

MADRID SUMMIT 2022 · NATO FACES A CHANGE OF ERA



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NATO 2050 - Spain

Enrique Fojón

Spain's journey in the Atlantic Alliance can be considered "peculiar". It joined NATO on May 30th 1982, without the Guarantee of Article 5 covering the entire national territory. With the coming to power of the Socialist Party, the permanence of Spain in NATO, with restrictions, was publicly endorsed on March 12, 1986, an unprecedented case in the history of the Alliance. After the referendum, Spain left the Military Structure, drawing up agreements for limited and conditioned military participation. Years later, President González acknowledged his mistake in promoting the referendum.

The abrupt unilateral withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq in April 2004 was a severe blow to Spain's international prestige, the consequences of which are still affecting it. This historical background shows a delay in the national strategic development covered with pacifism and international legality, which affects both the definition of national interests and a hypothetical conception of Defense. The incorporation into the Military Structure took place in 1999 under the pressure of the uselessness of our status, given the fact that the newcomers Poland, Hungary

and Czechoslovakia acquired more dominant positions in the Alliance than Spain. The 17 years outside the Military Structure meant for the Spanish Armed Forces an enormous opportunity cost. The new era that, with the war in Ukraine, begins for NATO will affect Spain. How?

Essential changes

The Russian invasion of Ukraine marks a turning point in history. It puts an end to the period that began at the end of the Cold War, when Western countries tried to integrate Russia into a utopian rules-based international order.

Andey Bystritskiy, Chairman of the Moscow Valdai Club said: "Our era is very interesting, but unfortunately, it is also very painful. The key word to describe the contemporary situation is "autarky", the ability of a country to live on its own resources." And the question is, to what extent the contemporary world is capable of creating a world order that has guarantees of security and constructive interaction. Recent developments have shown that conflicts tend to escalate, especially if we do not take their resolution seriously. All in all, the world is at a crossroads. And the path chosen will determine whether humanity will be able to develop a more or less stable future."¹

Rupturist wars are those that drastically change the geopolitical trajectory of the world, by creating a new strategic context. Such wars produce synergies that profoundly shake the governments, forcing them to reconsider the fundamentals of their foreign and security policies. They are the result not so much of a sudden miscalculation but, rather, of an inadequate analytical framework, due to lack of foresight of the evolution of the structural power shifts that are taking place. The wars that transform the system reveal the real distribution of power in key theaters and mark the real beginning of the Great Power Competition, revealing new strategic vectors inconceivable to imagine only a few months before.

Ukraine's resistance to the invasion has re-emphasized the importance of national sovereignty. After three decades of a proclaimed institutionalism and globalism, a post-Cold War framework,

¹ https://valdaiclub.com/a/chairman-speech/world-at-a-crossroads/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=277&utm_medium=email

there is a return to the realist foundations of National Security. International institutions could not prevent Russia from invading Ukraine. Second, there is no substitute for naked power. No nation can remain secure if it lacks a strong defense, regardless of whether or not it belongs to a military alliance, as NATO has once again relied on the United States to protect Europe. It has also become clear that, in a conflict, the objective should not be to reach a compromise as quickly as possible, but to defeat the aggressor and secure the nation's territory. The two biggest powers on the European continent, Germany and France, have failed to lead, proving once again the saying that being big is not the same as being strong.

The current crisis in Ukraine demonstrates that war is an increasingly complex phenomenon whose expressions transcend the purely military sphere. Although the war is being waged with fighting on Ukrainian soil, the projection of its geoeconomic effects has already reached a transnational scale. Understanding that Geoeconomics deals with how a state forms and exercises power by reference to economic, rather than political, factors. Geoeconomics combines geopolitical logic with economic instruments.²

This conflict illustrates how the realm of geoeconomics is a chessboard, for confrontation that offers unconventional and powerful weapons and shields. Therefore, it has become a key battlespace in the present and foreseeable future. However, while less lethal than nuclear weapons, economic warfare is very dangerous in its effects, such as wreaking havoc, bringing unintended consequences, and even exacerbating tensions beyond a critical boiling point.

Predicting with a high level of accuracy the geo-economic aspect of the Ukrainian war is difficult, but it is important to keep in mind the serious collateral effects on European economies produced by a growing strategic confrontation in the monetary domain and a revanchist policy. The drive to drastically reorganize the structure of the global financial ecosystem could result in a more uncertain, chaotic and dangerous environment. Under these conditions, the nature of National Power, conflict and hegemony are redefined according to the parameters of geoeconomic criteria. Thus, the results of a race in the Geoeconomic Competition produce

² BLACKWILL, Robert and HARRIS, Jennifer. *War by other means*. Harvard University Press. 2017.

synergies that change the factors shaping Strategy, National Security, Foreign Policy, Intelligence, and the "art of governance."

