



DEVELOPMENT OF MULTINATIONAL FORMATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT – CONCEPTUAL DETERMINATIONS AND PRACTICAL REASONS FOR GENERATING DEFENCE CAPABILITIES THROUGH REGIONAL COOPERATION INITIATIVES –

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This study aims to analyse the contribution of regional cooperation formulas in generating multinational formations that may be subject to participation in crisis management operations. From a chronological perspective, the development of formats of interaction in the field of defence were initiated in the period immediately following the Second World War, having as dominant reasons the creation of an efficient defence system to counter the Soviet threat. The criteria underlying the emergence of such formats undoubtedly concerned historical experience and affinities between European states, reinforced by the advantages of using geographical proximity in the development of joint programmes with immediate military applicability. On those coordinates, the regional dynamics recorded significant developments in the following decades, most of the initiatives being connected to varying degrees to the defence effort carried out in the context of NATO and the Western European Union (WEU).

The end of the Cold War and, subsequently, the reorientation of multinational defence cooperation in support of crisis management efforts brought new challenges and opportunities for the optimization of regional interaction formulas. Most of them were focused on capitalizing on the results recorded in the operational contexts of the period, through which the structures generated through the regional cooperation were tested in demanding operational environments, offering validations for the continuation of this type of interaction and the consolidation of their permanence. Under those auspices, the launch of the European Security and Defence Policy provided an additional opportunity to exploit the potential of regional cooperation formats. Basically, they proved to be a link between the potential developed under the aegis of the WEU and the process of creating the EU profile in the field of security and defence. Regional cooperation initiatives must also be seen as an essential provider of forces and capabilities to support the objectives adopted by the EU in the context of defence cooperation. This trend has intensified as the European defence project has advanced, offering consolidated prospects for supporting this endeavour.

Keywords: CSDP; Battle Group; FAWEU; EUROFOR; EUROMARFOR;



INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Second World War, the concern for ensuring security in Europe in the conditions of the outbreak of the Cold War, led to a more careful approach to the opportunities that multinational cooperation could offer. The immediate modality was aimed at pooling available forces and capabilities within formations established through arrangements/agreements between Western European states. The approach was dictated to a decisive extent by the insufficient level of resources for defence, especially in the specific circumstances of the first post-conflict decades. Thus, the only option that could be used was to associate existing capabilities and create higher-level structures that could help to ensure a defence system as close as possible to the requirements of the security environment.

Clearly, the emergence of international organizations with a role in ensuring European defence favoured the mentioned approach, offering a plus of concreteness by promoting standardization and framing it in a common typology of force and capability generation. From a chronological perspective, the emergence of cooperation formulas in the development of multinational formations is placed especially in the two-decade period after the end of the war. This period corresponds to substantial developments in the security policies of some NATO member states, such as the withdrawal of France from the integrated military structure, respectively the US decision to diminish the military presence in Europe, in the context of the Vietnam War.

The period also records the initiation of discussions at the level of the North Atlantic Alliance aimed at implementing a number of defence doctrines, centred on the flexible response. The core of the strategy was to strengthen deterrence while having a significant impact on the need to develop an extensive set of conventional capabilities that would allow a gradual response to be supported in case the security and defence of a member state was affected. On those coordinates, the new NATO Strategic Concept to be adopted on 12 December 1967/ 16 January 1968 stated that deterrence at Alliance level is based

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NATO Strategic Concept to be adopted on 12 December 1967/16 January 1968 stated that deterrence at Alliance level is based on “the flexibility which will prevent the potential aggressor from predicting with confidence NATO’s specific response to aggression, and which will lead him to conclude that an unacceptable degree of risk would be involved regardless of the nature of his attack”. In this context, the forces committed by the member states had to respond to criteria on logistical and combat support capacity as well as on tactical mobility.

on “the flexibility which will prevent the potential aggressor from predicting with confidence NATO’s specific response to aggression, and which will lead him to conclude that an unacceptable degree of risk would be involved regardless of the nature of his attack” (MC14/3 1968, 10). In this context, the forces committed by the member states had to respond to criteria on logistical and combat support capacity as well as on tactical mobility. It was also envisaged that the arrangement of forces would respond to the concept of forward defence, with locations of adequate strategic value, so as to ensure rapid and efficient response. Last but not least, particular attention was paid to strengthening the capacity of additional local and Allied forces as well as of reserve forces. Those criteria were met in the context of the strategic premise that the main direction of a hostile action would have taken place in Europe. Based on those considerations, the European Allies had to contribute concretely with forces and capabilities generated individually or through cooperation arrangements able to meet the operational criteria and parameters established at Allied level through the planning process.

