EUROPEAN ARMED FORCES WHERE TO?

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Abstract: *The permanent structured cooperation in the security and defence policy has been introduced through the Lisbon Treaty. It considered an opportunity for countries that are members of the EU to cooperate more tightly in the security and defence domain. This permanent state of cooperation in the defence domain will allow the member countries that are willing and able to develop common defence capabilities to invest in common projects and improve the contribution and operational availability of their armed forces.*

Keywords: threats, challenges, security policies, capabilities, european armed force.

1. Introduction

The fundamental changes that have been occurred in the continental and global geopolitical structure during the last decades requires the identification of viable solutions in order to ensure the security of the member states and appropriate measures to counter all the risks and threatens which the national and regional security encounter, in which the military power plays a significant role, and to develop effective methods to modernizing military capabilities as well, under the circumstances of immeasurable and uncontrolled expanding of the transformation process of the military and civil-military actions and systems, the need to reconsider and redefine the place, the role and the means of using the military forces.

The current security environment presents a series of challenges and threats that bring in front of us a reevaluation of the military answer in the case of a crisis. Armed forces have to adapt themselves from a doctrinal point of view and from the capabilities point of view as well to the evolution of the

new types of challenges generated by state and non-state actors. The rhythm of innovation and technology evolution, the unrestricted access to new technology developments generates changes in the structure, endowment and training of the military forces.

It is extremely clear that the ambitions of the European Union to become a first rank political actor on the world stage have to be backed by a credible military force without which this ambition may not be possible.

The European Union represents an economic and political partnership characterized by an unique form of cooperation between the 28 member states and has been conceived to meet the challenge of strengthening economic cooperation and promoting the economic prosperity of states, respectively, to ensure peace in Europe. The promoters of the project hoped that, through the creation of this partnership, the member states would willingly give up on some of their sovereignty in specific domains,

eliminating economic rivalry that could result in conflict.

Even though this was initially strictly an economic union, right from the beginning of the European process of integration in the 1950's, the European Union knew a gradual evolution, by incorporating subsequently several economic domains and becoming a customs union with an unique market, its own currency and progressively becoming an entity that incorporated activities in countless domains, from development aid to environmental and security politics.

On the other hand, with the beginning of the Cold War and the ever-growing tension between the Soviet Union and the United States, NATO has secured, for a consistent period of time, European security.

The North Atlantic Alliance, after the end of the Cold War, has confronted with the necessity of answering changes in the security architecture. As such, NATO planned and conducted new mission types on the international scene, becoming a global actor in the security domain, preserving at the same time the original objective of collective defence the Alliance has.

In parallel, the crisis in the Balkans in the 1990's has brought back the discussion of the idea that the European construction may not be complete without having a coherent and credible dimension of external policy and defence at its disposal.

2. European initiatives for security assurance

During the recent years, the European Union has evolved progressively, especially in the security field, and has become an important actor on the international scene, actively involved in crisis management operations not only on the European continent - the Balkans and the Caucasus, but also in Africa, The Middle East and Asia. This active involvement demonstrates the Union's capacity to operate free-standing in crisis management, but also within matters with military implications.

Although military operations have been largely backed by member states in recent years, the development of a common military component raises the issue of EU competition with other international organizations, in our case with NATO. Despite the divergences and competitions between the EU and NATO, the two institutions are trying to develop a relationship based on cooperation and complementarily, Europeans arguing that the EU's role is to give itself the opportunity to organize, deploy and conduct military operations, even there where NATO is engaged, but without doubling or rivaling the efforts made by the latter.

The idea of an European armed force has began to be invoked as early as 2016 by French President Emmanuel Macron as well as German Chancellor Angela Merkel in their public interventions. The central theme of the French Speaker's public speeches in relation to European security is the defence from China, Russia and even the United States.

Macron said the European Union should set up its own army to decrease Washington's dependence on defence, denouncing the emergence of "authoritarian powers," and evoking the need to protect Europe from Russia, China and even the United States. "We will not be able to defend the European citizens if we do not decide to have a real European armed force. Against Russia, which is at our borders and shows that can be threatening, we must have a Europe who can defend more by itself, without depending on the United States and thus to become sovereign", declared Emmanuel Macron. The President of France warned, without giving details, that there are "authoritarian powers re-emerging and rearming at the borders of Europe". "We have to defend ourselves from China, Russia and even from the United States of America," added Emmanuel Macron.

