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THE EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY VS NATO – COMPLEMENTARITY OR COMPETITION?

Robert Bocan

Air Force Training Center/Boboc

Abstract:

The European Security and Defense Policy could be a fundamental shift away from what European Union was intended to be. Change is complex and can affect its relations with NATO. If EU is going to be seen as a strong military organization as well as an economic one, these will require an appropriate culture and organization, as well as new policies, in terms of achieving strategic space and well-defined relations with other international institutions. The outcomes of this cannot be immediately anticipated, and will depend upon the political will of European states and the evolution of security environment in Europe and neighbor regions. However, it can be observed a gap between the declared level of ambition of EU and the resources made available to put in place the Common Security and Defense Policy.

Key words: EU, security, defense, economic environment.

Introduction

European Union is facing nowadays the most challenging economic, cultural and security situation since its creation.

The economic situation is still volatile for most European countries. In accordance with the European Commission Winter 2016 Economic Forecast, published on 4 February 2016, “The European economy is now entering its fourth year of recovery and growth continues at a moderate rate, driven mainly by consumption. At the same time, much of the world economy is grappling with major challenges and risks to European growth are therefore increasing. The European economy is facing substantial risks from the slowdown in emerging economies. Economic growth did not lead to reducing unemployment and a reinvigoration of investment, which is crucial for the sustainability of the recovery, remains limited”. The GDP growth forecast for 2016 is only 1,9%, with an unemployment rate of 9%.

And let’s not forget the threat posed by immigration to EU economy, and especially to the social security and welfare system.

The cultural situation is also affected by the massive migration crisis. “Negative responses about immigrant groups causing social problems are equally predictive of negative attributions about either immigrant group “[1].

With the vast majority of the asylum seekers being Muslims, we can already observe some of the effects of the cultural differences in western European countries. Public sources

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and press releases show a high rate of involvement of Muslims in sexual offenses in Sweden, with almost 77% of rapes allegedly committed by 2% Muslim male population. [2]

The security situation is, in my opinion, mainly affected by a wide array of new threats:

- Cyber-attacks;
- Vladimir Putin's surprising military strategy;
- Islamist "terror";
- Migration;
- The threat posed by "frozen conflicts", which is equivalent to wars without end.

The creation of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), at the 1999 Cologne European Council, following the European Security and Defense Policy, represent a major element of the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union (EU) and is the domain of EU policy that covers defense and military issues, as well as civilian crisis management aspects and is supposed to be adjusted in order to address the whole range of possible hazards.

1. The need for an EU Security and Defense Policy

In a continuously changing environment, facing the effects of globalization, the EU is facing security challenges both in its immediate vicinity and in other areas. "The Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) enable the Union to adopt a leading role in peace-keeping operations, conflict prevention and in the strengthening of the international security. It is an integral part of the EU's comprehensive approach towards crisis management, drawing on civilian and military assets. Since 1999 the EU has launched some 30 peace missions and operations contributing to stabilization and security in Europe and beyond." [3]

In a time when resources are sometimes limited, EU also needs to do whatever possible with the resources at hand. The CSDP allows EU Member States to gather their resources and to build stronger defense capabilities, in order to perform actions rapidly and effectively.

The creation of the European security and defense policy (ESDP) has been called Europe's military revolution [4].

CSDP became a long-term process in which the Union final goal was to project power (military) beyond its borders. We have to keep in mind that the EU's own history explains most of the nature of the current policy. The original civilian character of the Union, the way in which institutions have developed over the years, the role of key players, meaning states like Germany, France and Great Britain, relations with the United States and the impact of external evolutions now both empower and pose constraints over the EU.

Having an operationalized CSDP in the context of the Union's external dimension is therefore not just a phase in the process of the implementation. Stakeholders have to be sensitive to their collective history since World War II, as well as to their shared historical experiences before that edge. The core of ESDP values is an attempt to define and elaborate what we can call a strategic space for the EU as a security enabler, while maintaining its own institutional efficiency and legitimacy. Unfortunately, the structures of EU institutions that deal with security are a clear copy of the EU's own institutional development, are slow to change, and are not primarily driven by the policy requirements of the EU as a security provider. EU has neither the means nor the political will to create an autonomous foreign policy with important military capabilities. The relations with other institutions, especially NATO, are crucial to its future development.

