CONSIDERATIONS ON THE EU AND NATO SECURITY RESPONSIBILITIES

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Since its establishment, the two organisations, NATO and the European Union (EU) have acted to find the most effective ways, adapted to the constantly changing international environment, to carry out their basic missions and to maintain a strong transatlantic relationship.

The EU, especially after the end of the Cold War, has made significant progress in the direction of building and strengthening a common defence policy as well as the necessary means for its implementation in accordance with its security interests.

During the resolution of certain security crises in Europe, but also outside it, there were certain differences between the USA and certain allies, some of them members of both NATO and the EU, regarding the necessary actions to perform the security responsibilities.

The differences between the two organisations were mainly represented by the assessment of the threats, the institutions involved in the decision-making to trigger military actions, the requirements for military capabilities, the optimal ratio between political and military means in resolving crises and the share of military expenses in the gross domestic product. Moreover, the steps taken at the EU level have not always been the most appropriate for the development of credible military capabilities and for independent military actions, in crises where NATO as a whole is not involved.

Keywords: defence capabilities; security challenges; defence policy; crisis management; European security;

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INTRODUCTION

Strategic trends in recent years illustrate the accumulation of a substantial potential to reshape relations between actors with global interests, with direct effects on the stability and predictability of the international system, and the revival of global strategic competition confirms the transition to a new security paradigm. (*The Country's National Defence Strategy for the period 2020-2024*, 2020, p.17). The present article addresses several questions central to the debate over European security and the future of the robust transatlantic relationship as follows: What is the evolution of EU-NATO relations, especially in the security field? What are the particular security responsibilities of the European Union and NATO, and what is the correlation between the two organisations? What are the EU-NATO differences over the security responsibilities? What is the European Union's and NATO's strategy on threats response? Is the European Union a security provider? Does the EU meet the challenges on forces and capabilities?

Both NATO and the European Community (EC), now the EU, had their origins in the efforts to stabilise Europe after the Second World War. NATO's original purpose was to provide collective defence through a mutual security guarantee for the United States of America and its European allies to counterbalance potential threats from the Soviet Union. The EC's purpose was to provide political stability to its members through securing democracy and free markets. The United States of America has strongly supported both NATO and the EC/EU, based on the belief that stability in Europe engenders growth of democracy, reliable military allies, and strong trading partners. The evolution of NATO and the EC/EU after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has brought with it some friction between the United States of America and several of its allies over the security

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responsibilities of the two organisations. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 1). These differences centre around threat assessment, defence institutions, and military capabilities.

For decades, the USA and the EU (its predecessor institutions included) have maintained diplomatic and economic ties. The 1990 Transatlantic Declaration on EC-US Relations established the institutional framework for consultation, including meetings at the Ministerial level. (European Parliament, 1990).

In 1990, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, some European governments – led by France – concluded that they lacked the military capabilities to respond beyond the North Atlantic Treaty area, to distant threats. In consultation with the United States of America, they sought to establish the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI) within NATO, that would allow for consultation among themselves and with NATO over response to a threat. The USA asked that ESDI should not duplicate NATO structures, such as headquarters and a planning staff, but rather *"borrow"* NATO structures for planning and carrying out operations. In 1994-1996, NATO endorsed steps to build an ESDI *"separable but not separate"* from NATO to give the European allies the ability to act in crises where NATO as a whole was not engaged. (Archick, Gallis, Ib.).

In 1998-1999, the EU largely adopted ESDI as its own and began to transform it into a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), given greater definition by more detailed arrangements for the Europeans to borrow NATO assets for the *"Petersberg tasks"* (crisis management, peace operations, search and rescue, and humanitarian assistance). (Petersberg Declaration, 1992, p. 6). The principal differences between ESDP and ESDI were in the effort to secure more independence from NATO tutelage and guidance in the event that the USA expressed reluctance to become involved in a crisis. The Kosovo conflict of 1999 further spurred this effort, when most EU members of NATO conceded that they still lacked adequately mobile and sustainable forces for crisis management. (Ib., p. 6). ESDP had to confirm that NATO and the EU had shared objectives and the Euro-Atlantic security and political relations would be strengthened by the development of the EU pillar.

