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NEW CHALLENGES TO NATO’S FUTURE AND
THE EU’S COLLECTIVE SECURITY

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Abstract:

No matter how well prepared you are, you can never imagine what other person will think, for the imagination is the ultimate limit of a human being.

Therefore, by touching on the future of NATO and EU in terms of capability readiness to cope with collective security, I opened the Pandora box of predicting the future thus the unknown.

Facing a high speed changing global environment, with strong interdependencies and interplays at stake, demonstrating that these two very important international bodies will be able to meet the future challenges it will prove to be a treacherous endeavor.

Keywords: security, European Union, power, actors

1. Introduction

Our planet is reaching its limits in terms of sustainability of the fast growing population (more than 7 billion inhabitants). Hence the trend in future conflicts will most likely be vital resources access based rather than the old fashion *conquer the other’s country warfare*.

The unthinkable events of 9/11 terrorist attacks changed the world we knew once and for all. The two dimension classical warfare turned to a tridimensional asymmetric threat, irregular, unpredictable and with tremendous impact on public opinion, the major supporter of any military endeavor.

On the other hand, the ancient instinct of the human race to gather in tribes or groups for the sole purpose of surviving united has extrapolated for the past decades by creating alliances amongst states such as UN, NATO, former Warsaw Pact, EU or BRICS.

Despite the fact that most of them share and support different principles and values, the need for alliances and treaties remains valid in order to counter future threats and maintain the state of order and safety worldwide.

2. Global environment trends

The world has sky rocketed for the past decades at a pace no one could predict 30 years ago. The technical revolution has triggered the wheels of our surrounding environment in a phenomenal race against the ultimate rival – *time*.

You will never have enough time in spite of inventing state of the art machinery designed to save time. But with the ability to process many tasks simultaneously came multitasking therefore an increasing lack of time.

Hand in hand with the time factor came the need to access the increasingly scarce resources. Therefore, whoever managed to “*make it*” to the vital resources “*on time*” proved to be successful and reached a high level of prosperity.

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On the other hand, the migration of the labor force from the underdeveloped countries to the promise land of well paying wealthy countries triggered significant demographic changes and distribution of different ethnic groups of people.

Considering the military aspect of the future trend we are looking to a new threat and also a new dimension of modern warfare – cyber warfare. With most of the population being interconnected via internet it is almost impossible to be protected against cyber attacks.

These are the future challenges of the global collective security, regardless of nation, belief or level of development. Therefore the decision makers have to think outside the box in order to be one step ahead future risks and threats.

2.1. Current global poles of power

The United States of America is facing a major challenge in maintaining its status quo of world leading nation in terms of economy and military power. Dried up by two major conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, over buried in debt to China (!) and fighting to recover from the economic crisis, „*The Goliath*” seems to be shaking on his feet not acting with that boldness that we were used to.

As an example of faith, China recently acquired an aircraft carrier, thus increasing its operational capabilities, using the interest money owed by The United States.

The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), no longer emerging economies, pose a major concern regarding future shifting of political economical and military influence. Just a quick look at numbers gives the bird's eye view on the seriousness of the matter. BRICS sum up approximately three billion citizens, almost half of world population. These countries also account for almost 40% of world GDP and for the past years they boosted the global economy by 25%. On the other hand if you consider the strategic location the aforementioned states, they actually corner both NATO and EU putting those organizations between the hammer and the anvil.

The mighty Russian bear has got out of its hibernation lair, determined to regain former dominance in the Eurasia region. Recent annexation of the Crimean peninsula served as a statement that Russia will spare no effort in order to accomplish its political and military goals. Considering the economical factor, due to the recent discovery of oil reserves in the Arctic Ocean, Russia clearly intends to seize that economic platform by standing up tall, bold and determined.

China besides the economical boost and domination worldwide has a large well equipped and trained military force.

India's population growth has exceed 1 billion citizens and its military influence in the Indian Ocean area is well known.

Iran is continuing to follow its nuclear ambition creating a concern for the international peace and security of Israel and the neighboring countries.

The "bully" of South East Asia, North Korea maintains its nuclear ambition destabilizing peace in the region. Due to its dictatorial leadership the future military actions may embrace the worst case scenario.

2.2. New actors emerged on the global stage

As the world is being reshaped, new non state actors surfaced adding a great deal of uncertainty into the equation – terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaida and Isis.

