GEOPOLITICAL AND SECURITY DILEMMAS IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY

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Since the United States under the Donald Trump administration took a new stand towards the main global issues, China has become a "global player" and the Russian Federation has developed into a significant power again under President Putin's leadership, while NATO, the European Union (EU) and all European countries have individually started to analyze their position and strategies in relation with those three powers. Also, since then, there have been some other significant events which contributed to the development of this analysis, such as: a very special and challenging foreign policy promoted by the White House; the Russian Federation's intervention in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea; the conflict in Syria with two components-entities and countries involved, and the flow of immigrants towards Europe; Great Britain's Brexit policy, and, last but not least, the "special" policy promoted by Ankara in relation with the United States, the European Union and the Russian Federation. All those events, and many others, obliged the two organizations, NATO and the EU, and all European countries to react and to establish their specific policies. At this time, I would say that those reactions were often contradictory and somehow diverted, especially at the level of individual countries, rather than at organization level. However, these organizations are composed of many of the European states, most of them being part of both.

Key words*: NATO, EU, Euro-Atlantic versus Eurasian interests, complementarity, cohesion and solidarity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on identifying the main issues that NATO and especially the EU should respond to or find the right answers for both the benefit of the Euro-Atlantic link, as well as for the advantage of each and every country involved. In order to ensure a better understanding of the viewpoints presented in this

paper, a general framework and some relevant assumptions need to be first introduced.

First of all, it is worth noting that the topic of this paper needs to be approached from the perspective of the main geopolitical and security issues specific to the Alliance and the EU, as well as political decisions that should be made connected with those issues. The aim is not to find answers, but rather to make comments on the respective issue, and not going into details.

Second, even though NATO and the EU are composed of countries with similar values, principles and strategic objectives related to democracy, freedom, free market economy, they are also very different in terms of responsibilities, functioning mechanisms, structure and organization, and, last but not least, the purpose for which they were created. In other words, if NATO was created in order to provide security for its members while respecting a comprehensive common package of principles and values, the EU has a different purpose. The original European Union was founded on a purely economic basis, under the name of European Coal and Steel Community, which later became the European Economic Community. With the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, the organization became the European Union, further integrating the financial issues in 1999 and ending up in the present format after the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. At this moment the area of responsibilities in the EU is comprehensive and multidimensional, dealing with almost all functional domains of a state administration. Until recently, the security issue was not among the leading priorities because it had always been a NATO responsibility. In my view, that is the reason why the complementarity issue on defense matters has always been necessary.

Third, in 1999, the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) was designed, and since then there have been many attempts to create an EU military structure and capability. Recently, those discussions took a stronger path and center on the "strategic autonomy" for the EU, which implies that the EU needs to create an EU Defense Organization (EUDO) and EU Defense Forces (EUDF). This intent generated a large scale of debates in NATO and the EU and even more in each member country. In this context, there are EU member states which

sustain this endeavor and others which like to leave the security issue mainly to NATO and keep the complementarity of the EU with NATO.

All of the above considered, the assumption underlying this paper is that in the future, at global, regional, organizational (NATO and the EU) and individual member state level, all must address and respond firmly and successfully to the same threats, especially those on security and defense domains.

Hence, the goal of the paper is to identify the main questions and dilemmas that NATO and the EU leadership or each individual member country which is part of these organizations should answer. Responses are required in order to be prepared to face the new geopolitical context in a globalized world dominated by the USA, in the first place, and China, assisted by a reborn and increasingly assertive Russia, at least under President Putin`s leadership. I will approach this analysis by differentiating among the main issues on three levels: global, regional and internal.

2. GLOBAL CONUNDRUMS

At global level the first question might be: Are NATO and the EU global or regional players?

In the NATO environment this question was asked long ago, but there is no clear answer yet. Taking into consideration just the NATO members means that this organization may be seen as a regional player. Counting on NATO partnerships involves that the Alliance looks to be more than that. Moreover, if the global partners (Japan, South Korea, Australia, Colombia, etc) are added into the equation then NATO can be called global – even though the partnership status does not impose the same responsibilities as that of a member state.

