

The EU as a defence actor - strategic effectiveness and Transatlantic burden-sharing

Global environment has been changing dramatically for at least a decade. The West, including the EU and its Member States, is being challenged at unprecedented scale in all important domains: military, economic, diplomatic and technological. In the upcoming years, it will have to establish its position among emerging (or re-emerging) powers in a multi-polar global system, defined, as in previous centuries, in terms of clashing interests and balance of power.

Under these circumstances, the unity of the West is a long-term strategic necessity. Its most important institutions, the EU and NATO, have to provide a holistic and coherent response to the challenges we face. It should be the starting point for a definition of the EU role as a security and defence actor. The principle of European strategic autonomy must be interpreted in terms of an increased effectiveness and fairer burden-sharing in assuming responsibility for indivisible security of trans-Atlantic sphere, not as breaking ties with North American allies, duplication of efforts and competition. On the new level of relations between the EU and UK it is crucial to maintain the UK's role as a reliable and trusted EU partner in the field of security and defence – a partner, who is ready and capable of an effective reaction to our common challenges.

Goals

It was agreed in November 2018 that the EU as a security actor has three basic tasks:

- Responding to external conflicts and crises,
- Capacity building of partners,
- Protecting the Union and its citizens.

These tasks can be successfully performed only if jointly performed by NATO and the EU.

European defence, including its most prominent elements launched recently: European Defence Fund (EDF), Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and military mobility (as a separate point, as it goes much beyond the original PESCO project) should focus on the following tasks:

- Assistance with Member States in development of military capabilities for full spectrum of national and international engagements, from expeditionary operations to individual and Allied defence, in line with the subsidiarity principle. Strategic efficiency cannot be achieved if Member States do not have capabilities they could offer for the joint efforts.
- Development of sustainable and innovative European Defence and Technological Industrial Base. The overall aim should be a development of diversified, but co-operating network of defence entities, spreading expertise and innovation across the EU, in order to provide our militaries with sufficient capabilities. This efforts must not turn into a rent for the strongest European industrial players, helping them to monopolise European defence market. EU's openness for the cooperation with our trans-Atlantic partners in developing capacities within PESCO and EDF is key to ensure implementation of EU projects in complementarity with NATO.
- Close and strategic partnership between the EU and UK, in particular with regard to the: closest neighbourhood, trans-Atlantic cooperation, EU-NATO cooperation, combating terrorism, sanction policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), is a cornerstone of reacting to our common security challenges.
- Support for external partners, who deal with security challenges, which impact the security of the West. This should be done both through crisis management and capacity building, bearing in mind that only the latter could guarantee long-lasting results. This assistance should be addressed both to partners in the East, tackling Russian aggression and hybrid interference and heading towards European and Atlantic integration, and to partners in the South, combating terrorism and organized crime, including human trafficking, and struggling for stability, in line with genuine 360

degree approach. With the EU role as a global player well recognised, special attention should be paid to its neighbourhood.

- Complementarity with NATO collective defence. The EU comprehensive action in the area of military mobility is vital for NATO deterrence and defence at Eastern and Southern flank by assuring Allied freedom of movement across Europe. Besides that, there are numerous areas such as protection of critical infrastructure, response to terrorist attacks and natural or man-made disasters or cyber security, where EU instruments could contribute to building EU and NATO resilience to hybrid threats.

Proposed Actions

Finally, few words on governance. The CSDP is an inter-governmental policy and establishment of PESCO has not changed that. However, European defence became wider than the CSDP, for it also includes areas with growing involvement of the European Commission, notably defence industry, military mobility and capacity building. This makes European defence some kind of a 'grey zone' with blurring responsibilities and lacking transparency.

To deal with this challenge, following principles should be put in place:

- European defence remains inter-governmental, with decision-making based on a consensus;
- European Commission is involved in areas where action at the Community level could be more effective, and is accepted by the Member States, in line with the subsidiarity principle;
- Competencies of Member States, European External Action Service (EEAS), European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European Commission are clearly delineated and transparent procedures are put in place.