These criminal factions pose an unconventional threat by conducting asymmetrical operations in order to disrupt the normal way of life and instill fear. Originally located in the Far East and not posing any imminent threat to the European countries, these criminal organizations managed to reach to Western Europe.

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Through their persuasive propaganda they succeeded in establishing terrorist franchises, employing Muslim residents which are increasing in numbers especially in Germany, France, Austria and the Low Countries. By doing this, they set up a strong foot hold in the heart of a christen vulnerable continent.

3. NATO and EU role in current global/regional stability

Europe is enjoying its longest period of peace time – over 70 years. This allowed nations to develop and grow up generations without the fear of an armed conflict. Since EU managed *to secure peace*, now the next challenge requires being able *to secure prosperity*.

Since the Amsterdam Treaty, which strengthened defense policy cooperation in Europe, the EU has been very active in the area of foreign policy. It is worth mentioning that the failure of the EU in the Yugoslav region posed serious questions to the role of EU and how it can prevent or resolve European wide conflicts. Europe failed to stop the disintegration of Yugoslavia and witnessed the worst bloodshed since World War II.

The EU's incapability to act decisively in the Balkans was repeated during the Kosovo war in 1998 to 1999 when the European Council stressed the EU's „*moral obligation*” to address the humanitarian disasters in the middle of Europe, while relying on the US-led NATO missions to halt the Serb offensive. Such was the inaction from the EU in the area of foreign policy until the Union showcased its most striking diplomatic performance in 2008, when the French European Presidency Council played a significant role in devising a peace plan in the war between Russia and Georgia in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

3.1. NATO – still ”*The big brother*?”

The creation of NATO brought a sense of safety, stability and protection provided by „*The big brother*”. Until 1989, NATO's role was very well defined, a force on force major actor.

But as the global environment changed rapidly, NATO assumed missions and tasks no longer in accordance with its name (*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*), expanding its area of operations beyond the geographical area of its member countries. It also took part to operations other than article 5 (any form of military aggression upon any member state) assuming the role of an international *police force* bringing about justice.

The involvement of NATO in two major operations concurrently took its toll in terms of human lives lost and resources spent. Apparently the alliance bit more than it could chew. With the emergence of new actors on the world scene came new risks and threats to regional and global security and freedom.

The United States is still playing the role of the big horse pulling the NATO chariot, but with large debts to China and facing real internal problems, lack of support of public opinion (lots of casualties during Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns).

As the lead nation within NATO with the largest military force and the most amounts of financial resources added to the table, The United States still has the capability of projecting and sustaining combat forces to conduct major operations anywhere in the world.

3.2. European Union – The newbie federal state?

The European Union managed to bring together initially the wealthy western states and furthermore the political-economical alliance spread its umbrella towards Eastern Europe in an effort to create a credible, stable “*federal*” organization. The huge blow

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received during the economic crisis put the ability to cope with such situations to the test and questioned the durability of the international body itself.

EU started as an economical endeavor but later on established a level of ambition far too large to be accomplished. European integration was seen by many as an escape from the extreme forms of nationalism that had devastated the continent.

The European Union received the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize for having "*contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.*" The Nobel Committee stated that "*that dreadful suffering in World War II demonstrated the need for a new Europe [...] today war between Germany and France is unthinkable*". These shows how, through well-aimed efforts and by building up mutual confidence, historical enemies can become close partners.

Joining countries do not only have to accept the common rules and procedures, they also must satisfy certain economic, democratic and social conditions. Indeed, two countries are holding accession negotiations at present: Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Generally, it can be stated that a big percentage of Europeans fear that a further enlargement could threaten the Union's progress, intensified by uncertainty about cost of the procedure.

In the long term, other countries belonging geographically to Europe are likely to apply for membership, including the Balkan states as well as Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine, whose policies are already pro-European at this moment. Basically, as far as those countries match the criteria needed to join the Union and the current treaties are replaced by a new one (like the Treaty of Lisbon, see chapter 4.1) allowing the number of Member States to be more than the current maximal amount of 28, the European institutions have no reason for rejecting their membership.

However, with more and more countries joining, cultural, linguistic and economic differences within the Union increase, thus not only engraving problems of EU institutions, bureaucracy and fiscal policy, but also challenging the process of European integration and people's satisfaction.