Personally, I do not know if "A global NATO" is better than a "NATO with global partners", as it is today, but what I am sure of is that NATO can solve, if necessary, any issue even at global level using the three doctrinal concepts (collective defense, collective security and cooperative security), and in one day, one country, of the global partners group, will make an official request to be a NATO member. If such a situation shows up it will be necessary, at least, to add elements to the Washington Treaty, to change the level of

ambition and the structure of the organization. The Alliance needs to think now of this possible hypothesis.

In the EU environment things are more complicated, because we are not speaking just about values and security, but mainly about economy, finance, social health care, education, regional development, and other areas. If we are looking at the future BREXIT, then the situation is even more complicated, because the EU will need some time to "digest" this event. Leaving this situation aside, I sincerely think that the EU, as it is now, has the economic and financial power to play a global role, but most of the time it is not acting as an organization for many reasons. One of the reasons would be that the most powerful economies from the EU prefer to act in the global arena alone in order to achieve first their national interests and then address the respective issue at the organization level. There are some examples of such actions in relation to the Russian Federation, China, India and the USA.

In my view, as long as the EU is not acting as a coherent organization when dealing with the other global players it will not be perceived as a global player, but rather as a regional one. On the other hand, the global powers prefer to deal and negotiate things with a designated country rather than with an organization where the constraints and limits are more complicated.

Leaving aside the economic and financial domains and going to defense and security issues, in my view the EU cannot pretend to have a global importance, but rather a continental one, and sometimes regional, such as when the EU forces conduct operations in Africa.

The second question at *global level* is: Are NATO and the EU struggling between Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian interests?

A short answer to this question is YES. There are many arguments to demonstrate this reality and I will present some of the most significant ones, connected with the three main players` (The USA, China and the Russian Federation) attitude and actions.

The USA moved its top priorities from the Euro-Atlantic community to the Asian-Pacific community. China stopped remaining safe and quiet inside its borders and became a global player mainly on the economic and financial markets, in strategic resources management and,

secondary, in regional security issues. The Russian Federation plays a more significant and sometimes assertive role in Asian, European and Middle East spaces. At the same time, Russia and China try to connect more and more states with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, one of the latest achievements being the participation of Turkey. Also, both powers are working hard to connect themselves with some countries from the EU rather than with the organization itself. The purpose is not an issue of security, but rather it is about trade, finance, strategic resource management and technology. So, yes! The EU and NATO are struggling between Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian interests in many domains, including in security issues.

As far as NATO is concerned, the Alliance does not have a specific adversary in the Eurasian space, but threats are rather coming from this geographical area. Here I would mention nuclear vectors, terrorism, immigration on a large scale (some of those immigrants being religious fundamentalists), and, last but not least, cyber threat. However, there are many friends and partners too. According to this, in my opinion

NATO is prepared to face any threat from whatever direction it may come and it connects the threat with a specific state rather than with a geographical area or a continent.

If we consider NATO`s relation with the Russian Federation, there are mechanisms created for consultations and dialogue. The NATO view, after the involvement of Russia in Ukraine, is clearly presented in the last three Summits declarations.

Looking at China, I think that NATO, as an organization, does not have a clear view yet, but if we consider the USA, the top NATO power, as an individual player, the relation with China is more fluid and complex. However, I think that, at this moment, it is only a bilateral issue, because the two giants share different views on some important issues specific for the Asian-Pacific community, while for NATO this situation is a subject to be observed rather than to interfere with.

From the EU perspective, again, things are fairly complicated, not as much for the organization itself as for individual member countries acting alone. In my view, there are two main approaches to this connectivity, mainly concerning their bilateral

relations with the Russian Federation. There are some countries which want to promote stronger and closer relations with Moscow, mostly dominated by economic, finance and strategic resource management interests, while other countries see the Russian Federation's interests as clashing with their own national interests. This leads to increasing fear and uncertainty, especially after the evolution of the Ukrainian conflict, the sudden annexation of Crimea and, some would say, the soft/weak response of the Euro-Atlantic community to these actions.

