
The Transformation of the European security architecture

MIREES' Open Lecture

On December 16, 2015, Sonia Lucarelli, Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Bologna, delivered a lecture on the evolving patterns of what she called the European security architecture, i.e., the institutions regarding European security. An issue certainly actual and concrete, in the context of which particular attention was given to the post-Cold War developments at the regional and global levels.

The starting point of Lucarelli's presentation was a brief historical overview of the main steps that brought to the construction of the European security architecture. These ranged from the signing of the Atlantic Charter in 1941, to the settlement of EU and OSCE in the late 90s, without forgetting the importance of the Bruxelles Treaty and the foundation of the Western European Union. They all contributed - even if qualitatively in different ways - to the formation and consolidation of those principles that, after WWII, have become the essence of the Western global outlook and that, even after the end of the Cold War, still endure in today's European order, permeating the search for security and stability in the region with liberal(ist) and democratic rhetoric.

It is not by chance that this European order has been defined as a Liberal one, being in fact based upon the willingness to guarantee first and foremost the openness of the economy within and among States; a limitation to this political-economic view is to be found in a sort of "social propensity" typical of the European space which has brought about the formula of the "embedded liberalism", i.e., a liberalism in which the State grants minimum facilities and services for all its citizens, thus differentiating from the purely American outlook and posing the premises for today's welfare State. In addition to this, on an international level, the Liberal order has been based upon the principle of joint management of the order itself, which concretized in high density of international regimes and organizations founded upon sets of shared norms and rules to be considered - not only according to the juridical principles of *diuturnitas* and *opinio juris sive necessitatis*, but also on a more superficial level of political culture - as an international constitution. Quoting Ikenberry, Lucarelli defined this state of affairs as Constitutionalism.

Further recalling the studies of another prominent scholar of International Relations, Karl Deutsch, it has been underlined how this Liberal order gave birth to a (transatlantic) security community in which States feel no longer threatened by each other as a structural condition, i.e., where they can coexist more peacefully given a lessened security dilemma. In other words, through confidence-building measures, the fostering of a common identity, and of a common normative web - so through the construction of a "we-sense" -, States in the European region managed to escape the trap of the security dilemma, deepening in time their relations to the point of becoming now an "amalgamated security community", characterized by a high sense of belonging and the practice of sovereignty out-sourcing to common supra-national institutions - mainly NATO and the EU.

As a socio-political construct composed, in its turn, by other socio-political constructs - the States - it is clear that the European security architecture has undergone continuous change since its origin. In recent times, the end of the Cold-War and the pivotal events of the Balkan wars, the “War on Terror” following the 9/11, the economic crisis, and the qualitative transformation of terrorism with the now infamous IS seem to have imposed a more rapid pace of transformation to the Liberal order. In particular, Professor Lucarelli highlighted two major changes, the one regarding the concept of security applied by regional actors, and the other concerning their main international organizations.

In dealing with the former, she recognized a double-faceted turn, both in its scope and in functional terms. Firstly, the scope of security has changed in the sense that these States apply no more a classical concept of security based exclusively upon national and territorial defense against an external enemy, political and military in nature, but a broader multi-vectorial concept, subjective in its nature, fostered by the process of securitization of issues through elites’ discourses throughout time - as perfectly explained in the theories of the Copenhagen School of International Relations. A wider range of themes thus is now part of the security rhetoric and practice of European States, from economy to social order, and migration patterns. Secondly, the concept of security mutated also in its function after the end of the Cold War, directly affecting the functions of the main international organizations of the region. In fact, being the enemy of that time - the USSR -, defeated and, as such, no more available as a gathering factor for the Western camp, there has been the need for a new strategic concept and a renewal of the institutional aims, broadened as a consequence of the change in scope already mentioned. This happened clearly to NATO. If, during the Cold War, article 5 was the core of European security, i.e., if at that time military security was the major issue, now the approach of the Alliance evolved: notwithstanding the permanence of collective defense as an important aim, the new Strategies drafted in the last twenty years contemplated also crisis management and cooperative security - as the cases of Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan, and the practice of partnerships testify. EU as well has undergone these functional adjustments, more radically and without any background. Relevant with this regard is the NATO-EU Berlin Plus Agreement, which set the principles for the participation to international missions of States that are part of both institutions and allowed the EU to use NATO’s structures even without the participation of US to the missions.

Finally, the organizational arrangements of the European security architecture has been redefined also in terms of membership. In fact, with the de-construction of the socialist camp, those countries previously in it felt some sort of willingness to “return to Europe” and enter a “club of new friends”, in order to find a new ordered space and protect their new independence. As a consequence, both NATO and EU started enlargement processes, in parallel; relevant is the vast and diverse program of partnerships, which could be seen also as auxiliary means for broadening the security area under control. Clearly, as recent events have demonstrated, this has caused several tensions with Russia.

This structure, however, is all but perfect. In particular for what regards the functional developments both in the concept of security and their setbacks in terms of institutional arrangements, the addition of new aims and objectives to the pre-existing ones gave rise to a debate questioning the compatibility between the original military-defensive nature of NATO and the plethora of tasks of which it has now entitled itself. Doubts go in two directions: on the one hand, there is the possibility that engaging in more loose tasks territorial defense capabilities would be undermined; on the other hand, there is the risk that adhering strictly to a “Westphalian” concept of security - e.g., taking part to the bombing of Syria as an Alliance - the overall security would be decreased, not increased. Also for the EU the problem is similar, even if quite reverse in its terms: starting from a totally non-military background, the problem is one of ability to effectively cope with more classical-security-oriented functions, alongside the evolution of the present ones.

Professor Lucarelli gave a clear and pragmatic constructivist view on the European security architecture, highlighting the inter-play between ideological-political aspects and global

developments in fostering the new characteristics of regional institutions. It would be interesting to further develop this theme from a realist perspective, so concentrating on the effects of the redistribution of power at the international level both at the end of the Cold War and at present. In this context, power differentials and not elites' discourses should be recognized at the very basis of the superficial changes in institutional arrangements; this would offer the opportunity to assess the hierarchies within the international organizations of the region and, concerning instead the regimes, focus could be put on their efficiency, efficacy, and solidity. If the Visegrad Group - a lowly institutionalized regime composed by Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia - would offer a good case study for this latter aspect, the EU would offer the possibility to assess whether the Liberal rhetoric is still to be considered as fully adequate to legitimize its structural needs; moreover, EU would present itself as the perfect case to reconstruct the debate about its standing in the world: can it become a Great Power without properly develop hard-power potentials? And, more generally, are "hard capabilities" really no more crucial in the actual international system? Today's global events seem to offer a negative answer to both questions.

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