At this point, it seems adequate to differentiate between Turkey on one side and the two Balkan states on the other hand. The main reason to do so is the countries' population. Since Turkey has about 70 Million inhabitants, an accession of this country would have heavier consequences for the Union than an accession of Macedonia or Croatia having a population of 2 Million and 4,5 Million respectively.

Proponents of Turkey's accession argue that the country has big regional power, a large economy and a large military force. Moreover, they await a significant economic growth of the country allowing EU states to benefit from. The country's big area and population would be a good delivery market for existing EU member states. Also, the facts that Turkey has improved in human rights issues and has been applying for membership for 40 years by now militate in favor of an accession.

However, there are severe arguments against a membership. Firstly, with the country neglecting key principles like "freedom of expression", with women frequently having a lower status than men and with military having a too heavy influence on government, key features of a liberal democracy are not matched. Secondly, after joining, the 70 Million Turks would represent the second populous country of the Union, thus becoming a grave counterbalance of Germany, France and the UK. This argument is enforced by expectations that Turkey's population will significantly grow in the next decades, whereas most European countries face a demographic decline, which will lead to Turkey surpassing Germany in number of seats in European institutions. Thirdly, an admission would involve costs up to 10 billion € a year for the EU.

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At last, it is the country's location itself which creates questions: Does Turkey as a whole geographically belong to Europe? If Turkey joins, what would happen to other possible applicants like Russia and Morocco, whose application has already been rejected on geographic basis?

Another problem always occurring when a state promulgates its candidacy is the reaction of European Union citizens. "Turkey's membership is supported by 28% of the public among EU member states" and one of the major reasons for Dutch and French people to reject the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 was reluctance concerning Eastern-European enlargement policy and the extension of membership to Turkey.

All these facts join to the conclusion of the heterogenic nature of the European Union which acts like an obstacle in the path of globalization and unity of effort [1].

4. Future collective challenges

Despite all the drawbacks presented in the previous section, enlargement is one of the most powerful means of the European Union's policy. The enlargement policy serves the strategic interests of the EU in terms of stability and peace, security and conflict prevention, and as the basic postulate of creating the EU in general.

The aim of the EU is certainly a compact unit with stable, prosperous and democratic neighbors. This policy of enlargement contributed to more prosperity and growth opportunities, also to increasing connectivity of the transport and energy routes, as well as the reputation of the EU in the world.

The EU seeks two main types of policies towards the rest of the world: economic policies, through trade transactions and humanitarian aid; and foreign and security policy, through the Common Foreign and Security Policy. Foreign and security policy issues dominated the EU agendas at the beginning of the 1990s following the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe, the fall of the Soviet empire and the end of the Cold War.

As the world's political center of gravity is constantly shifting, the EU is developing towards being a major, yet unevenly balanced, player in global politics. While the EU mainly uses its soft power instrument of economic trade and humanitarian aid, a more robust foreign policy performance and a stronger foreign policy identity must be enforced, especially when international issues arise. With China challenging the US's status quo hegemonic power, in my opinion, I will argue that the EU needs to speak with one voice and that can be achieved by adjusting of its foreign policy priorities in times of international conflicts. While it is not realistic to believe that the EU will be able to challenge the hegemony of the US as the only military superpower, recent developments suggest that the EU may be on its way to becoming a more credible partner for the US in world politics.

But as the economic crisis drawback becomes worse within a few member nations such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, the future doesn't look bright. The European leaders will be forced to make a decision in order to keep the boat floating.

4.1. NATO's future

NATO's strength relies in the unity of effort. Therefore, in the future it must plan and use defense resources in the most efficient way possible in order to achieve the best outcome.

What does really NATO stand for? No Action Talking Only? Because if we look back in time we will discover that all major conflicts started as a Coalition Force and afterwards NATO was involved. The fact that the organization is made of 28 countries led to the lack of full support when the situation occurred.

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That makes one wonder: will this work in an article 5 scenario? God forbid! I do not even want to picture what will happen with 28 countries fighting alongside against a single major nation foe.

When US, UK and Canada, as a Coalition Force, attacked the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and the invasion of Iraq, there were situations of *blue on blue (fratricide)*. What is scary about that fact is that there were only two or three nations conducting operations, ironically all three of them speaking the same language and sharing the same combat procedures. Therefore, I fear that NATO is far from being fully interoperable and credible as military force.