In this context, these different opinions at individual level are leading to different points of view at organization level, and that goes for both organizations.

The same situation, with different viewpoints, is related to China, though not yet in the security domain as much as in economic and trade issues. When China wanted to connect itself with the EU space, they used the initiatives of some smaller EU countries, and this situation generated a series of critical comments from some other EU members. When we look back, however, in the last three years all those with a critical voice and some others, have made a long queue to be received by the Beijing leader, and nobody objected openly.

All that considered, I think that the economic, financial and strategic resource management interests are top priorities when we are speaking about the relations between the EU and the Eurasian space. Moreover, when we refer to individual member states this relation could be, on a case-by-case basis, more complicated, even though that means sometimes to forget or neglect some of the principles which govern the organization itself, principles which are normally applied to other nations from the same space, which means applying a double standard. We should not forget that many of the countries on the Asian space have different values and leading principles than those applied in NATO and the EU.

In my opinion, it is important for both organizations to keep an eye on the evolution of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This fairly new organization, is growing up year by year in two directions: in the number of the countries involved and more importantly, in the area of common interests, security being day by day an increasingly

debated issue. It is not impossible, that at some future point, this organization should develop into an Alliance which will connect all the countries from the Eurasian and the Pacific Ocean spaces that, one way or another, are not in the group of the Euro-Atlantic community. This situation can generate in this way a real balance in all domains, including defense and security, for NATO and the EU. Even though the highest technologies and most powerful economies are not in these countries, I will take into consideration that half of the Earth`s population is there, and probably half of this planet`s future strategic resources.

3. THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

Concerning the *regional context, the first question* is: Do NATO and the EU have the capacity to successfully manage specific issues and threats eated o the three seas?

When speaking about that, I am referring to the Baltic, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, all of them with their regional extensions. They all have different problems referring to the security domain as well as to all the other important domains, such as: political, economic, financial, social etc.

NATO has the necessary mechanisms and capabilities to take appropriate measures in the Baltic Sea and in the Mediterranean Sea and to a lesser extent in the Black Sea. The difficulties in the Black Sea are related to its geography, being an internal sea, and especially because of the Montreux Convention provisions over the straits, established in 1936.

After the events in Ukraine and in Syria, special measures were taken at NATO level in order to provide the required capabilities in all these three areas and they are called "reassurance measures". Anybody can find more details about those measures just reading the last three Summits` declarations. I would appreciate that the conceptual phase is almost finished and NATO forces have already started to train in each specific area, and this training phase will continue in the future.

At EU level this issue was seen slightly different, in my view, according to the specific event which was happening in each region. I would say that at EU level the reactions and measures taken were connected more with political, diplomatic, economic and

financial areas rather than defense or military issues.

We have seen those measures taken during the development of events in Ukraine and Syria. It is not my intent to discuss here if they were the best possible measures or the most efficient ones. Yet, it is necessary to say that, comparing to NATO`s similar steps, the EU measures prove that, in the defense posture, the EU does not have the required capabilities or the political determination to address such big scale conflicts.

It is also worth mentioning that the measures taken in the Ukrainian conflict do not show many positive results, the situation being, at least in the Donbas and Crimea provinces, almost the same as four years ago. The issue of Syrian immigrants was handled mainly by the EU and that created a serious debate and contradictory points of view in various member countries. These situations affected a lot the cohesion and solidarity of the EU itself. In this context, taking into consideration the importance of these three regions I would recommend that complementary various measures to those taken at NATO level must be established, in advance, in case of any other crisis situation which might appear. We should be aware

that, for the European space, a crisis situation might emerge mainly in one or in the worst-case scenario in all of these three regions, of course having different roots and actors.

The second question at regional level is: Do NATO and the EU have the desire and the political determination to continue the enlargement process?