INITIAL STEPS

Chronologically, the first steps to generate the formulas of regional cooperation in support of the commitments assumed in NATO context are placed in 1962, when the German-Danish Corps (LANDJUT – North-East Multinational Corps) was established with its headquarters in Rendsburg (Schleswig-Holstein). The main purpose of the structure was to protect exposed/critical areas of Allied territory within the perimeter adjacent to the Baltic Sea. Under peace conditions, the LANDJUT structure was based on one West German motorized infantry division; one Danish division and German brigade-level territorial forces. For crisis situations, the structure of the German-Danish corps was designed to serve as a receiver for other forces and contingents that NATO member states would deploy to northern Europe, such as the USA, Canada and Great Britain.

In the coming decades, practical interaction between European states increased significantly. On those coordinates was placed the development of naval cooperation between Belgium and the Netherlands, subsumed under the objectives set, in 1951, at government level between the two states aimed at developing regional

interaction. In 1975, a programme for the development of the training system at the level of the armed forces was initiated and the system of joint (rotating) management of the naval forces was established (July 2021, 224). The framework was expanded by the signing, in 1987, of a new agreement extended to the Benelux format on defence cooperation and coordination. In the same context, it was also placed the development of an amphibious force, by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (9 May 1973) with the participation of Great Britain and the Netherlands through which the Netherlands special forces were integrated into a Brigade of this type of British Navy.

Clearly, the mentioned developments were also stimulated by the dynamics of the Franco-German reconciliation process, culminating in the adoption, on 22 January 1963, of the Joint Declaration of the President of France Charles de Gaulle and the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. On its basis, the Cooperation Treaty between Germany and France, also known as the Élysée Treaty, was signed. It had substantive provisions on the interaction between the two states in the field of defence from the perspective of: harmonizing doctrines in order to identify common concepts; exchanging personnel between the armed forces, including unit secondment; developing joint armament programmes and their joint financing. (Hill 2000, p. 64). The deepening of Franco-German defence cooperation would continue in the coming decades with the creation of the Franco-German Council with responsibilities in the areas of defence, economy and finance. It was based on the decision of President of France, François Mitterrand, and Chancellor Helmut Kohl adopted in Karlsruhe on 12 and 13 November 1987. On that occasion, the first joint unit with the participation of the armed forces of the two countries, known as the Franco-German Brigade, which would be established in 1989, becoming operational in 1991, was decided.

The end of the Cold War generated an additional impulse to the cooperation between European states aimed at generating multinational formations, bringing to attention the importance of the design capacity of forces and capabilities in the context of crisis situations outside the European perimeter. Participation in the overall crisis management effort became the most important dimension of the work of international organizations (UN, OSCE, NATO and the Western European Union) as well as of the cooperation formulas developed



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in different formats with the participation of European states. On the latter point, the importance of the developments made at European level in the post-war decades should be emphasized. The idea of generating a format of cooperation in the field of defence can be found at the level of the allied states in the Second World War, the first step in this direction being materialized by the signing, on 4 March 1947, by France and Great Britain, of the Treaty of Dunkirk. It represented a defensive pact between the two states, with the aim of repelling a potential Soviet aggression as well as preventing the resumption of aggressive behaviour by Germany (Sutton 2007, p. 24). On those coordinates, the Western European Union, the first defence organization of the post-war period to operate on the basis of the provisions of the Treaty of Brussels, signed on 17 March 1948, by Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Great Britain and the Netherlands, was established. Its responsibilities would then be taken up at NATO level (Rohan, 2014, pp. 25-26).

