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Given the pressures, challenges, external threats and feelings of insecurity, will the evolution of the European security system, currently moving towards greater integration, eventually lead to the formation of shared defence or even a "European Army"? Is the latter a practical or politically possibility? (Throughout this paper, EU and Europe now mean the 27 member states – MS - of the European Union after the UK has left at the end of 2020)

Over the last 5 years, rapid steps so far involve the establishment of a European Defense Fund; the development of the Capacity Development Plan to define short, medium and long-term priorities; the adjustment of structures, including greater centralisation of information and a command structure for military operations initially non-executive, the Capacity for Planning and Conducting Military Actions; the Coordinated Annual Defense Review with a view to better coordination between countries; the Common Security and Defence Policy (see paper EDGE3 An introduction to CSDP by Edoardo del Principe) and, finally, the establishment of Permanent Structured Cooperation.

In the preface to the "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" of 2016, Federica Mogherini, High Representative for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (ARVP), told the European Council:

"The purpose, and even the very existence, of our European Union is being called into question. However, our citizens and the world need a strong European Union more than ever. Instability and insecurity have been growing in the European region in a broad sense. The crises we face inside and outside our borders are directly affecting the lives of our citizens".

Ms. Mogherini's thesis reflects a profound change in the context described in the European Security Strategy of 2003, which stated that Europe "has never been as prosperous, secure and free as today"

Following the terrorist attacks in Madrid (2004) and London (2005), other European cities (Paris, Brussels, London, Berlin, Nice, Manchester and Barcelona) have been victims of fatal attacks, affecting ordinary citizens and creating in Europe an atmosphere of vulnerability and fear. Add to this the uncontrolled flow of refugees and emigrants from a fragile, unstable South, whose

demographic growth and involvement in conflicts drag on over time. The internal security of Europe seems to depend on its strategic periphery. (More extensively explored in the MED series of papers)

Similarly is the effect of the more aggressive behaviour of Russia, focused on the preservation of spheres of influence in countries that belonged to the former USSR, such as the Baltic States, Georgia, Moldova / Transnistria or Armenia. The invasion of Eastern Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, de facto have changed, by military occupation, internationally recognised borders.

Much will certainly depend on how the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) is implemented.

On 14 November 2016, the "EUSR Implementation Plan in the Security and Defense dimension" was approved by the EU External Relations Council, which defines a new level of ambition - responding to external conflicts and crises; building capacity in partners; and protecting the Union and its citizens.

But the text mainly defines and proposes a set of actions considered necessary for its "Implementation" and for the construction of a stronger Europe, which, if materialized, could bring about significant changes in the inter-relationship between the European institutions and Member States' (MS) capacity-building systems. Among them, the "deepening of defence cooperation stands out" which will be based on the "Coordinated Annual Defense Review" (RACD) among the member states, with a view to promoting

- the synchronization of the defence plans of the member states, in pursuit of common capacities;
- the constitution of a structure for strategic-operational planning and conduct of initially non-executive military operations ie Military Capacity for Planning and Conduct;
- the creation of (financial) tools and instruments to support and encourage defence cooperation;
- the participation of SMEs and strengthening of the European defence industrial and technological base in a more competitive and innovative way;
- the reformulation of the information system;
- the revision of the financing mechanism for military operations (Athena mechanism) to make it more expeditious and shared;
- but, above all, the proposal to revitalize the concept of "Permanent Structured Cooperation"(Pesco) which, although present in the Lisbon Treaty, had never been implemented due to a lack of political will, which presupposes demanding operating rules that are beyond unanimous decisions.

These comprise the essential reference framework or "pillar" of EU security and defence.

The "European defense action plan: towards a European defense fund" or European Action Plan, in addition to preparatory action on R & T / defense and the European Defense Industrial Development Program (PEDID), created the European Defense Fund with the aim of helping Member States to invest more efficiently in joint defence capabilities, promoting a more competitive and innovative industrial base, and enhancing the security of European citizens.

On 15 December 2016, the European Council reaffirmed its commitment to the implementation of the European Union's Internal Security Strategy for 2015-2020. The strengthening of EU cooperation on foreign security and defence, focused on three priorities:

- The EU's Global Security and Defense Strategy.
- The European Defense Action Plan.

- The application of the common set of proposals that follows the EU-NATO Joint Declaration signed in Warsaw in July 2016.

Political considerations have been added to the strategic context. Before the Rome Summit in March 2017, the European Commission published the White Paper on the future of Europe, presenting various scenarios on EU developments in the post-Brexit context, reflecting on topics including the "Future of European Defense".

Its conclusions included that "the time is ripe for a change of degree in the field of security and defense". It presented as possibilities for "moving towards a Security and Defense Union ":

- "Cooperation" - Member States would co-operate more frequently than in the past;
- "Shared" security and defence - much greater financial and operational solidarity, in addition to a broader and deeper understanding in relation to the understanding of the respective threats and the convergence of strategic cultures;
- "Common" security and defence - the result of a deepening of cooperation and greater integration.

These are very different options, but all start from the need to improve current cooperation, which would lead to structures profoundly different from the one that currently exists in the light of the Maastricht Treaty and confirmed in the Lisbon Treaty - the actions of Foreign Policy and Security policies are intergovernmental in nature, and are decided unanimously.

