "a bulwark of the rules-based international order." The document highlights that the greatest threat to this order comes from Russia, and condemns its "brutal and unlawful invasion" of Ukraine, which has caused "unspeakable suffering and destruction." Given that NATO is founded on common values of "individual freedoms, human rights, democracy, and the rule of law," the document declares that NATO can no longer consider Russia as a partner.

The document's discourse about Russia is actually not very surprising, as activities related to NATO's transformation have previously been conceptualized through strategic concepts or other official documents, often after they have been implemented in practice. For example, the crisis management task was first mentioned in the 1999 Strategic Concept after being implemented

through operations carried out in 1995. Another example is the publication of the Alliance Maritime Strategy in 2011 to create a legitimate legal basis for NATO operations in response to asymmetric threats, such as terrorism and piracy, from non-state actors, especially since 2001. Similarly, it is unsurprising that the 2022 Summit and related Strategic Concept reflect NATO's new attitude and discourse regarding Russia.

After Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014, NATO shifted its threat focus and counter measures back from the non-state actors emphasized in the 2010 Strategic Concept to traditional, symmetrical threats from states. The specific steps taken included envisioning additional measures in Eastern European countries to enhance the security of the Alliance's eastern borders, establishing a Very High Readiness Force as part of the NATO Response Force, increasing the capabilities of the High Readiness Corps in Poland, and raising the readiness levels of some NATO forces. These developments made the collective defense task and deterrence, which are the Alliance's raison d'être, more pronounced, while the shift in discourse made NATO refocus from Northeast Africa and the Middle East to the Baltic Region and the Black Sea. As the recent membership applications from Finland and Sweden demonstrate, NATO now prioritizes state-based threats. The latest Strategic Concept emphasizes nuclear deterrence and introduces a new dialogue mechanism between member and partner countries on issues such as NATO's out-of-area and enlargement policies. NATO's main purpose, according to the document, is to provide collective defense based on a 360-degree approach.

In addition to the shift in NATO discourse toward Russia, there had been speculation before the summit about a change in NATO's approach and official discourse toward China, as previous strategic concepts have not included negative statements regarding NATO's policy toward China. The first official text expressing a negative attitude toward China was the 2019 London Leaders

Meeting Declaration,[8] which acknowledged that NATO could no longer ignore the consequences of China's growing influence and foreign policies. It was thus critical to add China to the agenda as a factor affecting NATO's security approach, given the ongoing trade wars and political debates within NATO regarding the economy, technology and cyber-warfare. The 2030 report thus addresses the issue of how NATO members would handle the geopolitical rivalry between China and the United States, and considers preventive measures to deter and defend their security interests against Chinese power. The report highlighted China's widening global capabilities and, above all, its capacity to apply disruptive technologies to erode NATO's military superiority. Finally, the report warns about China's industrial policy and civil-military fusion strategy aimed at obtaining intellectual property rights and new technologies from European and Western research centers and companies to support its own military development.

The NATO 2022 Strategic Concept uses negative language about China, claiming that China's strategy, intentions and military activities remain non-transparent, and that China has been conducting hybrid and cyber operations that harm the security of Alliance member states and that it is seeking control over critical technology and industrial sectors, critical infrastructure, strategic materials and supply chains. The report also states that China has been making efforts to subvert the rules-based international order at sea, in space and in cyberspace. The report notes that the strategic partnership between Russia and China has deepened and that these two countries act together to erode the rules-based international order. Nonetheless, it is important to note that, despite these negative statements, NATO declared that it would maintain open channels for a meaningful dialogue with China based on mutual transparency. The 2019 London Leaders Meeting Declaration had stated that China's growing influence and the consequences of its international policies could not be overlooked. This approach,

which indicates that NATO is aware of current opportunities and challenges, will persist, and NATO and China may establish a comparable council to the one the Alliance established earlier to maintain dialogue with Russia. Meanwhile, however, it would not be surprising if NATO increases cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries to balance China. In short, NATO's response to China's challenge may either strengthen the transatlantic bond or accelerate its decline.