The concerns about strengthening the European profile in the field of defence generated the initiative to create the European Defence Community (1952-1954), a project that failed as it was not ratified by the French Parliament. On those coordinates, on 23 October 1954, the Western European Union (WEU) was established, the functioning of which would be governed by the Paris Agreements (23 October 1954) which made amendments to the Treaty of Brussels. The role of the WEU in the European security equation would be valued especially starting in 1984, when the Declaration of the Council of Ministers held in Rome brought to the attention the will of the member states of this organization (Belgium, France, Great Britain, Luxembourg, Italy and Germany) to strengthen the profile of the European contribution in the field of defence, under the aegis of the WEU and within NATO (Rome Declaration, 1984). The approach became more visible in the context of international efforts in the field of crisis management. Thus, in June 1992, the WEU adopted the Petersberg Declaration in which the organization acquired a better-defined operational profile assuming a set¹ of missions and tasks that it could accomplish through its own

¹ The WEU missions adopted on that occasion covered: humanitarian and rescue missions; conflict prevention and peacekeeping missions; combat forces missions in crisis management, including peacekeeping; joint disarmament operations; military assistance and advisory missions; post-conflict stabilization missions.

operational commitments. The potential of the WEU was confirmed by the Maastricht Treaty in which the commitment of member states to the development of a security and defence identity would be integrated (Treaty of Maastricht 1992), to contribute to the strengthening of the European pillar within NATO.

From this perspective, it was envisaged to develop the role of the WEU without excluding cooperation between member states. The EU Treaty also introduced the concept of forces that “*meet the WEU operational needs*”, which would also be on the agenda of the NATO Summit in Brussels (11 January 1994), addressed in the context of the adoption of the concept of the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI). Subsequently, the meeting of NATO foreign ministers, held in Berlin on 3 June 1996, placed the concept in the transformation process of the North Atlantic Alliance through which European member states could contribute to WEU missions and activities. Thus, the ESDI was linked to the WEU role in the field of crisis management, advancing a set of measures to ensure its access to NATO’s planning capabilities (Sperling 1999, pp. 125-126). At the same time, it was envisaged to identify in the inventory of Allied forces and capabilities the “*separable but not separate*” resources that could be used for WEU-led operations. Also, the role of the organization would be addressed at the level of the NATO planning process in close connection with the implementation of the concept of Combined and Joint Task Force (CJTF) aimed at strengthening NATO’s capacity to conduct contingency operations with the participation of non-member states (Young 1997, p. 29).

On those coordinates, the WEU became the main platform for integrating cooperation initiatives between European states. According to the parameters agreed at Petersberg, the forces made available for the missions and operations of the organization were managed through a separate mechanism (Forces Answerable to WEU/FAWEU). The premises that were envisaged were aimed at:

- The fact that the WEU did not have permanent forces or command structures.
- Forces and headquarters engaged in WEU operations were to be extracted from the list of units made available by the states.



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The first multinational formation with a European profile made available as FAWEU was Eurocorps, a structure created in May-July 1992 based on the Franco-German Brigade. The command of the new entity was established in Strasbourg. At the WEU Council in Rome (19 May 1993), the two states expressed their interest in contributing through Eurocorps to WEU missions and operations.

- Participation in operations and making available forces were sovereign decisions and were determined after consultation with NATO, for the member states of the organization.

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In the same logic, the Multinational Division (Central) consisting of forces belonging to Belgium, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany was made available. The entity was established in 1992 and was simultaneously engaged in FAWEU and Allied Rapid Reaction Corps until 2002 when it was disbanded. The development of the military cooperation framework between Germany and the Netherlands

² The particular nature of the Danish position derived from the attitude of that state towards the prospects for the development of European cooperation in the context created by the Maastricht Treaty. From this perspective, Denmark opted for not participating in the military component of the cooperation developed within the EU on the security and defence dimension. This positioning was maintained until 1 June 2022 when, following the referendum held in Denmark, participation in the military dimension received broad support.



was also reflected in the establishment, in 1995, of the German-Dutch Corps, with its headquarters in Münster. The objective was to create the capacity for independent action of the Joint Corps as well as a ground component in a large-scale operation at NATO level. In the organizational chart of this entity were two German and Dutch divisions with a reaction speed in order to deploy within a period of 20 days being able to provide the command and control elements for a contingent of up to 50,000 troops.