All EU members express a wish to see a strong US-led NATO. However, there are disputes with the United States of America over

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how or whether to involve international institutions, such as the UN, in international crises. (Hunter, 2002, pp.74-75). There are also disagreements over the weight given to political versus military instruments in resolving these crises. These disputes have fuelled European desires to develop a more independent ESDP. The Treaty of Lisbon (i.e., the Treaty on European Union/TEU) requires the Member States to make available (Article 42(1)) and progressively improve (Article 42(3)) their military capabilities. (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007, p. C306/34).

The United States of America maintains that ESDP must be closely tied to NATO, given the large number of states that belong to both NATO and the EU as well as the limited European defence resources. The issues raised in the 1990s debate over European security remain the essence of the debate today. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 2). Moreover, starting in 2014, as well as in 2022, the USA and the EU imposed sanctions on Russia in response to the annexation of Crimea and the invasion of Ukraine.

EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGY ON RESPONSE TO THREATS

The EU, following the Treaty of Maastricht (1992), has had a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), established in 1993, in which member states have adopted common policies, undertaken joint actions, and pursued coordinated strategies in areas in which they can reach consensus. The eruption of hostilities in the Balkans in the early 1990s and the EU's limited tools for responding to the crisis convinced EU leaders that the Union had to improve its ability to act collectively in the foreign policy realm. Previous EU attempts to further such political integration had been hindered for decades based on member states concerns about protecting national sovereignty and different foreign policy prerogatives.

Most allied governments have contended that the USA places excessive emphasis on the military over political means to counter a threat. In general, they believe that military action must be undertaken within a multilateral framework. The allied debate over pre-emptive

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attack was affected by the US decision to terminate UN weapons of mass destruction (WMD) inspections and to go to war against Iraq in March 2003. The EU recognises the primary responsibility of the United Nations Security Council for maintaining peace and international security.

The initial refusal by France, Germany, and Belgium to approve NATO military assistance to Turkey in February 2003 in anticipation of a possible attack by Iraq sharply divided the Alliance. Most allies said then, and maintain now, that a UN resolution is a requisite step, whenever possible, for NATO military action. The inability of the US Administration to locate WMD in Iraq led to renewed insistence among the European allies that their opposition was correct and that a UN imprimatur should be sought for NATO operations. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 3).

Europeans remain wary of arguments justifying the crossing of borders and resorting to military action. The establishment of the United Nations in 1946, under US leadership, was one means to ensure that international diplomatic and public opinion could be brought to enhance understanding of an impending danger and how to respond to it.

The allied debate over pre-emptive attack, out-of-area engagement, and *"legitimisation"* of military operations was generated by the US will to avoid the Alliance difficult decision-making procedures. The US Administration believes that NATO military actions should mostly be conducted by *"coalitions of the willing"*. In this view, the Allies, of which only a small number have deployable forces capable of high-intensity conflict, should use coalitions of member states that agree upon a threat and have the means to counter it. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 4). Most European allies believe that *"coalitions of the willing"* undermine the solidarity of the Alliance and the consensus decision-making principle. Their support for the principle of consensus centres upon a desire to maintain political solidarity for controversial measures. (Clark, 2001, pp. 164, 176-178, 215-219, 224-225, 249-256). The recent world events have demonstrated that European soft power has limitations.

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EU leaders viewed ESDP as one of the great projects on the road to European integration. Countries such as the UK, Italy, and Spain considered that bringing more and better military hardware to the table would give the European allies a bigger role in the Alliance decision-making. Newer EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe, such as Poland and the three Baltic states, backed ESDP but maintained that it must not weaken NATO or the transatlantic link. Germany, given its size and wealth, was considered critical to the success of ESDP, but it has played a rather passive role in much of ESDP's development. France has traditionally been intent on developing a more autonomous European defence identity. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 18). At the same time, France has asserted that the EU should develop a full command and planning structure of its own. US officials contended that such a structure would rival NATO's large planning cell and be a wasteful duplication of resources. (Mehta, 2018, pp. 1-3).

Following 11 September 2001, the EU has struggled with whether to expand ESDP's purview to include combating external terrorist threats or other new challenges, such as countering the proliferation of WMD. The description of *"Petersberg tasks"* in the text of the EU's newly-agreed reform treaty (The Lisbon Treaty) states that: *"all of these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism"* (NATO and the European Union, 2008), and many analysts assert that this language would effectively expand *"Petersberg tasks"* to include combating terrorism.