The New Strategic Concept and NATO's Enlargement and Partnership Policies

NATO's latest strategic concept will affect its enlargement and partnership policies, which are among its most important post-Cold War policies. The enlargement policy refers to the admission of new members to NATO within the framework of mutual powers and responsibilities, thus expanding the Alliance's borders. A number of countries have become NATO members under this policy: the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland in 1999; Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004; Albania and Croatia in 2009; Montenegro in 2017 and North Macedonia in 2020. NATO currently has 30 members. At the Madrid Summit, it was clearly declared that NATO would continue its open-door policy. Accordingly, following their application, Finland and Sweden, who had not shown intention to become NATO members before the war in Ukraine, were invited to become members, and decisions taken at the 2008 Bucharest Summit regarding Georgia and Ukraine continued to be adopted. Thus, NATO intends to send a clear message to Russia to insist that NATO membership is decided by the NATO allies while third parties have no say. Considering the geographical locations of Sweden and Finland—especially Finland's 1,340 kilometer border with Russia, which will double the length of the NATO-Russia

border—NATO has sent both a military and political message to Russia by inviting their membership. Their accession will make Northern Europe a wing of NATO, with the potential to increase military spending and activities, such as a regional military build-up and exercises, much more than previous enlargements.

Another important manifestation of NATO's transformation is its partnership policy, which has made the Alliance reasonably operational in the post-Cold War era. Over more than 28 years, NATO has maintained multiple partnership frameworks with several functions. Its first partnership program, the Partnership for Peace (PfP), launched in 1994, enabled practical co-operation between NATO and Central and Eastern European states, including former Warsaw Pact members. Participation in PfP was considered as leading to NATO membership, particularly for Central and Eastern European states. NATO's subsequent cooperative security arrangements and initiatives, like PfP, focused on the Middle East, specifically the 1994 Mediterranean Dialogue (MD) and the 2004 Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). NATO has also cooperated with a range of countries beyond these regional partnership frameworks. Referred to as "partners across the globe," these include Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan.

NATO's partnership policy currently prioritizes cooperative security, identified as one of its three official tasks, together with collective defense and crisis management. The importance and meaning of the partnership policy, which aims at improving relationships with non-NATO countries, have increased even more in today's international conjuncture, characterized by growing security threats; these in turn pose three key challenges for the partnership policy itself: instability in partner countries, limitedness of resources allocated to partners and the search for new ways to be able to ensure interoperability. Considering the Ukraine-Russia War and NATO-Russia relations, NATO will clearly not be

able to use its partnership policy to develop intensive relations with Central Asian countries in Russia's near abroad. Based on the decisions taken at the Madrid Summit, NATO's short- and medium-term partnership policy will focus instead on improving relations with Asia-Pacific countries. One indication of this is the declaration in the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept that the Indo-Pacific region directly affects Euro-Atlantic security, and NATO's invitation of Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand to the Madrid Summit.

The Trilateral Memorandum between Türkiye, Sweden and Finland

Another development that makes the Madrid Summit important apart from the acceptance of the strategic concept is the tripartite memorandum signed by Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto and Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde after a four-way meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö, Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.[9] In the memorandum, Finland and Sweden declared that they strongly reject terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and that they will not support the the Democratic Union Party (PYD) – People's Protection Units (YPG) PYD/YPG and Fethullahist Terrorist Organization (FETO), while Türkiye conditionally agreed not to block either country's membership application. However, if Finland and Sweden do not fulfill their commitments, Türkiye can clearly still block their membership. The triple memorandum has had three main effects: First, Northern Europe has become a wing of NATO, giving it the opportunity to surround Moscow from the west and from the Baltic over the Northern Europe-Russia border. The second is to support Türkiye in its fight against terrorism, in line with NATO's

counter-terrorism rhetoric. The text signed at the NATO Summit of Heads of Government and States clearly defines the PKK as a "terrorist organization," and Finland and Sweden are obliged to prevent the activities of the PKK and its extensions or affiliated groups and individuals. Thus, the agreement is compatible with the strong inclusion of the fight against terrorism in the latest Strategic Concept. Third, Türkiye has clarified that it has no fundamental objections to NATO's expansion.

After the Cold War, NATO continued as an organization in response to the new international conjuncture. It identified new tasks beyond its original collective defense task, such as peacekeeping and crisis management, and reorganized and modernized its military force structure accordingly by implementing enlargement and partnership policies. These developments have allowed the Alliance to remain a significant element in Türkiye's foreign and security policy. Supporting all of NATO's policies, such as enlargement, partnerships and policies to establish a missile defense system, Türkiye focused particularly on developing its relations with new member states both before and after their accession. Türkiye currently plays a significant role in NATO: it has approximately 400,000 personnel operating within NATO and provides the second largest army by numbers; NATO's Allied Land Command is now deployed in Izmir as part of the Alliance's military transformation and as an expression of the transformation of NATO's command and force structure; in addition, since March 2012, in Kurecik, Malatya province, Türkiye has hosted one of the radar stations required for the new missile defense system included in NATO's collective defense policy at the 2010 Lisbon Summit.