From whence it came

The end of the Cold War, from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the collapse of the Soviet Empire, marked an unequivocal decades-long success of American foreign policy in Europe. Over the next three decades, however, the United States has faced other kinds of problems, both in relations with post-Soviet Russia and in transatlantic relations with allies in Europe. Both aspects need to be considered: those of the adversary and those of our allies. The result is a fundamental strategic dilemma.

A revisionist Russia emerged in the Putin era as a strategic competitor, as recognized by the "US National Defense Strategy" of 2017 (NSS 2017). Moscow has once again adopted a hostile posture towards Washington, with traits similar in character, if not degree, to Soviet-era Russian policies. Such a competition between Russia and the United States did not surprise and has very deep roots.

At the same time, the United States remained at odds with some European partners, particularly France and Germany. Such dysfunctions reflect a fundamental post-Cold War reality. Unlike pre-1989 Western Europe, a unified Europe believes itself to be less dependent on American security guarantees and therefore sets its own foreign policy objectives, independent of or even contrary to Washington's interests. On the contrary, those countries most historically aware of their vulnerability to Russia, the Baltic States and the former members of the Warsaw Pact are now the most committed to the United States. Washington's foreign policy faced a double challenge: the resurgence of the Cold War adversary, Russia, and the weakening of transatlantic relations.

These simultaneous challenges created a dilemma for U.S. foreign policy: adopt increasingly tough stances toward Moscow or should the U.S. effort emphasize repairing transatlantic relations, which means returning to closer relations with Paris and Berlin. The problem: those two visions are at odds with each other. France and Germany have been considerably softer on Russia than on Washington. The more Washington increased its criticism of Putin and enabled

confrontational policies, the more emphasis it had to devote to traditional allies on the continent. Each action separately is credible, but implementing them simultaneously was complex.

The Europeans must admit that, in Washington, Russian hawks will always have the preference. At least since the beginning of this century, U.S. administrations have shown inconsistencies in their attitudes toward Russia. Any fantasy of détente has repeatedly run up against the tenacity of Moscow's uncompromising ambitions. Compared to its predecessors, the Trump administration has been tough on Russia, with the constant proposal of sanctions on Crimea, the implementation of the Magnitsky Act³ and its opposition to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline.

Both Germany and France have preferred not to damage their relations with Russia. Therefore, any American proposal to confront Moscow would contribute to the deterioration of relations with Berlin and Paris. The problem for Washington was whether there were formulas to align American strategy with the interests of Berlin and Paris, in order to establish an Atlanticist collaboration against Moscow's revisionism.

These were difficult times for U.S.-German relations. Before the invasion of Ukraine, the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline was completed and the coalition government was formed in Berlin including the Greens, the Welsh Compromise, 2% of GDP for Defense and the ban on stationing US tactical nuclear weapons on German soil, which by NATO agreement would be used by the Luftwaffe.

As far as the 2022 elections in France are concerned, the good news is that neither the anti-Americans of the far left nor those of the extreme right won. Unable to impose its military will even in Mali, France cannot impose itself anywhere else without significant support, and for that support there is no other candidate than the United States. The opportunities for Franco-American collaboration lie in the Sahel against islamists and in the Indo-Pacific region, where France has interests because of its overseas territories and could, for example, join more freedom of navigation operations as a way to counter the other strategic competitor, China.

³ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ley_Global_Magnitsky_sobre_Responsabilidad_de_Derechos_Humanos

The invasion of Ukraine is a harsh awakening for a Europe, in which Spain is deeply immersed, that had been asleep in a naïve idealism for many years. Although the response to the, more than anticipated, invasion was apparently swift, Europe remains very weak. Beyond the next few weeks, the strategy to be adopted must involve a profound change in the structural model for its geoeconomic development.