But, first, we have to see what triggered the EU shift from an organization predominantly economic and politic, to a security enabler. There are views that suggest the appearance of ESDP as a response to the great power of US all its implications for global politics. I would like to embrace this opinion and to elaborate on it.

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As of now, it does not appear that EU is trying to manage security problems on Europe on its own, but to counterbalance the involvement of US and to have a word to say in other volatile areas. Probably the change was done because the Europeans realized that US may not be there to help when problems appear, and, maybe, because the way US is addressing the threats is not always considered the best. So, in order to have the right to a different opinion, EU realized that a military power is required.

Some states, which were always seen as powerful countries, may not wish to leave the management of global security affairs entirely to the United States, and they will seek global political power and influence. But, "if Europeans wish to influence the management of global security affairs, they need to be able to show up globally with capabilities, including military capabilities, that matter to local outcomes"[5].

I would like to quote the words of the French Minister of Defense, Madame Michele Alliot-Marie, on December 2002: "Europe has no foreign policy weight without the corresponding military potential". These will lead us to the fact that France has had the longest standing interest in an independent European defense capacity. The French view always was that it is better to have a multipolar world, with Europe been one of the strong positions, and not an unipolar world, with only US been the only strong position.

On the other hand, Great Britain interest in generating greater European military capability is to improve British and European influence in the United States, so, US will take European leaders more seriously, if they deliver credible capabilities to NATO.[6]

Germany and Italy are a bit ambivalent, supporting both the ESDP and NATO.

Now, let's have a look at some figures regarding the military expenditures in Europe. According to International Institute for Strategic Studies *World Military Balance 2016 (for 2015)*, out of the first 20 countries in terms of defense spending, only 6 are from Europe (United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Poland). But, the total amount of money of these countries only represent about 30% of what US is spending for defense, and is about the same as China's budget for defense for 2015. From these figures, we can realize that there is still a long way, if any, for Europe to have a strong military force.

Also, we can assess that the need for a stronger EU military is also desired by US, which seems to have its hands full with all the conflicts in which is involved, and it would prefer to step aside from some of them. However, it will be a long time until EU will take charge of large scale military missions on its own, if any, without support from NATO and especially from US.

2. Evolution of the Security and Defense Policy to meet the challenges of the current security environment

Even though the EU has been interested in Foreign and Security Policy since its beginnings, most progress has happened since 1998, when Britain and France at their St. Malo Defense Ministers meetings launched ESDP. Progress seems to be made rapidly. In 2002 one careful ESDP study reported that ". . . today the EU is a net exporter of security. The Union is well placed to link a wide palette of economic, diplomatic and military means in the fight against multifaceted threats and challenges. . . . The EU has the potential to become a global force in conflict prevention and crisis management."[7]

The EU's military effort was still centered on the Petersberg tasks, adopted in 1992, by the Western European Union. Humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making were the strategic objectives.

In June 1999, at the European Council held at Cologne, it was decided to incorporate the role of the Western European Union within the EU. With the signing by member states of the Helsinki Headline Goal, the EU made its first concrete steps to enhance military capabilities, in line with the ESDP. The 'Helsinki Force Catalogue', was also launched, to be able to carry out the Petersberg Tasks. The Helsinki Headline Goal called for the EU that by

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2003, to have the ability to deploy a Rapid Reaction force of 60,000 for a range of peacekeeping and peacemaking tasks within six months of a decision to do so and to sustain the mission for a year.[8] In addition, at Helsinki, EU created permanent political and military structures, such as Political and Security Committee (PSC), an EU Military Committee (EUMC) and EU Military Staff (EUMS), with the purpose to provide political guidance and strategic vision on future operations.

But, Europe proved that its capacity to act was reduced, compared to the one declared. So, in May 2004, EU defense ministers approved "Headline Goal 2010", extending the timelines for the EU's projects.

At the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon, the ESDP was renamed as *Common Security and Defense Policy* (CSDP). The treaty extended the enhanced co-operation mechanism to defense issues and also envisioned the establishment of a Permanent Structured Cooperation in Defense.