Despite fighting terrorism for years, Türkiye has unfortunately not received concrete support from several other NATO member states. Given that this struggle has depleted Türkiye in many respects, it was both normal and necessary for Ankara to prioritize Türkiye's national security concerns. Thus, it is very important for

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its Western allies to understand Türkiye, especially as further development of its defense industry opportunities will both strengthen its position within the Alliance and reduce its dependence on fellow member states. Türkiye's defense industry production and new ability to pursue a balanced policy that takes into account its national interests while maintaining relations with NATO will be one of the most important indicators of its success in foreign policy.

Conclusion

The Madrid Summit and the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept both highlight state-based threats: the Euro-Atlantic region is no longer at peace, with Russia, having been defined as a partner in 2010, now defined as the most important and direct threat to peace and stability. The decisions taken at the summit therefore aim to strengthen NATO's deterrence.

As of February 24, 2022, when the Russia-Ukraine War began, statements by NATO leaders regarding Russia's attacks and the decisions detailed above indicate greater integration within the Alliance. However, while NATO's attitude demonstrates solidarity within NATO, this does not mean that all its internal problems have been resolved. The Ukraine crisis in 2014 and the subsequent Russian invasion of Crimea have had tangible consequences for the Alliance's official rhetoric and actions. Several NATO summits announced additional measures to ensure the defense of NATO's Eastern European members, a Very High Readiness Force was created as part of the NATO Response Force, and the capabilities of the High Readiness Corps in Poland were enhanced. These developments highlight a new process that has increased the prominence of the Alliance's collective defense obligations and deterrence, which are its foundation. It should not be forgotten, though, that the U.S. and other NATO members have not fully achieved

solidarity on many issues, including coordination in their strategic decision-making processes. Thus, it is important to underline that it is too soon to judge whether or not the Ukraine War will help to resolve the issues caused by the divergence among NATO members regarding geopolitical priorities. Additionally, some countries within NATO have imposed implicit or explicit embargoes and sanctions against other members. Given that NATO was established to provide collective defense to protect the territorial integrity and political independence of its member states, this disunity indicates that NATO is far from achieving the desired solidarity.

Endnotes

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9   For the full text of the memorandum, see "Trilateral Memorandum," June 28, 2022, retrieved September 30, 2022, from: https://www.tccb.gov.tr/assets/dosya/2022-06-28-Trilateral-Memorandum.pdf

About SAM

Center for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye (SAM) is a think-tank and a research center which is chartered by law and has been active since May 1995. SAM was established as a consultative body to provide Turkish Foreign Policy decision makers with scholarly and scientific assessments of relevant issues, and reviews Turkish foreign policy with a futuristic perspective.

SAM conducts research, organizes scholarly events relevant to the ever expanding spectrum of Turkish Foreign Policy in cooperation with both Turkish and foreign academicians, its counterparts from around the world as well as various universities and government agencies. SAM provides consultancy to the foreign ministry departments as well as some other state institutions in foreign policy issues while also establishing regional think-tank networks.

In addition to its role of generating up-to-date information, reliable data and insightful analysis as a think-tank, SAM functions as a forum for candid debate and discussion for anyone who is interested in both local and global foreign policy issues. Increasingly, SAM has become a center of attraction since it successfully brings scholars and policy makers together for exchange of ideas in panels, in-house meetings, seminars and training programs for young diplomats.

SAM has a widening range of publications. Along with its traditional publication, Perceptions, which is a quarterly English language journal that hosts distinguished Turkish and international scholars within its pages, SAM has initiated Vision Papers which expresses the views of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, and SAM Papers that covers the current debates of foreign policy by various scholars.

With its commitment to contribution to the body of knowledge and constructive debate particularly in Turkish Foreign Policy, SAM will continue to serve as an indispensable think-tank and research center given its role promoting interaction and mutual benefits among the MFA, NGOs, other think-tanks and the broader scientific community and hence strengthen the human and intellectual capital of Türkiye.