I consider this question of top importance because I think that one of the best solutions to provide a better security for our nations on the European continent is to allow for these organizations to increase their number of members, within at least continental borders. Of course, in order to do that, many criteria, specific for each organization, are required to be accomplished. As a Romanian soldier, born in 1964, I have witnessed and contributed throughout my military career to Romania's efforts to fulfill those criteria in order to be admitted in both organizations. Consequently, I know this is not an easy process, but it is by far safer to be a member rather than being on the outside of these organizations, at least concerning the security and defense domains. Some would say that enlargement is an internal process specific to each

organization rather than a regional one. I agree with this comment, it is an internal issue, but on the other hand the effects of the enlargement are at least regional for the EU and NATO as well.

To answer the above question, I think both organizations have almost the same capacity and desire level, with a plus for NATO, which proves more politically determined to continue the enlargement process. The best example is Northern Macedonia which has just joined NATO, but not the EU, yet. In the EU the political determination to continue the process looks to be at a very low level.

There are two categories of possible candidates which are determined to join one or both organizations, some of them being already members of one of them, some others not being members of any. In my view, those possible candidates might be split in two categories according with their geographical position. The first category is composed of countries located inside of the geographical borders of both organizations, including Turkey and Finland, and the others being towards the East of this border, namely Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, to nominate just those which really applied and make efforts to be a member of at least one of the organizations.

If we are taking into consideration the first group of countries, there are the Western Balkan group and the others. Speaking about the Western Balkan countries, I think it is just a matter of time until they join both organizations. It is mainly about fulfilling the EU and NATO criteria and standards. Probably Serbia will need more time to decide if NATO is the right option. The other countries of this group might be analyzed according to their national interest, because for most of them the problem is to reach an internal political decision rather than to reach criteria and standards. Here we can nominate Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland, which, for different national reasons, decided not to join one or another of the organizations. Last but not least, a special status and set of discussions might be developed when speaking about Turkey's possibility to join the EU, this possibility having failed in 2016 when accession talks between Turkey and the EU were suspended.

With reference to the group located outside NATO and EU borders, namely Ukraine, the Republic of Moldov and Georgia,

there are three sets of issues which need to be addressed. First, it is about the requirement to accomplish the entire spectrum of NATO and EU criteria. The second issue is about, more or less, the "frozen conflicts" that unfortunately still exist in the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, and the ongoing one in the case of Ukraine. Last, but probably the most important issue is how to overcome the Russian Federation's opposition to any attempt of enlargement of NATO and the EU to the East of their present limits. Who can open another "Pandora's box" with the Russian Federation?

In conclusion, in future both organizations must keep the doors open for all the candidates who desire to be part of at least one of them. Special attention must be paid to those which, for whatever reason, at this moment, do not have such an option. Indeed, this approach could be very useful in future, and more than that, dialogue and connectivity with neighboring countries are "part of the game" in our days.

4. INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL DILEMMAS

As for the *internal context* of both organizations, there are two dilemmas, and in this respect *the first question* is: Are cohesion and solidarity the key words and main principles in NATO and the EU?

For me this is "the Gordian knot" for both organizations. As a matter of fact, this is the main issue for any other organization in order to be successful. Moreover, it is not about the two organizations, but rather it is about maintaining a strong Transatlantic link as a fundamental principle in the future.

In NATO, cohesion and solidarity are at the top of the Alliance's principles, starting with the Washington Treaty. After the events in Ukraine those principles were strongly emphasized in all NATO Summit declarations. We can say that in this period of time the political strength of the Alliance is mainly based on these two principles.

During the post-Cold War period there were many situations when NATO had difficulties reaching consensus. I would remind you just a few: the first Gulf War, the disintegration of

former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, the cyber attack on Estonia, the Russian Federation`s intervention in Georgia, and lately the Ukrainian and Syrian crises. Sometimes the Alliance reached consensus in its decisions and initiated NATO operations, and in other situations it was preferred a "coalition of the willing" type of operation under a US hat (as it was in the second Iraqi war) or French hat (as was the case with Libya). There were situations when the Alliance decided not to get involved militarily and acted only on the political and diplomatic arena (as was the case with Georgia in the summer of 2008).