On 20 February 2009 the European Parliament voted in favor of the creation of Synchronized Armed Forces Europe (SAFE) as a first step towards a true European military force. [9]

One of the challenges that CSDP has to overcome is the fact that member states currently have very different military and traditions, and different concepts of civil–military tenets at the domestic level. This might prove quite difficult to overcome. But, in the light of the fact that 22 of the 28 countries of the EU are part of NATO, there is a degree of standardized way of thinking and operating among the militaries.

There is also a growing disparity between different nations military know-how and capabilities, fact that it also makes the positive development of CSDP more difficult.

Moreover, the current organization of EU poses another challenge for a coherent CSDP.

The challenge at the core of ESDP decision-making lies in the capacity to achieve a decision. The main strengths of ESDP, namely the engagement of Member States and the wide policy of the Union, can also prove the sources of serious constraints and shortcomings.

In a domain, mainly political, governed by unanimity and with limited room for flexibility at Treaty-level, the capacity to achieve a decision is mainly influenced by the convergence of national positions towards a common one. The effectiveness of the resulting decisions depends, on the other hand, on the mobilization of all relevant actors and all necessary instruments in a coherent fashion at every stage of the decision-making process. Achieving convergence and enhancing coherence take time and require a permanent balancing act between national interests and institutional perspectives. However, both political convergence and policy coherence remain indisputable conditions for generating effective action at EU level, and especially when we talk about possible military actions. [10]

An integrated EU planning process is obviously essential to the success of its security policy. Yet the creation, for example, of a policing presence for Bosnia provides an excellent example of the weaknesses of the present structure. All the operational matters are under the European Council's responsibility, whilst establishment and training are controlled by the Commission. EU members have thus focused less on adapting the Union to the tasks of international policing than on shaping future police capacity around its institutional framework and politics. [11]

3.Considerations about future of the Common Security and Defense Policy vs. NATO

The relationship between the EU and NATO is based on the next obvious fact: each body consists of 28 different members, with 22 of those members belonging to both organizations (fig.1). Such a distribution ensures that sort of a relationship between the two entities exists.

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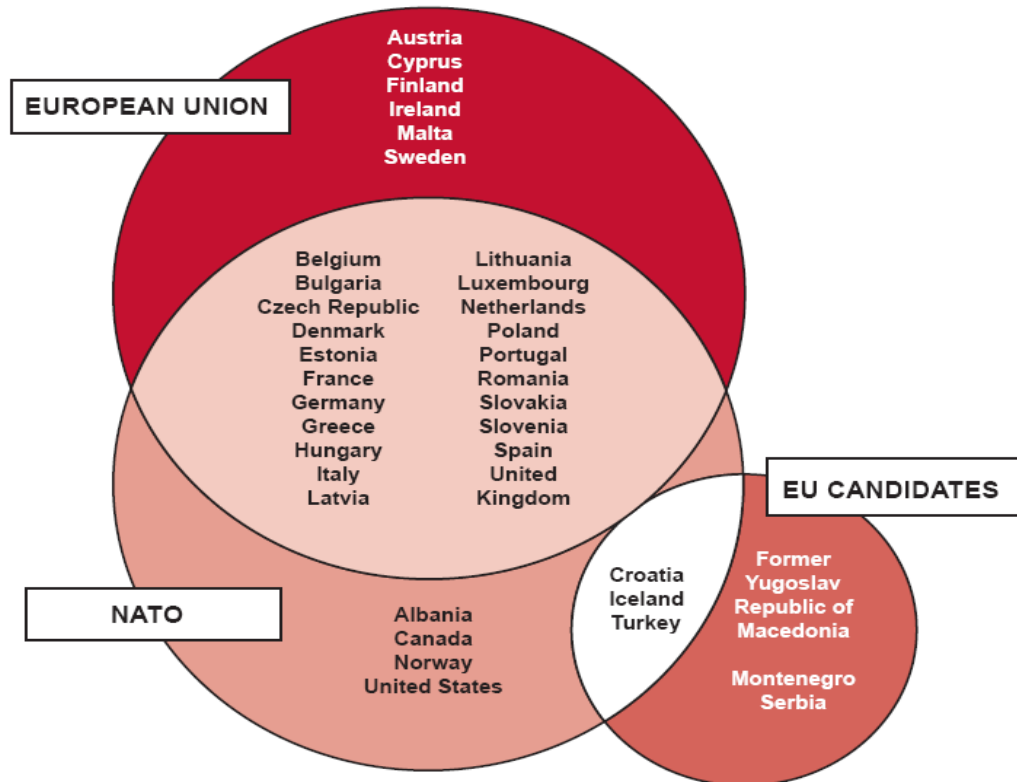