Considering the situation occurred in Ukraine, NATO's position was rather reactive than preemptive and not very convinced of its own power or show of force. This confirmed the lack of commitment, determination and resolve in solving this issue.

Emplacing missile defense shields along the NATO's Eastern flank along with the deployment of US forces towards the remote countries confirms once again the role played by US as leading nation. The future will tell how other member nations will rally alongside in order to counter a possible threat from East.

With the economical crisis not being solved yet and a lot of member countries struggling to survive there is a big question mark regarding the credibility and sustainability of the military alliance. According to the latest strategy, the organization has to be able to meet the level of ambition of conducting two major joint operations and six small scale joint operations simultaneously. Given the current conditions and the trend of cutting down defense expenses this goal seems pretty unreachable.

On the other hand, NATO's intention to expand its membership towards Ukraine and Georgia, which will lead to a position of being neighbors to Russia, seems rather unrealistic considering Russia's recent evolution and expressed ambition.

4.2. NATO and EU collective effort – The way ahead!

The majority of countries that are part of NATO are also member of the EU, hence it is easy to identify the interplays and interdependencies among the two bodies.

Since NATO is a military alliance relying on combat forces and the adequate material (financial) support, the economical stability and prosperity of the member nations will reflect on the readiness and the operational capability of generating, projecting and sustaining forces in a major military operation.

NATO's role as the guardian of freedom and security should provide the bedrock of stability needed for the EU to achieve a united, prosperous union. But, since the major players within NATO are the US and Turkey, nations that are not part of EU, it seems a little bit out of order to claim such requirement. It looks like we are in horns of a dilemma.

Are NATO and EU's objectives similar? Are they able to cooperate towards a common goal? So far these seem to be rhetorical questions due to the major discrepancies and differences of opinion regarding long term interests and levels of ambition.

With the high speed rate of information technology development, the risk of Cyber warfare poses a common battle space for both NATO and EU.

George Tenet, a former CIA Director perfectly outlined the importance of foreseeing the outcome of something new in our lives: "*We have built our future upon a technology we have not learned how to protect*".

Therefore, in order to prevail both organizations should share the same goals and objectives and act interconnected towards the same end state.

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5. Conclusion

The European Union is neither a pure intergovernmental organization, nor a true federal state. As National interests matter, states are becoming more reluctant to delegate extra powers and sovereignty to the European Union. Identity politics play a fundamental role in the European Union's quest to transform its future shape. The goals of Europe 2020 strategy need to be achieved through commitment, cooperation and action both at national and EU levels. The European Union is unlikely to be able to meet the challenges in Europe without greater state capacity or more democratic legitimacy.

Regarding the current situation and relations within the European Union, it is more realistic to view EU as a means to overcome the period of crisis, i.e. to pass through a period of consolidation and reform of institutional arrangements. This period may be crucial for the future of the European Union in a way that improves the economic and political dimensions of integration. A lot of attention and energy is aimed at the institutionalization of the mechanism of crisis management in the Euro zone. This is a good and important goal.

However, a more important challenge - which is mostly covered by the accompanying debate - is the need to prevent crisis. Such a decision, having in mind how fast it was taken, leaves an impression that the institutional frame for the Euro zone stays incomplete, until the clear rules on how to manage financial crisis are determined.

The tragic, unforeseen events on 9/11 triggered a massive alert signal for all leaders regarding the fact that you can never be prepared for everything, no matter how many contingency plans you develop.

As Albert Einstein stated: "*Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.*", the future does not seem bright and comforting for NATO especially due to the unbalanced ratio between future threats and actual economical constraints of the contributing nations. No one can predict what future threats are to be faced.

As for our nation, being a member in both organizations should give us that sense of identity and security. But as history proved, most of the treaties and alliances were not designed for the weak and the fainted. Future events will tell how solid and committed that support will be. Even though the matter is of the utmost seriousness, I cannot help myself asking:

If we are to face the mighty bear what will we do?....Play dead?

References:

[1] Curtis, Ben; Linserm, William D., *NATO and EU Enlargement: Challenges for the New Europe*, University of Washington Press, 2004, pp. 1-46.