In the wake of the terrorist bombings in Spain, on 11 March 2004, EU leaders issued a new *"Declaration on Combating Terrorism".* In November 2004, EU officials outlined a more detailed plan to enhance EU military and civilian capabilities to prevent and protect both EU forces and civilian populations from terrorist attacks, and to improve EU abilities to manage the consequences of a terrorist attack.

Overall, critics of ESDP contended that it will mean less influence for the United States of America in Europe. They suggest that the possible development within NATO of an *"EU caucus"* – pre-negotiated, common EU positions – could complicate the Alliance decision-making and decrease Washington's leverage.

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As noted previously, EU plans for its rapid reaction force depend on double or triple-hatting forces already assigned to NATO or other multinational units, thus potentially depriving NATO of forces it might need if a larger crisis arose subsequent to an EU deployment. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 19).

The European Union is a unique and essential partner for NATO, shares the same values, and plays complementary, coherent, and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security. NATO and the EU will enhance the strategic partnership, strengthen political consultations and increase cooperation on issues of common interest, including the military field. Developing coherent and mutually reinforcing capabilities, while avoiding unnecessary duplications, are the key to joint efforts to make the Euro-Atlantic area safer. (NATO Strategic Concept, 29 June 2022, pp. 1, 10).

Russia's unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 grossly violates international law and the principles of the UN Charter and undermines European and global security and stability. Russia's war of aggression constitutes a tectonic shift in European history. Confronted with growing instability, strategic competition and security threats, the EU decides to take further decisive steps towards building European sovereignty and reducing dependencies.

In December 2021, the EU decided that it would take more responsibility for its own security and, in the field of defence, pursue a strategic course of action and increase its capacity to act autonomously. The European Council agreed to: increase substantially defence expenditures; stimulate Member States' collaborative investments in joint projects and joint procurement of defence capabilities; invest further in the capabilities necessary to conduct the full range of missions and operations and take measures to strengthen and develop defence industry. The EU needs to best prepare for fast-emerging challenges by: protecting ourselves against ever-growing hybrid warfare; enhancing the security and defence dimension of space industries and activities; accelerating ongoing efforts to enhance military mobility throughout the EU. (The European Council, 2022, pp.1-5).

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THE EUROPEAN UNION – SECURITY PROVIDER

For decades, there has been discussions within the EU about creating a common security and defence policy. Previous EU efforts to forge a defence arm foundered on member states' national sovereignty concerns and fears that an EU defence capability would undermine NATO and the transatlantic relationship. However, the US hesitancy in the early 1990s to intervene in the Balkan conflicts favoured the creation of an EU defence arm. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 11).

Improving European military capabilities has been difficult, especially given many years of flat or declining European defence budgets. Serious capability gaps exist in strategic air and sealift, command and control systems, intelligence, and other force multipliers. Also, a relatively low percentage of European forces are deployable for expeditionary operations. A solution may be pooling assets among several member states and developing national niche capabilities as possible ways to help remedy European military shortfalls.

In 2004, the EU established the European Defence Agency (EDA) to help coordinate defence-industrial and procurement policy in an effort to stretch European defence funds farther. Recently, many EU officials and national leaders have supported increased defence spending and advocated for further EU defence integration. Such calls have been driven by both the new security challenges facing Europe, including a resurgent Russia, and a desire to bolster the EU project in light of Brexit. At the same time, fundamental differences exist among EU countries about the best way to manage Russia in the longer term. (The Council of The European Union, 2021, pp.1-6).

The deficiencies in European defence capabilities exposed by NATO's 1999 Kosovo air campaign, gave new momentum to ESDP. (Hunter, 2002, pp. 3,10, 23, 30,115,121,130). EU leaders have hoped ESDP will provide a military backbone for the Union's evolving CFSP, a project aimed at furthering EU political integration and boosting the EU's weight in world affairs. They have also hoped that ESDP will give EU member states more options for dealing with future crises.