Fig.1 NATO and EU countries

Moreover, both NATO and EU use most part of a single pool of assets, and also have similar interests concerning international security and refer to a common base of values.

The EU and NATO have experienced broadly comparable evolutions since 2001. Both have had to adjust simultaneously to the challenge of receiving new partners, and the demands of a new security agenda generated by the 9/11 events. The latter event brought a greater emphasis on countries internal security and to a need of intervention to counter some new, non-traditional, including non-state, threats.

Currently, we could identify two ideological views:

1. Europe should fully develop its military sphere, with the aim of eventually being able to conduct the full range of military missions. We can estimate that, in this case, EU, throughout CSDP, will become a possible competitor for NATO. Such a move requires the creation of structures found in sovereign states, including permanent military forces, as well as military academies and headquarters and is also subject to the fact that, currently, most of EU countries have declared the same forces both to NATO and EU.

2. Another view is that Europe already has its military organization in the form of NATO and any strong military structure created outside of NATO would be a waste of resources while weaken a transatlantic link, which was the key of the victory in the Cold War. The view will see EU with its CSDP as performing only small scale missions, some of them mostly civilian based and in the field of humanitarian relief provision, training for military forces or police forces, and not the full combat operations.

France and the United Kingdom are generally seen as the promoters of the of these two views, France re-joining the integrated structure of NATO in 2009 that it had left in 1967, while the United Kingdom has often been one of the driving force in the development of common European military capabilities.[12]

Lately, there are voices that try to promote a third option, a view that try to present NATO-CSDP relationship as a “community of practice”, meaning a group of actors interacting on a certain domain of action to which they have a social commitment. This

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perspective is strongly at odds with the frequent focus on these relations being about either competition or complementarity but also, more importantly, deepens insights provided by approaches in terms of “interorganisational networks” or “institutionalismorphism” [13]

However, in this study, I will try to focus more on the complementarity versus competition relationship.

Why *competition*? Competition is the inevitable consequence of the functional and geographic overlap between the two organizations. The relationship between them has to take into account the structural shift in the transatlantic balance represented by an increasing EU involvement represents. The EU’s required degree of autonomy in the field of foreign and security policy is one of the points of the study.

The very creation of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was to a large extent motivated by the concern that after the end of the Cold War the United States – and thus NATO – could no longer be relied upon to automatically take upon itself the resolution of every security issue with which Europe could be confronted. In the absence of automatic American intervention, a capacity for autonomous EU action is a necessity. In combination with the obvious shortcomings of existing European capabilities, as evidenced in Kosovo in 1999, this was the motivation for the creation of CFSP and, in 1999, ESDP. [14]

The issuing of the 2003 European Security Strategy stated clearly the Europe ambitions to become more a global than a regional actor.

Whether it will also be a global power, that is whether it will proactively influence the world, depends on the strengthening of its emerging strategic culture: the political will, including in demanding situations, to take decisions true to its strategic objectives and to put to use all necessary instruments to implement them.[15]

In this debate, the most important role to take into account is the one of US. US is the biggest promoter of the primacy of NATO as the forum for decision making on security and defense. The United States further promotes NATO as a vehicle for the modernisation of the armed forces of its European allies, with the aim of increasing their “usability”, and continuously urges Europeans to spend more on defense. Until recently, the EU countries defense budgets suffered only cuts, but, in the light of recent terrorist related events at the core of Europe (France, and Belgium), as well as due to Russia’s unpredictable behavior, a slight increase is observed. Finally, US managed to persuade European partners to do as per its request.

