

Estoril Political Forum

June 27th 2023

The war in Ukraine and the European Security

Nuno Severiano Teixeira

There's at least one thing we have to thank Vladimir Putin for.

The invasion of Ukraine is strengthening the transatlantic bond and renewing the European security order.

First, the transatlantic bond. Putin's strategic goal, in addition to Ukraine, was to divide the West, separate the United States from Europe, weaken the European Union and move NATO away from its borders. He achieved just the opposite. The West remained united, and the United States and Europe coordinated their strategic responses to Russia. The Russian threat has given new meaning to NATO, which has strengthened its collective defense and the enlargement to Sweden and Finland took NATO closer to the Russian border. Finally, the European Union, despite all the internal differences, has remained united. It's already in the ninth sanctions package. It has opened the door to Ukraine's future accession. And, completely new, is providing military aid to Ukraine and increasing their defense budgets.

Secondly, the European security order is changing radically. All the principles and diplomatic instruments that founded the European security order in the post-Cold War are now expired: the Helsinki Final Act and the inviolability of borders; the European Security Charter and the indivisibility of European security; the Founding Act and the NATO-Russia Council and the political dialogue between Russia and the West. With the invasion of Ukraine, Putin ended all this. And its political meaning is twofold. First, it is the end to the indivisibility of European security: until now Russia had to be inside; From now on, Russia will have to be outside. Second, Ukraine will no longer be a buffer state. That international functionality ended. From now on Ukraine will be the border of Europe with Russia. And if the trends on the international scene are confirmed, it will be at the same time the border between the Euro-Atlantic community and the Eurasian community. Between democracy and autocracy.

Of course, in addition to the Russian threat there is the challenge of China and transnational risks that persist. But for European security the Russian threat is the most direct and immediate. What

impact do these geopolitical changes have on the transatlantic alliance and in particular on the relations between NATO and the EU?

For Europe in the face of the Russian threat, the priority is collective defense and deterrence. And in this context NATO is undoubtedly the right instrument. The only one with military means, command and control structure, and deterrence culture. Moreover, it is the only one that can link the United Kingdom to European defense. In European defense, the strategic priority of European allies will be NATO and the relationship with the United States.

But in a strategic environment where the American priority is China and the Indo-Pacific and with the memory of the Trump administration and the fear of its possible return, European allies will need to assure their defense when the Americans are not interested in intervening. In this context, what is the place of the European Union and the European Security and Defense Policy?

In the typology of military missions: collective defense, security providing and crisis management, the European Union, given its past as a “normative power”, has always focused on crisis management and non-military threats and risks on the Southern flank. It must continue to do so mainly because NATO will tend to focus on collective defense and the eastern flank. But the European Union can and must develop the necessary capabilities to carry out the other tasks and become useful in the framework of deterrence and collective defense to which it will be called on the eastern flank.

The decision to use the *European Peace Facility* to support Ukraine or the launch of a joint procurement task force is in the good way.

But it can strengthen and extend instruments such as *Permanent Structured Cooperation* (PESCO) – for capacity building - or *European Defense Fund* (EDF) - for technological innovation and industrial base- from simple crisis management to security providing and collective defense. This obviously requires a stronger and permanent institutional cooperation between the EU and NATO, and coordination of PESCO and EDF priorities with NATO planning. In other words, a closer political and strategic interaction between NATO and the EU. It will be a long way but it will certainly be the path for the European Union to become a credible ally of the United States and, at the same time, to gain autonomy to act when the US could not or did not want to intervene. All crises are at the same time opportunities. Perhaps this could be the opportunity for the European defense to overcome its old divisions. First, the traditional division of strategic work: hard work for NATO and the soft work for EU. Second, the old cleavage between Atlanticists and

Europeanists. And, at the same time, strengthen the transatlantic link and European strategic autonomy.