To a crucial extent, the existence of the WEU and the comprehensive framework of the relationship with NATO led to the creation of new multinational formations. An additional impetus for the dynamism of that cooperation option was represented by the intensity of the operational commitments assumed by the WEU and NATO during this period. It mainly targeted the perimeter of the Western Balkans, amid the conflict in the ex-Yugoslav area. In this context, the successive forces deployed by NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in support of the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement (IFOR – 1995-1996, SFOR – 1996-2004) were placed. In parallel, the joint WEU-NATO operation (Sharp Guard, 1993-1996) was conducted in the Adriatic basin to impose economic sanctions and the embargo on arms delivery. The WEU also carried out, between 1993 and 1996, the operation to support the Danube states (Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania) for the implementation of UN sanctions. Also, in support of international stabilization efforts in the Balkans, in September 1994, the WEU participated in the structuring of Mostar's civil administration.

In addition to the issues of participation in crisis management commitments, the need to meet interoperability standards was another factor in stimulating cooperation in generating multinational formations. The approach also came to address the concerns related to the efficiency of national defence spending, the multinational options being identified as able to offer alternative solutions that were much more efficient financially and with a high level of operability. On those coordinates is placed the Franco-British cooperation in the field of aviation initiated in 1991, the concrete reflections of which were recorded in the operations carried out in the Balkans and Iraq. In order to capitalize on the operational experience, the two states decided to establish, in 1994, a common structure under the name

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Cooperation between the southern European states made further progress with the creation in 1996 of an amphibious force (SIAF) with the participation of Italy and Spain with a land component needed for landing (SILF). The structure was made available to NATO and the EU and could also be used in the context of UN missions.

of the Franco-British European Air Group (FBEAG), and since 1998 the European Air Group (EAG). The number of states participating in this formula increased by the association of Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain.

Almost simultaneously with those developments, the naval component of the cooperation of the European states was approached at the level of cooperation between Belgium and the Netherlands. Starting from the framework agreed between the two states at the end of March 1995, it was agreed to intensify the bilateral interaction towards the integration of command and control arrangements through a common operational centre capable of managing 40 Dutch and 10 Belgian vessels. Against this background, bilateral cooperation was extended to the air dimension by concluding, in the same year, the agreement to operationalize a deployable group. The main rationale for such an approach was aimed at making costs more efficient in an area with significant financial impact, as well as optimizing the possibilities of making air capabilities available to the WEU and NATO. In this context, there was also the initiative adopted in May 1995 by France, Italy, Portugal and Spain to create a defence cooperation architecture, known as the Operational Rapid Reaction Force (EUROFOR), to be made available for WEU missions and operations. With the command in Florence, the level of forces engaged by the participating states amounted to 12,000 troops, also having a naval component (EUROMARFOR), with multiple capabilities that allowed it to execute a wide spectrum of missions. Cooperation between the southern European states made further progress with the creation in 1996 of an amphibious force (SIAF) with the participation of Italy and Spain with a land component needed for landing (SILF). The structure was made available to NATO and the EU and could also be used in the context of UN missions.

NEW PARTNERS

The end of the Cold War also brought to attention a new reality in terms of cooperation in generating multinational formations as part of the process of preparing the states of Eastern Europe for NATO membership, respectively the integration into the European Union. A key role in this context was the launch of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) under NATO's auspices in January 1994. The initiative aimed

to develop cooperation with the new democracies in Eastern Europe as well as with neutral states in order to strengthen European security and stability. It also promoted a practical approach to developing cooperation that helped prepare interested states for NATO membership. By assuming the principles and objectives set out in the Partnership for Peace Framework Document, the interested states were committed to promoting a process of substantial reform of their own armed forces, including from the perspective of generating forces and capabilities that could be deployed in crisis management missions (Volten 2007, p. 45).