In one way or another, in my view, the Alliance has found most of the time the power to move forward and to achieve a compromise in order to maintain the credibility of NATO while not getting involved in a military way.

Another difficult issue has emerged lately, which consists of a strange relationship between Turkey and the Russian Federation. This situation looks strange because it seems to be too close for a NATO member, at least in the weapons acquisition area. Because of that and some other particular bilateral issues, the dialogue between Ankara and Washington has become more contradictory rather than productive. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that Turkey has become, since 2012, a special dialog partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and in 2017 it chaired the Energy Committee of this organization, even though it is not a member of it. Hopefully, NATO as an organization will find the wisdom to move forward while maintaining unity of the Alliance. For a thousand reasons Turkey is of too much importance for NATO, and even more for the European security, than we can imagine, especially in a broad future perspective.

Speaking about the EU cohesion and solidarity, this subject looks rather more complicated in our days.

First of all, because of the BREXIT issue, which in a few weeks might be concluded and become history. This event is highly important for the future of the EU, for many reasons, some of which are: it represents a failure of the organization; it creates a precedent; the weight of the EU will be affected on the international arena; the event could lead to an internal dispute on who is taking Great Britain's place, the

possible construction of EUDF will be affected, and many others.

As an EU citizen, I was a supporter of the United States of Europe type of organization, seeing Lisbon Summit as a first step, but this option looks quite remote now. In this case, if the EU is not going there, the question is: Where is the EU going to? I do not have an answer to this question, but in order to maintain and promote the EU values we ought to remain strong and united, especially when the future looks very unpredictable and challenging.

The next issue concerns how the EU, as an organization, and various member countries reacted to the immigrants' issue, when the contradictions at all levels were strong enough to produce more negative impact than we thought.

Another issue is the Schengen Accord, where there were also a lot of contradictory discussions around the admission process of Romania and Bulgaria.

A similarly important issue would be the way different member states, rather than the organization itself, are approaching the relations with the Russian Federation, especially after the events in Ukraine. Here, I would say that we have a real different

perspective between member states located on the Eastern side of the organization and those located in the central or in the Western side.

All those issues and many others make me have a pessimistic view on the strength of the cohesion and solidarity principles at the EU level. Looking for reasons why different member states of the organization have different points of view on various important issues, some of them mentioned above, I find out two more questions which need to be answered at organizational and member state level.

The first one is: Are we, the EU member states, still prisoners of our history? The second is: Are the size and geographical position of a country, as well as its economic and financial power, more important than the cohesion and solidarity within the organization? Of course, we can have a strong debate on this, but, in my view, the key is how the member states will respond to those questions. Moreover, if we do not learn from our, more or less, common history, and we are not looking seriously at the future, in all aspects of it, the EU organization risks to remain stuck at the present level instead of moving forward, while the other

players, at global and regional level, are moving forward faster than us. This risk should be avoided, and the organization must find the resources to remain united and cohesive.

The *second important dilemma* at internal level might be: Is complementarity with NATO enough for the EU security?

NATO has a strong partnership with the EU, in peace time or crisis situations. This partnership was based on complementarity and it was proved during operations conducted in Afghanistan or the Western Balkans. The success of this cooperation was mainly observed in accordance with the comprehensive approach environment principle, often applied during those missions.

In my view, the complex different capabilities of these two organizations are very well suited to the principle of complementarity. If NATO represents a political military alliance where defense of its members and the military "tool box" are at the core of the organization, the EU has a lot of capabilities outside of the military ones, such as: political power, diplomacy, economic and financial resources, civilian structures and mechanisms able to restore and rebuild governments or/and failed states. Those capabilities were demonstrated during all missions where the EU participated along with NATO or alone under UN or EU mandate. This principle of complementarity between NATO and the EU is often mentioned in the last Summits' declarations, where the NATO-EU strategic partnership has always been a special subject.