To describe the situation in Europe, Philippe Silberzahn said: "Europe has not only yielded to pacifism by limiting its defense effort, especially since the fall of the USSR, but has also neglected its wealth-creating core. It now faces the dual challenge of diminishing economic and military power. Europe suddenly discovers that while organizing citizens' conventions on climate change and signaling its virtue, Putin was making moves. Europe is discovering, or rediscovering, that humans also need to eat and be safe. Europe is rediscovering that there are Bedouins willing to plunder at the slightest opportunity, and that they do so simply because they can, when their neighbors are weak or naïve, as Europe was. Europe is rediscovering that security has a cost, and that that cost can only be assumed if one has the means, that is, if one has a powerful productive core. In short, Europe is rediscovering what Machiavelli explained five centuries ago, that you have to see the world as it is, and not as you would like it to be. At a time when, in the face of the Russian danger, Europe is suddenly rediscovering the need for soldiers, its strategic priority in the coming years must be the restoration of this core of wealth creation. A strong economy is the condition for Europe to continue to exist as a model in the world." ⁴

The foreseeable NATO strategy, the EU and its consequences for Spain

In June 2019, the document entitled "A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy" issued a call for Europe to achieve "strategic autonomy".⁵ The motivation behind this request was a consequence of President Trump's attacks on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which reinforced European concerns about the credibility of the United States' commitment to the Alliance.

⁴ <https://philippesilberzahneng.wordpress.com/>

⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf

"Strategic autonomy" can be defined as the institutional capacity to independently plan and carry out military operations across the spectrum of conflict and to autonomously develop the necessary defense capabilities.⁶

Although the vast majority of analysts agree that Europe lacks "strategic autonomy", the numerous European Defense initiatives, including the European Defense Fund (EDF), the strengthening of the Permanent Structured Cooperation Mechanism (or PESCO), the European Intervention Initiative and the EU Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), they supposedly indicate that Europeans are taking significant steps towards strategic autonomy.

The question is: Could Europeans develop an autonomous defense capability in the event of a complete U.S. withdrawal from Europe? Although in the short term withdrawal is unlikely, it is not a scenario that can be ruled out in the future.

Studies and analyses show that European efforts to achieve "strategic autonomy" will encounter two main constraints: deep deficits in defense capability, which will be difficult to overcome, and the so-called "strategic cacophony", that is, deep divergences across the continent in terms of visions of national defense policies and, especially, threat perception. These restrictions, which are endogenous, are mutually reinforcing and impose a limit on the ability of Europeans to achieve "strategic autonomy" in the short term. Consequently, if the United States were to withdraw completely, the continent would become significantly more vulnerable to Russian meddling and aggression. Moreover, if US-backed NATO were to disappear, this would undermine the only institutional framework that has fostered, at the strategic level, a certain degree of coordination between European doctrinal and capability countries. This, in turn, would make institutionalized and intra-European cooperation in defense more difficult.

From a large number of studies, it can be deduced that the notion that Europeans could achieve defense autonomy, after the withdrawal of the United States, is illusory. The political implication is simple: if the United States wants European stability, it needs to remain in Europe.

Ukraine has imposed a new direction on NATO in the sense that it has provided it with a relatively omnidirectional task: deterring and defending itself against Russia on the Eastern

⁶ <https://direct.mit.edu/isec/article/45/4/7/100571/Illusions-of-Autonomy-Why-Europe-Cannot-Provide>

Front. The Alliance has adopted new doctrinal concepts and procedures and has taken practical steps to operationalize this task. The Finnish and Swedish applications for Alliance membership implicitly recognize that "strategic autonomy" resides in the Alliance.

There is consensus on the fact that security challenges in the Middle East and North Africa create risks for NATO member states, so it should be embedded in the Alliance's strategy, which is very important for Spain. Whether there is a consensus on what to do and whether NATO should be a central component of the response is less obvious. NATO's presence in MENA is a strategic decision.

If, on the contrary, NATO wishes to enhance its presence and impact in MENA, then a significant effort will be required at the strategic level. The Alliance alone could not address the root causes of instability in the region, which is clearly beyond its usual competence, but it could at least make more sense of what it has done so far.

Spain facing the new international situation

The geographical position of Spain, part of NATO's Southern Front, provides opportunities and risks for national interests, which should be managed strategically or, in other words, Spain has a permanent geopolitical servitude that configures, to a large extent, its National Security.

The Spanish territory has control of a "choke point" of global value, the Strait of Gibraltar, with national territory on both sides, and insular national territory in the accesses from the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The situation on the Southern Front is complex, with several potential sources of destabilization. In recent years, NATO has recognized the need to project stability on its Southern Front, noting that migration flows and jihadist terrorism are a real threat to the Alliance.

North Africa is characterized by a situation of general instability. Some of these factors are:

- In Egypt, the regime controls growing popular discontent.
- Libya has been without a government since 2011. In reality, it has two pockets of power, a situation that increases the risk of armed clashes.