Equally, participation in the PfP generated significant opportunities, embodied in concrete initiatives for military and/or defence cooperation between partner states. The main course of action was aimed at developing the potential for participation in crisis management operations under the aegis of international organizations. The approach was also a direct reflection of the development of political interaction between states in the region, materialized in the emergence of regional cooperation formats that would contribute significantly to boosting practical collaboration at military level. The first formula of political cooperation resulted in the adoption, on 28 August 1991, of the Declaration of the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland, which laid the foundations for the format of the Weimar Triangle. Its main objective was to identify convergent approaches to the future of Europe and to enhance cooperation between the three states. Subsumed under that approach, the creation of such a format of cooperation also envisaged the consolidation of the Polish-German reconciliation process, following the model of that carried out between France and Germany (Declaration commune, Weimar, 1991).

Also, the importance of cooperation under the aegis of the Weimar Triangle can also be seen from the perspective of the positive effects in stimulating cooperation between the states of Europe and, subsequently, in erasing the divisions imposed by the Cold War. It is in this context that the creation, on 15 February 1994, of the Visegrad Group, with the participation of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, was placed. This format of interaction and coordination addressed a wide range of areas, including military cooperation between the participating states. On similar coordinates, in March 1996



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another cooperation format was initiated, known as the South-East European Defence Ministers' Meeting Process (SEDM) bringing together a number of states from this geographical perimeter (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Croatia, Georgia, Slovenia, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro) as well as the USA, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova (observer). The main objective of this cooperation format was aimed at developing political-military cooperation in the region, in support of the good neighbourhood process, strengthening regional capacities in the field of defence as well as in supporting the Euro-Atlantic integration process of the states in this area.

The manner of practical translation of the political elements of convergence regarding the consolidation of the capacity of participation in the international crisis management approaches was materialized in the orientation of the cooperation formulas towards the generation of the structures of forces of battalion and brigade level. We can talk about the replication of the model used in the decades leading up to the end of the Cold War in Western Europe as well as the approach of a level of operability capable of allowing the deepening of interoperability, respectively of providing the necessary resources for participation in operations carried out by international organizations. The first project of this type was represented by the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT), created in 1994 by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, also extended to the naval forces by the creation of a specific cooperation format, known as the Baltic Squadron (BALTRON). Starting from this initiative, various formulas were developed with the participation of the states from the Baltic or adjacent perimeter, as is the case with the Polish-Lithuanian Battalion (LITPOLBAT), the Polish-Ukrainian Battalion, both created in 1995, as well as the Polish-Czech Battalion, operationalized two years later.

For the states of Central and South-Eastern Europe, this period recorded an effervescence of military cooperation initiatives including the creation, in 1997, of the Mixed Battalion with the participation of Hungary, Italy and Slovenia (1997) and of the Romanian-Hungarian Peacekeeping Battalion. On those coordinates, on 18 April 1998, the Agreement establishing the Multinational Infantry Force, known as the

Trilateral Brigade, was signed, with the participation of Italy, Hungary and Slovenia. A few months later, the Letter of Intent for the creation of the Multinational Peace Force in South-Eastern Europe (MPFSEE) was signed. The initiative would be attended by Albania, Greece, Italy, North Macedonia, Romania, Turkey whose contributions would be reflected in the activation, on 31 August 1999, of a brigade-level force structure (SEEBRIG). To them there would be added, a few years later, the Engineering Multinational Battalion, for which forces and capabilities of the armed forces of Hungary, Romania and Ukraine were associated.

Responding to the same objectives, in March 1998 the “Central European Cooperation in Defence” initiative was launched with the participation of Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Hungary, Switzerland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Poland (observer). In particular, the initiative was aimed at contributing to strengthening the capacity of member states to participate in peace support operations. The concrete objective assumed at the time it was launched was to create a multinational brigade that could be deployed in international missions. The initiative continued to operate even after the abandonment of the objective in 2010 and, subsequently, the strengthening of the political dialogue in the field of defence.