This evolution had been foreseen in the Maastricht Treaty, where it was agreed in Article J. 4 (1) that "foreign and security policy must include all issues related to the security of the Union, including the possible structuring of a common defense policy, which over time can lead to a common defense"

Are we moving from a common security and defence policy to this common defence?

The "Reflection Paper on the Future of European Defense", ("Reflection"), prepared by the European Commission, describes current trends, and describes the options for future developments "towards a Security and Defense Union". While these scenarios are not mutually exclusive, there are different levels of ambition for the EU to jointly develop competencies in security and defence.

"Security has become a major concern for Europeans". This, according to the Reflection, was recognized in the 2017 Rome Declaration, where a vision of a safer Union required commitment to strengthening its common security and defence.

The document also considers that the first steps towards a Security and Defense Union have been taken. The EU is reforming its Common Security and Defense Policy structures, developing civilian and military capabilities and instruments, deepening European cooperation, as well as strengthening its partnerships with third countries and partner organisations, such as UN and NATO. (See paper EDGE3) But further progress is now needed:

Firstly, "for MSs to be stronger and more sovereign in a globalized world, they need to have greater cooperation within the European Union, including in the field of defense", while fully respecting the constitutional rights and responsibilities of each country. Systematic defence cooperation and gradual integration will contribute to the preservation of national sovereignty. Second, there are significant differences in perceptions of threats and strategic cultures amongst the member states. The nature of the threats has also changed over time and Europe now faces hybrid and transnational threats. A Security and Defense Union should encourage a stronger alignment of strategic cultures, as well as a greater understanding of threats and appropriate responses.

Thirdly, the nature of the transatlantic relationship is evolving. To date, EU security has been

coordinated by NATO, but it is clear that more responsibility is required from Europeans while continuing to coordinate their actions on both sides.

Fourthly, "more systematic cooperation and integration" requires a genuine single market for defence. This means, in particular, encouragement of industrial competition, access of small and medium-sized enterprises to European supply chains, specialisation and economies of scale and optimisation of production, (as duplication between MSs can affect the interoperability of their equipment). They can also lead to a lack of preparedness and readiness by the armed forces and gaps in defence capabilities. In order to solve this issue, defence expenditures for MS's must be better coordinated.

It will be the European Parliament and the European Council that will decide to change the current limitations on common funding and what military problems can be overcome by moving towards a common defence. However, the European Commission has already proposed more effective allocation of funds through a European Defense Fund in its document "A modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends, Multiannual financial framework 2021-2027."

The European Defense Fund encourages cooperation of MS's, necessitating European defence cooperation to obtain European funding for projects, mainly with regard to the productive capacity of components in security and defence. However, the Fund foresees its continuation for the "Development" phase in which the projects can receive considerable financing, if there is a guarantee of the product's acquisition by an associated group of MS's. The European Defense Fund goes beyond Cooperation, as described above, and aims at Shared security by stimulating collective purchases of equipment.

The Capacity Development Plan planning process that defines and presents short, medium and long term priorities, and applies to any of "Reflections" three scenarios.

RACD leads to a mutual availability of equipment acquisition priorities by each MS's so that, together, they can pursue opportunities for better coordination in the definition of requirements and production timetables, achieving improved compatibility, lowering production costs and profiting from the action of the European defence industrial and technological base.

Military Capacity for Planning and Conduct (CMPC) goes beyond simple Cooperation because it is about creating a planning and command entity that will exist permanently. CMPC is, in principle, intended to conduct "non-executive" military actions, that is, non-combatants. But, even if it does receive such an assignment, it does not create a "European Army", since it has no permanently constituted force structures.

Pesco, going beyond Cooperation, seems to promote shared defence. MSs have accepted the obligation to subscribe at least one of the Projects. It may represent a step towards common security and defence because it is legally binding and the MSs accept submitting themselves to the EU's scrutiny to verify whether or not they are fulfilling the commitments they made, which was not the case in the past. Pesco seems to surpass "shared security and defense" whose initiatives are usually voluntary, and national initiatives.

The EP Foreign Affairs Committee of 17 February 2017 attests to the EU's willingness to integrate Battlegroups into Pesco, to create a Headquarters with military planning capacity, as well as using the EU budget to support operating expenses. These measures call for greater and better collaboration, paving the way for research, development and common acquisition of materials. Uniformity and interoperability of arms is based on the premise that if more countries buy the same type of weapons, their market price will be lower. Previous examples include the strategic transport plane Airbus A400-M and NH-90.

Does this mean that a European army is coming? No, at least not soon, but this is the ultimate end, according to some commentators who consider that the agreement signed by the 23 MS's laid the foundations for a mechanism "aimed at creating a 'common army' of European Union, within a framework of complementarity with the NATO "political-military bloc". These aspects are discussed more fully in EDGE2 "An EU Army: Fantasy, Fact, or Folly?" by Joe Fallon

A year after launching the idea of a common military force, then-EU President Jean-Claude Juncker defended the idea that "a joint EU army would show the world that there could never again be a war between European countries". This force would allow Europe to "react more credibly to threats to peace from an EM's or a neighbouring state" and "send a clear message to Russia that we are determined to defend our European values". But between 2015 and 2017, emphasis changed. The European Commission now says that the European Defense Mechanism will not duplicate structures or create a NATO for Europe.

The process of implementing the Common Security and Defense Policy goes beyond simple cooperation, and is evolving steadily towards shared security and defence.

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