President Macron's statement refers to the project initiated in 2017, called the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

On 13 November 2017, ministers from 23 Member States signed a joint notification on permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and forwarded them to the High Representative and the Council. On December 7, 2017, Ireland and Portugal also notified their decision to take part in the PESCO.

On 11 December 2017, the EU Council adopted the decision to establish permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) less than one month after receiving a joint notification from Member States referring to their intention to participate. The 25 Member States participating in the PESCO are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden.

The permanent structured cooperation in the field of security and defence policy was introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon. It provides the EU member states with the opportunity to cooperate more closely in the field of security and defence. This permanent defence cooperation framework will allow those member states that want and are capable of doing so, to develop common defence capabilities, invest in joint projects and improve the contribution and operational availability of their armed forces.

However, as Martin Quencez points out in a European security review [1], France and Germany have not yet agreed on how the European common defence should look like. According to that analysis, while France would envision a small group of states with high end military capabilities, Germany would be in favor of an enlarged cooperative structure of which all Member States would belong, regardless of their military capabilities.

The argument put forward by Germany is that a Europe divided by the armed forces of each state would, in fact, be a politically divided Europe. Important, according to Germany, is that the member states to have a common goal.

On the other hand, US President Donald Trump responded using his favorite method of posting on Twitter, just before his arrival in France for the Armistice Day ceremonies on 11 November 2018, by describing the French President's statements as “very insulting”, pointing out that “firstly the European member countries of NATO should pay correctly their contribution to NATO, where the United States contributes greatly” [2].

The project of an European army was also indirectly criticized by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO-Industry Forum in Berlin on November 12, 2018, where he said he welcomed “the European Union's reinforced defence efforts ...”, but not “the fact that the EU is starting to develop structures that are doubling those of NATO.”

In our opinion, beyond the military significance, the new European defence structure would have major political consequences as well.

3. Determinations, conditionings, and implications of an European armed force construction

After the Second World War, the United States and Europe acted as a unit, directing their efforts towards defending and promoting the liberal-democratic values in the world. The political collaboration of America and Europe has been favored by the military alliance and economic interconnection. Now, however, the problems that are threatening the military alliance of the two political blocs seem to threaten their political collaboration themselves

Over the last two years, relations between the European Union and the United States have deteriorated more and more. Foreign policy by President Donald Trump under the motto “America First” worried European leaders who reacted accordingly. Throughout its history, the United States has oscillated between assuming a role as “international gendarme” and isolationism.

After almost half a century of interventionism, in 2016 US foreign policy returned to 180 degrees. President Donald Trump moved from interventionism to isolationism. This policy has resulted in President Trump's request to European leaders to pay contributions to NATO.

In 2017, contributions to the NATO budget were as follows: US contributed 71.7%, Britain 5.8%, France and Germany each with 4.8%, Italy 2.4%, Canada 2.2%, Spain with 1.3%, and the other states together contributed 7.1%, according to a statistic published in the NATO Secretary General's Annual Report for 2017.

For the year 2018, according to the NATO Secretary General's Annual Report for 2018, the US contributed 69.3% and the European and Canada countries contributed 30.7% as follows: Britain 6.2%, France 5.2%, Germany by 5.1%, Italy by 2.6%, Canada 2.2%, Turkey and Spain by 1.4%, the Netherlands by 1.3%, Poland by 1.3%, and other countries together with 4.4%.

Very few European countries - including Greece, the UK, Estonia, Romania and Poland – respect their commitment to allocating at least 2% of national GDP to NATO.

By calculating the alternatives, we believe that European leaders have two options: either to contribute 2% of GDP to NATO, so as to collaborate on an equal footing with the Americans, or ignore the US President's pressures and organize themselves in a military structure separated from NATO. The second option seems to be preferred by the European leaders.

In this context, the vision inside NATO becomes extremely relevant. There is a consensus that NATO and the EU need to work together as closely as possible when it comes to defence. The defence capability policy is as clear as possible for NATO and EU member nations of 22. The nations provide capabilities for both organizations. More plastic said, money for the capability comes from a single pocket, that of member nations, and they can not be allocated for

double efforts. This is where the question arises: “Who comes first?”. And in order to avoid an unconventional response to one or other of the positions, the EU should establish mechanisms to fund joint defence capabilities similar to those of NATO.

From the start, any competition between NATO and the EU is a mistake in our eyes. A competition of this kind would lead to a doubling of resource needs (economic and military) as well as to a totally inefficient management, according to an analysis published by Carnegie Europe [3].