The interest in capacity development in a regional format also covered the cooperation formulas initiated in the northern perimeter of Europe. The start of those initiatives was in 1963 when the Nordic Cooperation Group was formed, involving the participation of the armed forces of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland (NORDSAMFN). The objective of the format was to deepen the links of cooperation in the military field as well as to create a nucleus of pending forces that could be made available for UN missions. In 1997, the NORDSAMFN format was replaced with the Northern Peace Support Operations Agreement (NORDCAP) which, in 2008, turned into a consolidated formula for interaction between these states, known as the Nordic Defence Cooperation – NORDEFECO. Also, in connection with the demarches of the Northern states was the initiative to create a force structure at the disposal of the UN, known as the Standby High-Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG). It was established after the signing,



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on 15 December 1996, of a letter of intent between Austria, Denmark, Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and, in the following years, the participation in the format was considerably extended by including Argentina, Italy, Poland, Romania and Sweden.

REGIONAL FORMATS FOR COOPERATION AND THE COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The assumption of political priority, through the Franco-British Declaration of St. Malo (December 1998) for structuring the profile and contribution of the EU in the field of security and defence was one of the main elements that would influence the evolution of the regional formats described above. On those coordinates, the decisions of the Helsinki European Council (December 1999) generated a distinct course of action that the cooperation formulas would follow with priority in the coming period. Basically, by adopting on that occasion the first EU Headline Goal (HLG 2003) in the field of defence, aiming at the creation, by 2003, of a Rapid Reaction Force (50-60,000) was one of the main elements in the formats of cooperation developed between European states. The consistent political support that accompanied the Helsinki decisions would also be found in the way in which the states participating in the various initiatives report on their results and their relevance to the objectives assumed at European Union level.

It must be said that this approach was also stimulated by the initiation of the process of transferring the responsibilities and functions of the Western European Union to the EU. In this context, FAWEU became, through the exclusive will of the contributing states, forces made available to NATO and the EU, for the latter being indicated the priority given to the achievement of the objective adopted in Helsinki. Along these lines, at the first Capability Engagement Conference (20-21 November 2000) held at the European Union level to fulfil the HLG 2003, the contributions advanced by member, candidate and partner states had their origins in the regional cooperation arrangements developed in recent decades. To a large extent, the approach allowed to meet the quantitative benchmarks associated with HLG 2003 that targeted more than 100,000 ground forces,

400 aircraft and 100 ships. New areas were also advanced where there was a need to deepen cooperation and develop additional options (logistics, force protection, mobility, air and land transport). Under those auspices, in the following period, additional cooperation formulas were initiated at European level aimed at creating movement coordination centres as is the case of Athens (Multinational Sealift Coordination Center/AMSCC). On similar coordinates, the agreement concluded on 14 May 2001 between Germany and the Netherlands on cooperation in strengthening air transport capacities was also placed (Rutten, 2001, pp. 158-164).

The potential of the various initiatives in connection with the development of the EU profile in the field of security and defence would be valued in a practical way through participation in the crisis management operations conducted by this organization. In practical terms, the EU's assumption from 2003-2004 of the main responsibilities for managing the security developments in the Western Balkans generated a consistent level of participation of the member and candidate states in the various operational commitments carried out within this perimeter. It is worth pointing out, in this context, the contribution of the EUFOR format under the auspices of which quotas would be generated that participated, between 2003 and 2006, in the implementation of the mandate of the first EU military operation carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Althea Mission). The naval component (EUROMARFOR) would also be found, with different levels of participation between 2011 and 2015, in the framework of the EU Counter-Piracy Mission, Atalanta (launched in December 2008).

