



NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

SUMMARY

OF THE MEETING OF THE

POLITICAL COMMITTEE (PC)

Wednesday 15 July 2020

By Videoconference

127 PC 20 E | Original: English | 15 July 2020

ATTENDANCE LIST

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| Chairperson | Lord CAMPBELL OF PITTENWEEM (United Kingdom) |
| General Rapporteur | Gerald E. CONNOLLY (United States) |
| Rapporteur, Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Relations | Ahmet YILDIZ (Turkey) |
| Secretary General | Ruxandra POPA |
| Member Delegations | |
| Bulgaria | Plamen MANUSHEV |
| Canada | Cheryl GALLANT Karen MCCRIMMON |
| Czech Republic | Josef HAJEK |
| Estonia | Kerstin-Oudekki LOONE |
| France | Gilbert ROGER |
| Germany | Karl-Heinz BRUNNER |
| Greece | Mariori GIANNAKOU |
| Iceland | Njall Trausti FRIDBERTSSON |
| Italy | Edmondo CIRIELLI Paolo FORMENTINI Luca FRUSONE |
| Latvia | Ojars Eriks KALNINS |
| Lithuania | Gediminas KIRKILAS |
| Poland | Anna Maria SIARKOWSKA |
| Portugal | Marcos PERESTRELLO DE VASCONCELLOS Adao SILVA |
| Romania | Ben-Oni ARDELEAN |
| Slovakia | Vergil CHITAC Jan SZOLLOS Tomas VALASEK |
| Spain | Javier ALEGRE |
| Turkey | Luis RODRIGUEZ-COMENDADOR Osman Askin BAK Ahmet Berat CONKAR Ilhan KESICI |
| United Kingdom | Lord ANDERSON Douglas CHAPMAN Jeffrey DONALDSON Heather WHEELER |
| United States | Brett GUTHRIE Rick LARSEN Gregory Weldon MEEKS John SHIMKUS Filemon VELA |
| Associate Delegations | |
| Armenia | Gevorg GORGISYAN Andranik KOCHARYAN Viktor YENGIBARYAN |
| Ukraine | Mariana BEZUHLA Solomiia BOBROVSKA |

European Parliament

Rasa JUKNEVICIENE
Eva KAILI
Sandor RONAI

International Secretariat

Andrius AVIZIUS, Director, Political Committee
Ethan CORBIN, Director, Defence and Security
Committee
Karen WALKER-LOVE, Coordinator, Political
Committee
Sarah-Claude FILION, Coordinator, Science and
Technology Committee
Michael TRINKWALDER, Research Assistant

I. Opening remarks by Lord CAMPBELL OF PITTENWEEM (United Kingdom), Chairperson

1. **Lord Campbell of Pittenweem** (UK) welcomed participants to the first virtual meeting of the Political Committee (PC) and provided the attendees with information on the structure of the meeting.

II. Adoption of the draft Agenda [107 PC 20 E]

2. **The draft agenda [107 PC 20 E] was adopted.**

III. Consideration of the draft General Report *The Rise of China: Implications for Global and Euro Atlantic Security* [036 PC 20 E] by Gerald E. CONNOLLY (United States), General Rapporteur

3. Mr Connolly began his presentation by emphasising that the rapid rise of the People's Republic of China represents a paradigm shift in global affairs comparable in magnitude to the collapse of the Soviet Union. He pointed out that it would be irresponsible for Euro-Atlantic nations and institutions to further delay the revision of their strategies and capabilities in light of the growing assertiveness of the world's most populous country, which is guided by an ideology that rejects liberal democratic values.

4. The General Rapporteur noted that under Deng Xiaoping, Chinese foreign policy was epitomised by the dictum "hide your capability and bide your time." This approach has changed dramatically under Xi Jinping. Today's China is much more openly assertive, if not to say aggressive. This is most evident in China's immediate neighbourhood, but it has also begun to impact its relations with countries around the world. To back up its assertive policies, Beijing is employing military, economic, technological, diplomatic, and soft power capabilities it has been developing for decades.

5. Mr Connolly underscored how China has continued to engage in opportunistic behaviour amid the pandemic. Recently, China has increased its provocative military activities in the waters and skies near Taiwan and Japanese islands. It is tightening its death grip on democracy in Hong Kong. China has engaged in border clashes with India that resulted in deaths. Aggressive state propaganda promotes an image of China as benevolent in its public health response despite the country's early attempts to hide the outbreak of COVID-19 from the rest of the world. Chinese hackers are even targeting American and European scientific organisations conducting COVID-related research.

6. The General Rapporteur urged Allied nations to recalibrate NATO's strategic documents, such as the Strategic Concept, as well as defence planning, training, and capability development priorities to take into account the rise of China. NATO should increase support to the Allies that are most active in the Indo-Pacific region. He also suggested establishing a NATO Centre of Excellence on the Indo-Pacific. EU-NATO cooperation should facilitate a more cohesive and strategic response to China, including China's investments in critical infrastructure. Furthermore, NATO should also strengthen security cooperation with like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific.