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Most EU members have insisted that ESDP should be tied to NATO – as have US policymakers – and that EU efforts to build more robust defence capabilities should reinforce those of the Alliance. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 12).

Since 1999, with political impetus initially from the UK and France, the EU has been working to develop a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). CSDP has sought to improve the EU's ability to respond to security crises and to enhance European military capabilities. The EU has created three defence decision-making bodies and has developed a rapid reaction force and multinational *"battlegroups"*. Such EU forces are not a standing *"EU army"* but rather a catalogue of troops and assets at appropriate readiness levels that may be drawn from existing national forces for EU operations. CSDP operations focus largely on tasks such as peacekeeping, crisis management, and humanitarian assistance. Many CSDP missions to date have been civilian, rather than military in nature. The EU is or has been engaged in CSDP missions in regions ranging from the Balkans and the Caucasus to Africa and the Middle East.

France and some other countries have traditionally favoured a more independent EU defence arm. Many French officials have long argued that the EU should seek to counterbalance the United States of America on the international stage and viewed ESDP as a vehicle for enhancing the EU's political credibility. (Ib., p. 12).

NATO support for ESDP and for the use of NATO assets in EU-led operations has been conditioned, since 24 April 1999, on three *"redlines"*, stated in article 9 of Washington Summit Communique: no decoupling from NATO. ESDP must complement NATO and not threaten the indivisibility of European and North American security; no duplication of NATO command structures or Alliance-wide resources and no discrimination against European NATO countries that are not members of the EU. (NATO, p. 3, 1999). The non-EU NATO members were concerned about being excluded from formulating and participating in the EU's ESDP, especially if they were going to be asked to approve *"lending"* NATO assets to the EU.

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With the inception of the *battlegroup* concept, the EU began creating these new combat units – completely from the ground up – for six-month readiness periods. (The European Council, 2013, p. 2).

At its December 1999 Helsinki Summit, the EU announced its *"determination to develop an autonomous capacity to take decisions and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crises"*. At Helsinki, the EU decided to establish an institutional decision-making framework for ESDP and a 60,000-strong *"Headline Goal"* rapid reaction force to be fully operational by 2003. This force would be deployable within 60 days for at least a year and capable of undertaking the full range of *"Petersberg tasks"* (humanitarian assistance, search and rescue, peacekeeping, and peace enforcement), but it would not be a standing *"EU army".* (The European Council, 1999). Rather, troops and assets at appropriate readiness levels would be identified from existing national forces for use by the EU. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 13).

It can be stated that Brexit could make closer EU defence cooperation, more likely because the UK traditionally opposed certain measures – such as an EU military headquarters – that it viewed as infringing too much on national sovereignty or the primacy of NATO as the main guarantor of European security. Since 2016, EU leaders have announced several new initiatives to bolster EU security and defence cooperation, including the European Defence Fund (EDF) to support joint defence research and development activities. In 2017, the EU launched a new defence pact (known officially as Permanent Structured Cooperation, or PESCO) aimed at spending defence funds more efficiently, jointly developing military capabilities, and increasing military interoperability. EU leaders assert that efforts such as EDF and PESCO do not represent the first steps toward an EU army and that member states will retain full control over national military assets and over defence procurement and investment decisions. (The Council of the EU, 2017).

Many in the EU argue that concerns raised by the withdrawal of the US and European forces from Afghanistan in August 2021 demonstrate the need for more robust EU defence capabilities. Some in the EU

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have renewed calls for establishing an active EU rapid reaction force, as well as for changes to certain EU decision-making procedures to allow such a force to be deployed quickly in a crisis. (Emmott, 2021). At the same time, implementing EU security and defence initiatives, including PESCO, and improving European military capabilities remain challenging.

On the institutional side, the EU created three new defence decision-making bodies to help direct and implement ESDP. They are: the Political and Security Committee (composed of senior national representatives); the Military Committee (composed of member states' Chiefs of Defence or their representatives in Brussels); the Military Staff (consisting of about 130 military experts seconded from member states). The EU also established cooperation mechanisms with NATO, intended to enable the EU to use NATO assets and meet US concerns about ESDP. They include regular NATO-EU meetings at ambassadorial and ministerial level, as well as regular meetings between the EU and non-EU European NATO members. This framework allows for consultations to be intensified in the event of a crisis, and permits non-EU NATO members to contribute to EU-led operations. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 13).