In addition to these elements, the contribution of regional formats to the development of the EU operational profile also included the contribution of Eurocorps in the conduct of EU missions in Africa. Thus, between 2015 and 2016, it provided the core of forces and the command and control arrangements for the Training Mission in Mali. The EU's operational approach in this area was launched on 18 February 2013 with the main objective of assisting the armed forces of the Republic of Mali in achieving the capacity to carry out autonomous operations to resume control over its own territory and to combat terrorist actions (Council Decision 34, 2013). Subsequently,



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by reviewing the mandate in March 2020 and extending the training programmes, Eurocorps took over the main responsibility for the employment of the mission's essential staff for the period 2021-2022. Almost simultaneously with the engagement in Mali, contingents of Eurocorps would participate in the EU Preparedness Mission to the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA). It was launched on 16 April 2016 with the objectives of supporting national authorities in the process of reform and modernization of the armed forces (Council Decision 610, 2016). The presence of Eurocorps would be constantly found between 2016 and 2022, both in the training programmes for the national armed forces and in supporting the counselling and support activity at government level.

The association between the various mentioned initiatives and cooperation formulas and the development of the security and defence component at the EU level underwent significant developments in the context of the adoption in June 2004 of a new Headline Goal (HLG 2010). It was centred on strengthening the expeditionary nature of the EU's defence effort by introducing the concept of Battle Groups. Advanced as military elements of the EU's rapid response capabilities for crisis response, they would be the main item of the European operational agenda for the coming decades. According to the agreed parameters, the Battle Groups were to reach their final operational capacity in 2007, with member and candidate states to contribute to the endeavour by creating such structures.

On those coordinates, the approach entailed the use of the already existing cooperation formulas that would be adapted to meet the operational parameters and requirements of the Battle Groups. One can talk about implementing a continuity approach in generating the capabilities and forces needed for crisis management operations. At the same time, the continuity of those steps was also dictated by the interest in implementing a pragmatic approach dictated by the need to streamline the European cooperation in the field of defence, as well as by the capitalization on the operational experience gained in various external commitments. From this perspective, it is worth pointing out that the implementation of the Battle Groups project had to be carried out on the basis of arrangements between European states,

the regional option being implicit to ensure the practical conditions for the preparation and sharing of the necessary force packages. At the same time, the need to maintain the Battle Groups during the stand-by period (minimum 6 months) presupposed the existence of a resource of forces having a permanent and integrated character, being also the repository of a relevant operational experience. From that perspective, the only options that could be used in support of the HLG 2010 were regional cooperation formulas.

Starting from these reasons, the adoption of the HLG 2010 generated a particular interest of the European states in the use of the existing formats, a trend that would consolidate as the Battle Groups project progressed. The first formations of this type advanced in the context of the generation process developed by the EU for the implementation of the HLG 2010 were structured on the basis of the initiatives developed in recent decades. It is in this context that the November 2004 approach to create a Battle Group with the participation of Germany, the Netherlands and Finland, the core of which was to be found in the structure of the German-Dutch rapid reaction corps, is placed. Also, in the first half of 2006, Italy and Spain advanced an Amphibious Warfare Group, operationalized on the basis of SIAF cooperation arrangements. Similarly, on 25 July 2006, at the meeting of the Weimar format, the decision was taken to create a Battle Group with the participation of the member states of that cooperation format, which reached the level of final operability in 2013. Almost simultaneously with this initiative, on 13 November 2006, the ministers of defence of Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus and Greece signed the Technical Agreement for the creation of a Battle Group at the level of which the results of regional cooperation as well as the forces and capabilities contributions of these states were to be exploited.

The achievement of the final operational capacity of the Battle Groups on 1 January 2007 reinforced this trend, with new steps being taken in the following years to use cooperation formats to generate new formations of this type. Between 2007 and 2008, a Battle Group was operationalized with the participation of Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland and Norway based on the Northern Cooperation. On similar coordinates, the political framework for cooperation developed under the aegis of the Visegrad Group generated formulas



It is worth pointing out that the implementation of the Battle Groups project had to be carried out on the basis of arrangements between European states, the regional option being implicit to ensure the practical conditions for the preparation and sharing of the necessary force packages. At the same time, the need to maintain the Battle Groups during the stand-by period (minimum 6 months) presupposed the existence of a resource of forces having a permanent and integrated character, being also the repository of a relevant operational experience.



