
The European Union and the Atlantic Alliance between new territories and new security challenges: a variable geography relationship with variable geometry.

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Abstract

Since the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, the global system seems completely changed. The emergence of new production areas, the fall of consolidated myths, the political changes, the increasing interrelationships between States, territories and regions, are phenomena which generated new geopolitical, economic and social scenarios.

The end of geopolitical certainty involves the opening of the debate on the role that NATO now assumes, on the redefinition of its tasks, strategies and the same geographic scope of the Alliance.

The international political and military events that took place since the end of the 1980s and culminated in the Second Gulf War led us to reflect on the role that NATO, the United States and the European Union play on the world political scene.

The end of the Cold War and Communist regimes in the countries of the former Warsaw Pact have profoundly changed the nature of these relations. First, the East-West dualism created by the Yalta accords that geographically crushed the Western European States, which, moreover, adhered to the North Atlantic Treaty. The importance of military and nuclear capabilities seemed to have been reduced in favor of the economic ones for which the European Community, which had been set up in the meantime, was in the position to play, together with the US and NATO, a key role in the future global equilibrium. However, the Gulf War of 1991 highlighted the absence of a co-ordination structure for the foreign policy of the Community, which responded to the invasion of Kuwait mainly through the imposition of economic sanctions and only marginally through a political and military contribution to NATO, to which the United Nations entrusted the task of conducting the operations.

For more than fifteen years, the EU and NATO have been pursuing a path of mutual approach, both in terms of membership and at the level of sharing strategic objectives, functions and potential scope. They carry out two complementary roles and mutual support for the protection of international peace and security, in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

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Today's security challenges include a complex and changing threat, including international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, dissolving states, new conflicts, organized crime, cyber threats, the shortages of energy sources, environmental degradation and related security risks, natural and man-made disasters, pandemics and many more. Facing these threats will in fact require extensive partnerships and strong synergy between NATO and the European Union.

The two organizations should have a holistic approach to security issues and work together in the defense field. Although neither a geographic division nor a functional task is a viable option, many now believe that some forms of "outreach", such as maintaining peace in Africa and the Balkans, should be marked "EU", while others, such as the current operations in Middle East and Asia, should be "NATO".

The aim of this paper is to highlight, through the analysis of the evolutionary variables within the Alliance and the Union, of new security challenges and the investigation of existing conflicts, how the demise of the established relationship between territory, sovereignty and monopoly of violence, led to a strategic renewal and overcoming the limits inherent in NATO and UE, characterized, however, by the persistence of the importance and centrality of geography of space and territories.

In this perspective, having to face complex and constantly evolving security challenges, the two organizations will have to continue to assess changes in the security context and in the geographic context to adapt its functions to new needs and emergences. In anticipation of this expansion of operational collaboration with geographically distant global partners, NATO-EU cooperation should become the backbone of a strong Euro-Atlantic community.

Keywords: European Union, NATO, security challenges, defense policies, military strategies.