Lately, on the EU side, there have been a series of discussions and initiatives which ask for an independent EU military structure called the EU Defense Forces. This structure must provide the necessary military tools designed to grant a high level of a "strategic autonomy" with respect to the defense and security domains at the EU level. There are some EU member states which are questioning this initiative and recommending that NATO should remain the organization tasked to deal with the security and defense domains, at the Euro-Atlantic community level. I am also a supporter of this way of thinking, but in order to find arguments to sustain this approach, I would comment on two questions.

The first question is: Can we afford to create the EUDF? Analyzing the military capabilities

and the financial resources required to create this structure, I believe that some member states of both organizations will be reluctant. In the entire EU space, many governments have a hard time finding the necessary resources to accomplish just NATO commitments, not mentioning the EU ones. Most governments face problems when it comes to providing resources for education, health and social care systems, which are considered top priorities ahead of military issues. So, especially in some of those countries, which are members of both organizations, it will be very difficult to reach an agreement on this subject.

The second question is: Against which adversary must the EUDF be able to react? Or, in other words, which level of ambition must this structure have?

To respond to this, in my view two ideas should be taken into consideration. The first one refers to the hybrid warfare type of operations. Considering the special characteristics of this type of warfare, I think that out of the national military capability of each member state of the EU, a supplementary defense force structure at the organization level is not required. I am saying that because, in most cases, hybrid warfare mechanisms are addressed not by military structures, but rather using diplomatic, economic, financial, political and internal security forces in conjunction with information and intelligence structures. But what would happen if, from a hybrid type of warfare, the situation would evolve into a military conflict? Then the question goes to: Which country or entity can be a threat for the EU? Some would say that the Russian Federation might be a threat. But if so, can the EU fight alone against this powerful adversary? According to the Russian Federation's conventional and nuclear forces capabilities, it will be very hard for the EUDF to be successful and then the EU will be forced to ask for a NATO support.

If we are going to discuss about any other possible adversary in the proximity of the EU space, except for nuclear and/or CBRN vectors, nobody can be considered powerful enough to initiate a conventional conflict with the EU. In the case of nuclear and/or CBRN vectors the issue is quite simple: only NATO has the required capacity to address successfully these threats using Ballistic Missile Defense Capabilities.

In these circumstances, I hope that the EU leaders will take into consideration the necessity, the costs, the required human and financial resources and the effectiveness of this endeavor. That means to calculate how much we need to pay for this, and put the result in balance with what military capabilities we will achieve and when. Moreover, I think that this endeavor should not minimize the transatlantic link unity and cohesion, the strength of this link being essential in order to preserve Euro-Atlantic values, liberties and achievements.

5. CONCLUSIONS

It is necessary, first of all, to admit that in both organizations we have certain dilemmas and we need appropriate answers for all those questions and many others as we go into more detail. Once admitting that, it is our task as scientists, researchers, analysts or specific structures in both organizations to find the best options in the political and defense domains to be recommended to our leadership, who are entitled to take the most efficient decisions and actions.

Of course, "politics drives everything" is a very actual and powerful reason why each and every country, member of either one or both organizations, will take the best organizational decisions in support of their own national interest. However, we must not forget that nobody is strong enough to face alone the future threats and trends. Moreover, the values established on the forefront of our organizations will remain valid in whatever the future has in stock for us – and, with that in view, the Euro-Atlantic community must remain united, and that should be an unquestionable objective. We do not need to reinvent the transatlantic link, it is necessary just to preserve it while adapting the two organizations and all common mechanisms in place to the new geopolitical context, future threats and common interests.

At the end of the day, it is all about what we are leaving to the next generations. To sustain this, I will close by quoting a special thought addressed by the late king of Romania, H.M. Michael I, in a speech delivered before the Romanian Parliament in 2011: "I do not see today's Romania as a heritage from our parents, but as a country which we have borrowed from our children." It is with this

thought in mind that we, as member states and our organizations, must proceed to reduce and minimize the internal issues and to maintain and develop the transatlantic link.

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