7. Mr Connolly noted that the rise of China presents both risks and opportunities, and opportunities for cooperation on common threats should be explored. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that China is not a friendly actor: it aims to disrupt the global liberal world order and undermine values that are at the heart of the Alliance. It builds coalitions with other malign actors such as Russia, Iran, and North Korea, while attempting to divide and weaken

transatlantic unity. The Euro-Atlantic nations can counter and deter these attempts only if they align their positions on China and speak with one voice.

8. **Rasa Juknevičienė** (European Parliament) also stressed the need for the transatlantic community to develop a unified strategy and approach towards China.

9. **Ahmet Yıldız** (TR) concurred that China is a malign actor especially with regard to human rights. He suggested that the next version of the report includes a section on China-Japan relations. He also urged the Rapporteur to explore further the Chinese activities on the southern flank of NATO.

10. **Tomas Valasek** (SK) suggested elaborating the legal basis for NATO's role in the Indo-Pacific.

11. **Ojars Eriks Kalnins** (LV) noted that the present US Administration has some differences with the EU and that these differences could affect the EU and US policies toward China. Additionally, he raised the issue of the feasibility of the NATO-China Council.

12. **Cheryl Gallant** (CA) suggested adding a map to show every airport, port, and other major infrastructure projects that China currently controls across the globe.

13. **Luca Frusone** (IT) also discussed the issue of Chinese investments in Allied ports. He suggested that the Alliance could encourage national governments to set up national laws and regulations to protect strategic national assets.

14. **John Shimkus** (US) called on the Euro-Atlantic community to explore what common leverage it has on China and how to employ it.

15. **Paolo Formentini** (IT) noted that malign Chinese behaviour represents a "virus against democracy." Therefore, he stressed the need for the same depth of conviction and unity that the Alliance had during the Cold War.

16. Gerald Connolly thanked delegates for their constructive comments and stressed the considerable danger of Chinese influence stemming from investments in critical infrastructure. The COVID-19 crisis has exemplified areas where the Euro-Atlantic community was too reliant on China. He reiterated the need for the Euro-Atlantic community to develop a common strategy on China.

IV. Consideration of the draft Special Report *COVID-19 and Transatlantic Security* [105 PC 20 E] by Lord CAMPBELL of PITTENWEEM (United Kingdom), Chairperson

17. The Rapporteur pointed out that a crisis of this magnitude will inevitably have a major impact on transatlantic security. He argued that COVID-19 will likely exacerbate and accelerate the already existing trends, such as the rise of unilateralism. He lamented the de facto absence of global collaboration in the face of COVID-19.

18. The Rapporteur emphasised that during this crisis, the United States has assumed a US-centric approach and abstained from assuming global leadership. The Chinese government sees itself as the top contender to fill this perceived leadership vacuum. However, China's global reputation has arguably suffered as a result of this pandemic. Many nations are now taking steps to reduce their dependency on Chinese industry and technology. The Rapporteur noted that the Russian government handled the crisis poorly, and due to the

combination of high infection numbers, falling oil prices and the decreasing popularity of Mr Putin, Russia might see little choice than to align closer with China.

19. The Rapporteur also addressed the question of solidarity demonstrated by NATO and the EU during the COVID-19 crisis. While it is true that both organisations were initially caught off guard by the pandemic, both NATO and the EU did make tangible contributions to assisting their hardest-hit members. In the end, the alliance proved its resourcefulness and found ways of mobilising its assets to help Allies and partners, while maintaining adequate levels of preparedness to execute NATO's core tasks of defence and deterrence.

20. Lord Campbell stressed that the post-COVID global security environment is likely to be more adversarial and characterised by increased geopolitical competitions. Therefore, it will be crucial to maintain adequate levels of defence spending, in line with the 2014 Wales Summit commitment. Although NATO should seek to be better prepared for similar health emergencies in the future, the alliance should not lose sight of its core mission of protecting its members from more traditional security threats.

21. The Rapporteur concluded his presentation by underlining that in regard to China, there can be no return to "business as usual." NATO members must take steps to limit third-party investment in strategic infrastructure and ensure diversification of vital supply chains like those for medical goods. Democratic systems have a possibility of coming out of this crisis stronger, Lord Campbell argued, but it requires continued responsible and science-based efforts by governments, solidarity as well as better communication.

22. Luca Frusone highlighted the need for Allies and NATO to strengthen their capability to communicate on assistance efforts. At the same time, NATO should refrain from countering Russian and Chinese propaganda and fake news using their methods.

23. Ahmet Yildiz asked the Rapporteur to include a list of the assistance provided by the Allies in the annex of the report. Turkey has provided assistance to more than one hundred countries, he noted.

24. **Gevorg Gorgisyan** (AM) commented on the escalation of hostilities at the Armenian-Azerbaijani state border.

25. **Ethan Corbin** (Committee Director, NATO PA) pointed out that the NATO PA President has released a statement on this topic.

V. Any other business

26. The chairman thanked two retiring US members, Representatives Paul Cook and John Shimkus, for their service and wished them all the best in their future endeavours.

27. No other business was raised

VI. Date and place of next meeting

28. The Chairman informed participants that the next meeting of the Committee will take place virtually on 31 August 2020.

VII. Closing remarks

29. The Chair thanked the interpreters, NATO PA staff, the Rapporteur, support staff, and Committee members for their hard work and constructive participation in these difficult circumstances.