Another fact that will not allow the EU to become a real “competitor” in terms of security for NATO, is the fact that EU is very much internally divided. In spite of the aspirations expressed in the ESS, no real evolution has been made on the nature of the transatlantic partnership and on the level of ambition in respect to the autonomy of the EU as strategic actor *vis-à-vis* NATO and the United States.

The EU thus continues to oscillate between Atlantic and European positions. This continuous change remains the fundamental obstacle to a fully cohesive and resolute CFSP/ESDP.

On the other hand, there are views and voices that envision more a *complementary* role of the two actors. A more flexible arrangement within NATO ought to be able to reconcile the divergent trends, satisfying both those who want to maintain the cohesion of the transatlantic alliance and those who seek room for an autonomous role for the EU.

According to Sven Biscop, “There are now two main pillars within NATO: the United States and the EU. This is a logical consequence of the development of the EU as an ever more deeply integrated entity, and is reflected in the establishment of formal EU-NATO relations.” [16]

This view sets the conditions for a complementary relationship.

Instead of some sort of “right of first refusal”, each pillar should have a “right of initiative”. As global strategic actors, with the full range of foreign and security policy

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instruments, the EU and the United States are the main decision makers. If, on receiving a request from UN or another actor that requires a possible military response, it should be agreed upon– within the bounds of international law of course – to initiate that. For transparency, US should consult its allies in the NAC (North Atlantic Council), before any action is considered.

Next, a NAC-PSC (Political and Security Committee) meeting could be the forum where a decision to be reached, and if both agree to contribute substantially to the actual military operation, it can be implemented either under NATO flag, or if one organization does not agree to the action or prefers not to contribute to the action, the other part can still launch the operation autonomously.

For its autonomous operations, each part could still request the use of NATO assets according to mechanisms in place, such as “Berlin Plus”. An organization can still choose to invite other individual allies, outside the treaty they are part of, to participate in its autonomous operations.

An EU improved security capacity is needed to be able to act in cases when NATO/US assets are unavailable. Without this capacity, EU have to rely on US to solve most of its problems, and, it could realize, maybe too late, that it is not possible.

This approach will have to rely upon a great flexibility from US and EU. It implies a pragmatic attitude, choosing the framework that is most suitable according to the present situation.

Building in the necessary flexibility would prevent divergences between allies on issues of “day-to-day policy” from endangering the organization as such, while the alliance as a community of values expressed in a collective defense commitment would be preserved. Solidarity in the event of an effective Article 5 situation naturally would still be complete and unquestionable. Article 5 should be interpreted strictly though, so as not to detract from the value of this ultimate security commitment. NATO would thus remain the foundation of collective defense and the ultimate guarantor of the security of all allies.[17]

4. Conclusion

In the view of the facts presented in the previews chapters, I can conclude that NATO still has a role to play in shaping the global security situation. The alliance is based on common values, as well as the ones the EU Treaty encompasses: liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. Secondly, NATO has proved its efficiency as an operational organization for non-Article 5 missions; it is therefore the best possibility to use when all allies agree on the need to intervene militarily. Thirdly, NATO is an instrument for the permanent modernization of military capabilities in terms of operational capabilities and interoperability.

However, the rise of the EU as a global strategic actor requires a re-equilibration of NATO, in order to take into account the change that has taken place in the transatlantic relationship.

A complementary relationship (which I see the most favorable based on the current situation), based on the two-pillar alliance would at the same time put to value European capabilities and provide for the flexibility that would allow for the EU – and the United States – to play its own part on the international scene. Inherently, what I see more probably, at least for medium term, is that NATO will remain the main military organization dealing with major operations, due to the fact that it has proven itself over the years to be effective in major scale conflicts, and due to the fact that most of the resources of both NATO and UE countries (meaning military forces) are committed to it. Meanwhile, EU will continue with small scale operations, usually in the reconstruction and development phase of conflicts, based on the fact that it has capabilities to provide valuable support to these areas.

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Subsequently, both NATO/US and EU have to undergo some structural changes, and maybe changes in the way they perceive their power positions. First and foremost, however, it is up to the EU to overcome its internal divides, in order to meet the ambitions of the European Security Strategy. Should the CSDP progress, on the long term, it seems possible that EU will prove itself as a powerful actor on the world scene.

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