"Berlin Plus" allows the EU to borrow Alliance assets and capabilities for EU-led operations and thereby aims to prevent a needless duplication of NATO structures and a wasteful expenditure of scarce European defence funds. *"Berlin Plus"* gives the EU *"assured access"* to NATO operational planning capabilities and *"presumed access"* to NATO common assets for EU-led operations *"in which the Alliance as a whole is not engaged"* (NATO Summit, 1999).

The current mechanism for formal cooperation between NATO and the EU is the *"Berlin Plus"* arrangement, signed in March 2003. As part of ongoing efforts to further develop ESDP, the EU adopted in December 2003 a new agreement on enhancing the EU's military planning capabilities and NATO-EU links. It entailed:

- establishing an EU planning cell at NATO headquarters to help coordinate *"Berlin Plus"* missions, or those EU missions conducted using NATO assets;

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- adding a new, small cell with the capacity for operational planning to the existing EU Military Staff – which currently provides early warning and strategic planning – to conduct possible EU missions without recourse to NATO assets;
- inviting NATO to station liaison officers at the EU Military Staff to help ensure transparency and close coordination between NATO and the EU. (Burwell, Gompert, 2006, pp. 7, 13, 14). British officials maintained that the new EU cell would *"not be a standing headquarters"* and that national headquarters would still remain the *"main option"* for running missions without NATO assets. (House of Commons, 2006, pp. 26-27).

Created with the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon, in 2007, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) follows the former ESDP, offering the institutional framework for carrying out security and defence cooperation, at the European Union level. A CSDP specific element is that it retains its intergovernmental character by operating on the basis of the principle of unanimity in the decision-making process.

Since its inception, the EU has asserted that CSDP is intended to allow the EU to make decisions and conduct military operations *"where NATO as a whole is not engaged"* and that CSDP is not aimed at supplanting NATO's collective defence role. The United States of America has supported EU efforts to develop CSDP, provided that it remains tied to NATO and does not rival or duplicate NATO structures or resources. Advocates of CSDP argue that more robust EU military capabilities will also benefit NATO given that 21 countries currently belong to both organisations.

In 2016 the EU launched a Global Strategy that reignited ambitions for European strategic autonomy, and that ambition has dominated the debate about EU defence. As a result, questions at that time existed for European allies about the strategic relationship between the EU and NATO structures and processes. Also in 2016 officials from the EU and NATO signed a Joint Declaration that laid out 42 actions in seven areas of cooperation ranging from countering hybrid threats

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and cybersecurity to defence capabilities, industry and research, exercises and capacity building. (The Diplomatic Service of European Union, 2016). The EU also launched PESCO, which is a treaty-based political framework to help the EU member states develop capabilities jointly and in a way that will make them available for EU military operations. (The European Commission, 2017).

Two *Berlin Plus* missions have been conducted in the Balkans, and NATO and the EU have sought to coordinate their activities on the ground in operations in Afghanistan and various hot spots in Africa. Bureaucratic rivalry and varying views on both sides of the Atlantic regarding the future roles of NATO and the EU's CSDP have also contributed to frictions between the two organisations. The emergence of new security threats in Europe, however, has prompted some recent progress toward enhanced NATO-EU cooperation.

In 2016, NATO and the EU concluded two new arrangements – one on countering migrant smuggling in the Aegean Sea and another on cyber defence – and issued a joint declaration to *"give new impetus and new substance"* to their strategic partnership. (NATO, 2016). Among other measures outlined, NATO and the EU agreed to boost their common ability to counter hybrid threats, expand operational cooperation on migration (especially in the Mediterranean), and further strengthen coordination on cybersecurity and cyber defence. In 2018, NATO leaders reaffirmed the importance of the NATO-EU partnership and both organisations pledged to improve military mobility in Europe. (NATO, 2018).

The transatlantic relationship and EU-NATO cooperation, in full respect of the principles set out in the Treaties and those agreed by the European Council on 11 March 2022, including the principles of inclusiveness, reciprocity and decision-making autonomy of the EU, are key to European overall security. The solidarity between Member States is reflected in Article 42(7) TEU.

