NATO and EU, EU and NATO – the future interdepending relations

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NATO AND EU, EU AND NATO – THE FUTURE INTERDEPENDING RELATIONS*

Dr. Gordan Akrap

In the middle of the 19th century, Croatian poet Petar Preradović wrote in one of his poems: "Change alone remains constant in this world". The world around us is in a continuous movement, in constant shifts.

The existing organization of international relations over the last 30 years has experienced numerous and intense changes that have essentially determined the totality of global political, economic, security, and social processes. The end of the Cold War 30 years ago marked the transformation of bipolar into a unipolar world. However, this period was marked by the wars in the Middle East and the bloody breakdown of Yugoslavia. While the EU and NATO alliances were facing new security challenges, the Russian Federation has, under new leadership, ambitiously strongly and completely returned to the world's political, digital, economic, energy, military and security scene. Today, we are witnessing the transformation process from unipolar (NATO) to tripolar world (NATO, Russian Federation, China), which seriously threatens to move to the four-polar world. This process, set on antagonistic foundations, directly jeopardizes the stability of the political and military system established to promote and

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protect human rights and freedoms, our democracy, our system of values.

Significant changes inside individual NATO member states in relation to their mutual relations as well as relations with the Russian Federation have led many to ask questions of justification of the existence of the NATO alliance. That led to the reopening of the process of encouraging the creation of joint defence and security institutions within the EU that need to protect the value-based system of the EU.

Therefore,

- Recognizing that the Cold War has returned to the main gate by acting as influence on the public knowledge corps of individual states with the aim of impacting the results of their elections and referendums (do not forget that there are 50 different elections in EU and EU member states during next 12 month in 2019/2020),

- Not wanting, especially for EU member states, that Europe again become a key Cold War battlefield,

- Realizing that the democratic rights and freedoms of an individual and communities that represent both the EU and NATO have become, to use computer language, security holes and open doors for malicious hackers,

- Knowing that the level of rights and freedoms must not be changed, regardless of the level of threat,

- Recognizing that the hostile information and media operations of the enemies of EU and NATO alliance have partly succeeded in the realization of their goal of introducing and promoting internal divisions, riots, violence, insecurity, divergence, destabilization,

It is necessary to emphasize that in dealing with modern security challenges it has to be very clearly said: the EU needs a strong NATO alliance and the NATO alliance needs a strong EU, especially in the domain of coping with hybrid threats. This will be topic of this Forum.

Even if EU defence and security institutions are substantially strengthened and effective, they should be ready to act within the framework of NATO alliance. Together, we need to work

on vivification of the model which should guarantee the encouragement of information and digital literacy as one of the key prerequisites for creating the state of information and digital sovereignty both at the national and multilateral levels. Today, as well as in the time to come, information and digital domain are the key area in which conflicts and wars will be led, unless it becomes apparent that such conflicts have no winners necessarily but cause serious consequences for each individual as well as society and the state.

Achieving the status of information and digital sovereignty, as well as the possibility of their active defence, must not go beyond the reach of the achieved democratic rights and freedoms.

The defence of national sovereignty on an individual level, as well as integral parts of multilateral organizations, is one of the key ideas that, in the organization of the Forum, has been a driving force since the day we began to contemplate the need for its maintenance. The necessity of intensive and quality trans-Atlantic and trans-European cooperation is an integral part of these reflections, especially in view of the many security-demanding processes taking place in the MENA (Middle East / North Africa) and West Balkan areas. Our insistence on the quality, expertise, relevance and reliability of lecturers who transfer their experiences and knowledge on certain topics that are, and are expected to become, the goal of future strategic thinking is proven sign that we are moving in a good way.

Therefore, if the process of modern or any future changes catches us by surprise and unaware of its coming, it means that our defensive and preventive systems have come to an end, and we had not noticed, interpreted well nor understood the information and processes that surround us, either directly or at a distance. The consequences can be very dire, short-term and long-term.

However, if the process of change is timely and successfully predicted, the level of uncertainty and surprise becomes very low, while the level of preparedness and readiness to find the best possible preventive solution and response to the crisis grows significantly.

Therefore, we should do our best in order to Strengthen Democracy, and to Protect our Freedom and Society in new, Digital Cold War era.