A fragmented West will be at the disadvantage of all parties involved. And the direction that the leaders of France and Germany chose by building a common European armed force will serve the main competitors of the West: Russia and China, according to the cited analysts.

The political division that Europe's separation from NATO could generate would also have economic consequences. For example, Chinese investment in Europe is already rising, as revealed in an article in *The Economist* and another in *CNBC*. A slowdown in the Chinese cash flow would generate serious economic problems for Europe [4].

In addition to the international political consequences, Europe will also have to manage the internal problems such a project will bring: the difference of opinion between France and Germany on how the European army should look, the determination of the other European states to contribute on a long term to this joint project or the proper organization of the European army.

Strengthening the allegation that there is no consensus within the EU on whether or not to create a single European armed force is also the statement of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini who, at a conference in Brussels, affirmed that the EU will not turn into a military alliance.

“We are a political union. There is no competition, there is no mention of a change. We will not build a European army, no one here speaks of an European army” Mogherini declared. The EU official also said that the EU bloc is investing to ensure that Member States “have the capabilities to strengthen their own defence system, then they will be more credible, more active as security providers in the region and around the world.”

The purpose of the EU's foreign and security policy is to give the 28 Member States more importance on the international scene than if they were acting individually.

What would such a project mean from a military point of view? We cannot imagine the whole set of consequences that this project would generate from a military point of view.

We could, however, do an imaginative exercise in which we can at least draw a set of consequences on the basis of which the military echelon can draw up the recommendations needed to make a political decision.

On one side, supporting such a project would result in the elimination of US dependency and the EU's assertion as a world power pole. It could make the EU generate a whole range of common capabilities, based on already existing mechanisms, capabilities that can be deployed where European leaders decide that it is in the interest of Europe to intervene. Surely the creation of such an armed, credible, discouraging and effective force would take quite a long time. First of all, we should act decisively in doctrinal terms.

Such steps are already being taken at NATO level. NATO already has a policy of equalizing joint defence efforts through the so-called “fair burden sharing” mechanism. This mechanism sits at the base of all the actions NATO undertakes. What is more, with the occasion of the Summit in Wales in 2014, the heads of states and governments approved and assumed in the names of the member countries they represent commitments to curb defence

budget cuts and to allocate at least 2% of country's' GDP to defence within 10 years, of which at least 20% shall be spent on the cost of new major equipment and related research, in the time span. These commitments have gained a new meaning with the occasion of the summit held in Brussels in June 2018, when leaders of the member states have agreed to elaborate national plans that would support touching the 2% mark from GDP for expenditures destined for defence.

Along the same idea, NATO has already established criteria of deployability and sustainability of the capabilities put at their disposal by the nations, and by the assumed commitments, nations will ensure their armed forces will be able to work together efficiently, including by implementing NATO standards and doctrines.

After the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, the number of activities in which the Allies are engaged has increased in the light of NATO missions and operations, as well as through operations and missions under national command or other organizations. These actions are complementary, though. One of the NATO's most important military actions at this hour Forward Presence with its two components Enhanced Forward Presence and Tailored Forward Presence is designed and developed to discourage and defend against any type of aggression from Russia directed towards the Allies on the eastern flank. Complementary, the European Union is conducting military operations in Northern Africa to prevent and combat terrorism. Another example of complementarities is EU's operation “SOFIA” to combat illegal migration which is conducted in parallel with NATO's operation “SEA GUARDIAN”. NATO cooperates with EU in the Aegean Sea to combat illegal migration from Turkey by displacing a part of NATO's Standing Naval Group in support of FRONTEX and the list can continue. West Balkans is another example of complementarities, with NATO ensures a military presence in

Kosovo, whereas UE is conducting a military operation in Bosnia, Operation Althea and EULEX rule of law mission in Kosovo.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can affirm that only a careful analysis of the international security environment and the challenges and threats to the Western world can solve the dispute generated by the idea of forming or not forming a European military force. It is extremely clear that the access to advanced technology added with the possibility of

owning and using weapons of mass destruction can increase the number of state and non-state actors with the desire to change the balance of power, both at the regional level and above all, globally.

In this context it is needed that the European leaders leave aside their political ambitions and contribute at finding efficient solution regarding European defence, regardless if it is helped by NATO, or why not, a future European armed force which could multiply the effects of defence when it needs to be used during crisis or war.

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