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THE EU'S GOALS FOR ENHANCING FORCE DEPLOYABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN ORDER TO BRIDGE EQUIPMENT GAPS TO NATO

Since the end of the Cold War, both NATO and EU have evolved along with Europe's changing strategic landscape. The world is facing a critical time for its security and international peace and stability. In this radically changed security environment, both organisations are taking steps in strengthening and accelerating their adaptation, particularly in consolidating and modernising the force structure, and against all threats and challenges.

European shortfalls in strategic airlift, precision-guided munitions, command and control systems, intelligence, aerial refuelling, and suppression of enemy air defences are among the most obvious. In setting out the parameters of the 60,000-strong *"Headline Goal"* rapid reaction force, EU leaders sought to establish goals that would require members to enhance force deployability and sustainability, and to reorient and ultimately increase defence spending to help bridge equipment gaps.

In 2000 and 2001, the EU held two military capability commitment conferences to define national contributions to the rapid reaction force and address the capability shortfalls. Member states pledged in excess of 60,000 troops drawn from their existing national forces, as well as up to 400 combat aircraft and 100 naval vessels as support elements. In 2001, the EU also initiated a European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) to devise strategies for remedying the capability gaps. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 14). The European Council met in Thessaloniki in June 2003 and concluded that the EU had operational capability across the full range of *"Petersberg tasks"*, limited and constrained by recognised shortfalls, which can be alleviated by the further development of the EU's military capabilities. (Council of the EU, 2003, p.17).

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for the security of the two organisations. (The Council of the EU, 2022, p. 1).

As a result, ESDP missions in the near to medium term have focused on lower-end *"Petersberg tasks"* rather than on higher-end peace enforcement operations. EU leaders pointed out that rationalising member states' respective defence efforts and promoting multinational projects to reduce internal operating costs were key goals of ECAP. Some options under consideration included: leasing commercial assets (primarily for air transport); sharing or pooling of national assets among several member states; *"niche"* specialisation, in which one or more member states would assume responsibility for providing a particular capability; and more joint procurement projects. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 15).

The *battlegroup* concept provides the EU with a specific tool in the range of rapid response capabilities, which contributes to make the EU more coherent, more active and more capable. This concept enables the EU to respond timely to emerging crises with military means, taking into account the size and capabilities of the *battlegroups* on stand-by. The *battlegroup* concept is also a driver for capability development, improved interoperability and for transforming the member states' armed forces from a *"Cold War"* to an expeditionary configuration, so the member states can undertake rapid deployments and operations.

At the June 2004 EU Summit in Brussels, Belgium, EU leaders endorsed a new *Headline Goal 2010* aimed at further developing European military capabilities. The Headline Goal was focused on improving the interoperability, deployability, and sustainability of member states' armed forces. A key element of the Headline Goal was just the *"battlegroups concept"*, which saw to further enhance the EU's ability to respond rapidly to emerging crises and undertake the full spectrum of *"Petersberg tasks"*. It was provided that each battlegroup should consist of about 1,500 high-readiness troops capable of being deployed within 15 days, for up to four months, for either stand-alone missions or as a spearhead force to *"prepare the ground"* for a larger, follow-on peacekeeping operation. In November 2004, at the EU's third

military capability commitment conference, EU officials announced plans for the creation of 13 battlegroups, which may be formed by one or more member states and may also include non-EU members.

As of January 2007, the EU announced that the battlegroups were *"fully operational"*, meaning that the EU now has the capacity to field two battlegroup operations nearly simultaneously. Many European and American military experts view the EU's battlegroups as more sustainable and practical than the EU's 60,000-strong rapid reaction force. They hope that the emphasis on highly trained, rapidly deployable multinational formations indicate that the EU is growing more serious about enhancing its defence capabilities and seeking new ways to stretch existing defence resources farther. (Archick, Gallis, 2008, p. 16).

The *EU Battlegroups concept* is complementary and mutually reinforcing with the NATO Response Force (NRF) documents while taking into account the characteristics of both organisations. The EU-NATO Capability Group, notably through ongoing exchange of information for addressing overall coherence and complementarity between EU Battlegroups and the NRF, will ensure coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of the capability requirements common to both organisations. (The European Parliament, 2004).