- The authoritarian turn in Tunisia risks being the prelude to another turbulent season; Algeria and Morocco are in a situation of extreme tension because of their dispute over Western Sahara.
- The situation in the Sahel region is highly volatile and where the Russian presence is a fact.
- Burkina-Faso, Mali and Chad are institutionally destabilized.
- The economic and power dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean could once again provoke an explosion around the eponymous gas pipeline, which has gained new interest after the Russian war in Ukraine.

The Alliance is well aware of the need to project stability on its Southern Front and has indicated in the past that it is willing to maintain an ongoing assessment of the Zone. Its reflection in the Madrid Strategic Concept is unknown.

This circumstance is not in the conscience of the Spanish people nor is it, nor has it been, dealt with politically. It is not precisely the strategic mentality that is the strength of the national executives and legislatures in the last three centuries.

It is paradoxical that a state such as Spain, with a certain and clear geopolitical risk, its political, economic and academic elites have not tried to shape the corresponding strategic mentality or, what is the same, that Foreign Policy is a power relationship and to raise awareness of it to the citizens. The policy pursued by successive democratic governments, with the exception of a few years at the beginning of the century, which ended with the terrorist attack on Madrid on 11 March 2004, confirms the lack of such a mentality.

The reaction to that fact was the return to the absence of strategy and the option for a pacifist-normative utopian path. The absence of geopolitical analysis is the dominant feature in Spanish Foreign Policy which, by its nature, is reactive. This attitude contradicts the fact that International Relations are characterized by the application of power to preserve national interests, since states are ultimately responsible for their own Security and Defense. It must be shown that military power is a legitimate component of the state, which is constituted and updated to deter or comply in the defense of national interests.

Conclusions

To begin the geopolitical path, successive national governments will have to recognize that our geographical situation entails a geopolitical risk that imposes servitude on Spain and that needs to be managed through strategies in their practical sense: the way to exercise power. These Security and Defense constraints are not new and should be exposed to public opinion. Spain will have to model political, institutional and educational aspects. National Security cannot be divided territorially, as has been demonstrated in the management of the pandemic. Separatist tendencies constitute a factor of Spain's high geopolitical vulnerability, which can be employed by foreign powers against national interests.

As has been exposed, Spain has a high geopolitical risk, with its resulting military component. This circumstance must be the "hub" of the National Security Strategy, derived from the explicit national interests, only then the Defense will enjoy political priority, with the consequent budgetary hierarchy. The Spanish Armed Forces must be designed to develop the Operational Concept necessary to meet their own needs. Therefore, a Force Design will have to be determined from which the necessary operational capabilities are derived.

The announced weakening, or the breakdown of the era of trust in international institutions, supranationalism and internationalism, seems to be tending to be coming to an end and we will have to be prepared for a situation without such confidence. Democratic Spain has developed in this environment and should prepare for an era of "intergovernmentalism", for which there is currently no national political baggage to face it.

Spain must strengthen the instruments of power: economy, diplomacy, information and defense. There are political deficits in all four. We must be aware that a defense policy appropriate to the needs of the security and defense context has not been developed. Years of neglect and with a structural budgetary contribution, have decapitalized the Armed Forces and created a crisis of readiness and availability that will take years to correct. Spain has participated in the last twenty years in UN peace operations and NATO operations, but without projecting combat power. The work in these operations has been important, but, in general, they were not aimed at the real direct challenges to the security of Spain.

The crisis of the Armed Forces drags the Defense Industry, assimilation and technological development, something that affects national wealth. It follows that a National Industrial, Technological and Commercial Strategy is necessary in the Digital Age for Spain to be an actor in the Strategic Competition.

To be a protagonist in NATO, you have to provide military capabilities. Therefore, the mantra of "shared and nonshared threats" must be dismissed as absurd, whether Spain is in NATO or not, everything consists in the political interpretation of the Treaties. It is necessary to take realistic measures on what capabilities must be obtained in order to manage the threats of today's world, identifying those that affect us directly, and invest in innovation and technology capabilities, if the Armed Forces are to be an instrument of the State Strategy. Technology alone does not provide military capacity if it does not become, through design, an instrument for the preparation of doctrine, training reference and element of Operational Concepts. Technology is the foundation of innovation.

The need for a solid State is established as a condition for the future for Spain. No member of a supranational organization will renounce either its sovereignty or its institutions if it has the power to do so. No democracy will survive a lack of popular awareness of the situation of its nation, nor the subordination of national interests to electoral strategies. The task of making the situation known to the public is a task of the political leadership.