The development of cooperation formulas with a regional profile represented a specific form of the contribution of the European states to the collective defence effort. Their European profile does not exclude the contribution of different initiatives to territorial defence within the parameters of the North Atlantic Treaty as well as in the context of the various operational commitments that NATO has carried out, as is the case with those in the Balkans, Afghanistan or the Mediterranean.

of this kind. Thus, in 2007, a Battle Group was operationalized with the participation of Italy, Hungary and Slovenia, generated by using the MLF cooperation format and with the Italian contribution. A year later, another Battle Group was generated with the participation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, also developed with the support of Germany through the provision of command and control elements by the operational headquarters in Potsdam. On similar coordinates, in November 2010, the Battle Group with Poland, as a framework nation, became operational, through contributions from Germany, Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania. The cooperation format developed through Eurocorps also provided an opportunity to structure participation formulas in the form of Battle Groups made available to the EU successively between 2010 and 2012. They included the participation of France, Germany, Luxembourg and Spain. Last but not least, there was also the contribution of the cooperation format developed since 1972 between the UK and the Netherlands that was used to generate, in 2010, a new similar structure.

CONCLUSIONS

As it can be seen, cooperation in flexible formats at European level was one of the main constants in the period after the Second World War. Clearly, it was generated by both the security realities that Europe was to experience during the Cold War and the need to develop a substantial contribution to the NATO-backed defence system. The association of these formulas with a distinct and relatively unitary European approach was a dimension constantly explored, initially in relation to the WEU, and then with the development of the security and defence dimension of the European Union. From this perspective, the development of cooperation formulas with a regional profile represented a specific form of the contribution of the European states to the collective defence effort. Their European profile does not exclude the contribution of different initiatives to territorial defence within the parameters of the North Atlantic Treaty as well as in the context of the various operational commitments that NATO has carried out, as is the case with those in the Balkans, Afghanistan or the Mediterranean.

On the typology in which these formulas were structured, it is obvious the cohabitation of the elements of tradition, the geographical proximity as well as the common historical experiences in all the decisions that led to structuring the cooperation formats and the objectives assumed by them. Equally, the interaction between European states on these coordinates was the main form of continuity in addressing military issues at European level. The end of the Cold War generated significant opportunities for valuing the contribution of regional formats in supporting the operational effort by participating in various crisis management missions and operations. From this perspective, one can speak of a stress test to the new challenges of the security environment that most of the initiatives developed in Europe successfully passed. The results of this process were also reflected in terms of strengthening the potential of those initiatives on generating the forces and capabilities needed to implement an ambitious political agenda as well as in terms of the ability to design a sufficiently relevant response to support operational commitments. Equally, the contribution of those cooperation formulas to the elimination of the divisions in Europe generated by the Cold War and particularly to the resumption of the democratic and European path of the states of Eastern Europe cannot be ruled out. The significant increase in the number of initiatives in the first decade after the end of the bipolar conflict attested to this conclusion, with regional cooperation in the military field reaching an unprecedented level. It was positively reflected in strengthening the capacity of European states to participate in multinational operations and, subsequently, to meet the conditions and practical criteria necessary for NATO membership.

The development of the defence dimension at the European Union level brought new opportunities for regional cooperation between European states, adding relevance to this level of interaction. In particular, the launch of the European Security and Defence Policy provided an additional framework for capitalizing on the contribution and expertise accumulated through regional cooperation. This approach is visible both in terms of supporting EU operations and in terms of generating integrated packages of forces and capabilities as it is the case with the Battle Groups. Within the latter, the contribution of regional



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cooperation formats has been the main resource-generating area, ensuring the sustainability of the European project in the European field. Under these auspices, one can speak, despite the diversity of cooperation formulas, of their significant contribution to deepening European integration in the military field. The particular relevance in this direction can be seen from the perspective of the predictability of regional cooperation formats in terms of the generation capacity of forces and capabilities required by a large-scale political project under the auspices of the European Union. Equally, the permanence of these initiatives, successively reinforced over the past half-century, provides additional elements of a guarantee on the sustainability of the prospects for the integrated development of defence cooperation at European level. How to make effective use of the potential of these cooperation formulas is a course of action that can strengthen European cooperation in the field of defence, not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of the capacity to support a broad spectrum of operational commitments.

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