Over the course of the last seven years, the EU bodies have made contributions to the new European defence architecture. In May 2017, the Council endorsed the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD). CARD was conceived as a tool to help member states to harmonise their national defence plans and make sure that they are consistent with EU objectives, as well as to formalise defence cooperation. Since their launch, EDF, PESCO and CARD have developed quickly. The EU is taking steps to be able to act quickly and firmly whenever a crisis emerges, along with partners, if possible, on their own when necessary. It will develop a rapid deployment capability and strengthen the command and control structures by promoting a rapid and flexible decision-making process. (The Council of the EU, 2022, pp. 23-28). The latest changes proposed to the EU's defence architecture attempt to address the challenges of decision-making

EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION

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and sustainable finance. Qualified Majority Voting could help overcome divisions between member states and make the EU's foreign policy more effective and autonomous.

CONCLUSIONS

Over the past several years, the EU has struggled with how it can best address significant changes in Europe's security environment. The most prominent concerns relate to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, a more militarily assertive Russia, and terrorist activity in Europe linked to the Islamic State organisation. Such issues have challenged the EU's ability to forge common foreign and security policies, often complicated by the need to reach consensus among all member states.

The EU has taken significant steps to be able to respond to imminent threats or to react quickly to a crisis situation outside the Union at all stages of a conflict cycle. EU member states make important contributions to ensuring the EU peace and stability interests in the world through different forms of cooperation.

In support of the active profile of the EU in order to respond to security challenges and subsumed under the general objective of establishing a common European defence capability, achieved through the contribution of the member states with civil and military capacities, under the aegis of CSDP has been made significant progress both by developing the conceptual framework and by launching initiatives to develop security and defence capabilities.

Although this concept initially described the need for greater EU action in the security and defence fields, the EU has recently widened it to include other areas, such as trade, digital technology, and climate change, among others. For some EU officials, ensuring the EU's position as a robust international leader reflects concerns about the future trajectory of the US-EU partnership.

In the last period of time, EU member states have taken significant steps to deepen political integration with resolutions to amplify a common foreign policy and a defence arm to improve EU member states' abilities to manage security crises. The evolution of NATO and the EU, despite the high level of cooperation, strategic partnership in a spirit of full mutual openness, transparency, complementarity,

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and respect for the organisations' different mandates, decision-making autonomy and institutional integrity as agreed by the two organisations, has been also marked by some differences of opinions. The differences in viewpoint are inevitable among a multitude of countries that have different historical relationships and often different national interests when it comes to foreign policy. In recent years, many European leaders have renewed calls for the EU to become a more assertive, independent global actor – often referred to as strategic autonomy. Defence has been long considered the most cherished policy field, and the *"last bastion"* of national sovereignty.

The EU is generally considered a cornerstone of European stability and prosperity, but it also faces internal and external challenges. Decision-making processes and the role of the EU institutions differ depending on the subject under consideration. In certain other areas – especially foreign and security policy – member states have agreed to cooperate but retain full sovereignty. Decision-making in such fields is intergovernmental and requires the unanimous agreement of all EU countries, any one national government can veto a decision. EU institutions generally play a more limited role in the decision-making process in certain policy areas but may be involved with efficiency in implementation and oversight.

The EU has made efforts for greater flexibility of the decision-making process, without compromising political and financial solidarity. To this end, it has continued to adapt the current model of military missions and operations to increase their effectiveness on the ground. Strategic communication tools have been permanently consolidated to better support joint missions and operations.

But some questions remain regarding how NATO and the EU will relate to one another in strategic terms. If the EU aspires to strategic autonomy, then what role does NATO play? Conversely, what is the purpose of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy if it does not achieve autonomy and continues, in practice, to rely on NATO for collective defence and security?

It is useful for the EU to make more effective use of increased defence spending, build flexibility and responsiveness while protecting

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interoperability, and capitalise on commercial investments in technology and innovation.

There is an increasing demand for the EU to become a *"security provider"*. This demand comes from Europe's best ally, namely the USA, as well as from member states themselves. European countries have taken a number of initiatives to develop the progressive framing of a common defence policy in the framework of a common foreign security policy pursuing the aim for the Union to have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them and the readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises.

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