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A EUROPEAN WAY OF WAR [1]

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Abstract:

Through establishment of ESDP/CSDP in late 1990s, following the French-British Declaration in Saint-Malo, the EU has developed a defence and security dimension in its own right and has managed to launch more than 20 civilian missions and military operations. While ESDP/CSDP is to be seen as the operational arm of the EU's foreign policy, this essay tried to identify whether the Union had also its own way of waging wars, by that actually meaning to conduct crisis management operations based on an integrated / comprehensive approach. With a large array of instruments at its disposal, civil and military ones, the EU seems quite well prepared to respond to international crises, although of a limited scope and at the rather lower intensity spectrum. With the Treaty of Lisbon providing for a mutual assistance clause and due to the recent statements on a possible US retrenchment, the Union seems to have to assume greater responsibilities on the international stage. While the economic crisis requires innovative solutions to compensate for the cuts in MS' defence budgets, the EU should try to demonstrate that it has both the will and the ability to strengthen its role as a meaningful security actor and complement NATO's actions in this field.

Key words: ESDP/CSDP, crisis management, operations, missions, collective defence

1.Introduction

Since the establishment of the EU, back in the 1950s (initially in the form of a European Economic Community - EEC), the topic of a genuine **European defence** has been *de facto* a taboo for most of the period until 1999. Quite surprisingly the European Security and Defence Policy (Common Security and Defence Policy after the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in December 2009) has emerged in the past 12 years or so as the spearhead of the EU's foreign policy and a major asset in the respective policy toolbox.

With more than 20 military operations and civilian missions on most continents, after a shy start in 2003, the EU made a huge leap forward in terms of asserting its identity on the international stage.

As put bluntly by the former director of the EU Institute for Security Studies in the eve of the ESDP launching back in 1998 “Of all European ambitions, the build up of a political Europe able to shape the international environment has in fact constituted the most conflicting and the least fruitful one since the end of 1950s. Is it stupidity or fatality? Would it be money, weapons or diplomatic and military know-how the European partners are lacking?” [2].

More than a decade later, it is worth ascertaining the way Europeans managed to answer such questions making use of the ESDP instruments. This is an endeavor which explains the need for short look into the evolution of ESDP proper.

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The trigger for the ESDP-related developments was twofold: on the one hand, the EU managed to reconcile the tensions between its civilian and military side of the house, while the disputes on the primacy of the Union and NATO as security actors have evolved into an acceptance and even support from the American side towards enhancing the European capabilities, on the other hand [3].

Without focusing too much on the evolution of ESDP/CSDP as such, the intent is to analyze whether the Union is heading into the right direction in terms of establishing a particular way of waging wars, although limited to the management of international crises for the time being.

As the 2003 first European Security Strategy ever puts it: “In almost every major intervention, military efficiency has been followed by civilian chaos” [4]. While this holds true for a basic tenet of ESDP/CSDP, i.e. the EU’s ability to draw on a broad spectrum of soft- and hard-power resources [5], civil and military ones, to tackle crises around the world, this does not necessarily infer that the Union is to assume in the future crises response operations only the a sort of “cleaning” role while NATO or various “coalitions of will” will play the game of war proper, especially when it comes to the high intensity spectrum.

2. From the European Defence Community to the ESDP/CSDP

After a short period of recovery in the aftermath of the World War II, inspired by the example of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), Europe tried to establish a so called European Defence Community (EDC), with a view to allow German soldiers to operate within a European Army without having to create a German one. The refusal of the French Assembly to ratify the EDC Treaty led to the failure of this initiative in 1954.

A direct consequence of this endeavor was the establishment in 1954 of the Western European Union (WEU), integrating also West Germany.

Later on, in 1960 and 1962, France put forward the idea of a “European Union” with a common foreign and defence policy to operate on an intergovernmental basis outside the European Economic Community (EEC). This attempt was also doomed due to the EEC partners fear that the French plans were aimed at undermining both NATO and the EEC. The following decision by France in 1996 to withdraw from NATO’s integrated structure and pursue its own military and nuclear doctrine has kept the European defence and security policy at bay until 1998.

It was only through the Franco-British Declaration of December 1998 in Saint-Malo that the ESDP/CSDP process was launched, reinforced by a gradual rapprochement of France towards NATO, leading to the decision to reintegrate France into the military organization of the Alliance, as recent as in 2009.

The choice made by Europe in 1950s and 1960s to rather remain a “civil power” led to the impossibility of the EU to react properly to the crises in its backyard, i.e. the Western Balkans, in early then late 1990s.

Although the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 meant already a shift in paradigm for the EU, the organization being now able to take gradual measures leading to a common defence, if the European Council so decides, there were almost two additional decades needed to have a ESDP/CSDP in full swing, by the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009.

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3. The development of the ESDP/CSDP

While Europe was qualified as “an influential <<soft power>>” [6] more than ten years ago, the EU still needs to further develop the <<hard>> side of its clout. The following sections deal with the developments related to the ESDP/CSDP contributing to the build up of the operational arm of the EU’s foreign policy.

In the context of the Balkans crises in early 1990s and due to a change in attitude by the United Kingdom in late 1990s towards a need for more Europe as an international actor, as a means to rebalance the transatlantic relations and safeguard the future of the Alliance, the EU could launch the ESDP/CSDP.

The adoption of the Franco-British Declaration in December 1998 was followed swift by the goal to establish ESDP/CSDP in the EU, during the European Council in June 1999. Moreover, half a year later, in December 1999, in Helsinki, the EU made the commitment to develop credible military capabilities to respond to international crises.

The Level of Ambition (LOA) of the Union established in Helsinki especially in military terms acted as an incentive to enhance the EU capabilities needed to manage international crises. Although various authors stating that the respective LOA was merely a recognition of the need for the Europeans to be able to tackle in the future a crisis at the scope and intensity of the one in Kosovo [7], one should admit that by setting targets for the EU Member States (MS) was a significant leap forward for the realm of security and defence by itself.

While the big picture seems to have been already painted it is worth noting that the Union’s ESDP/CSDP relies on several pillars hereinafter shortly described and assessed.

An extremely important one is the institutional setup of the ESDP/CSDP. By establishing the Political and Security Committee (PSC), the EU Military Committee (EUMC) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS), the Union endowed itself with a set of instruments to monitor the international situation, speak with a harmonized voice on the international stage and make decisions when required. This institutional setting was further enhanced by the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) incorporating civilian and military structures with responsibilities in the field of security and defence.

Another pillar of the ESDP/CSDP consists of its very capability development process. Whenever trying to describe this process one aspect should be crystal clear: the EU aims at developing a set of [civil and military] capabilities, based on the voluntary contributions of the Member States, in order to be able to respond to crises around the world (using civilian and military means, either separately or in a coordinated manner) and not with a view to establish a “European Army” as many still believe unfortunately. And this process is already **a good indicator on the European way of war as it stands now and as it is likely to stay at least in the short and medium run**: to tackle crises if possible before they arise (as the EU is the biggest world donor in terms of development aid this role fits rather well the organization as a credible foreign policy actor) and to use the whole available set of instruments, i.e. civilian and military ones, in order to have a comprehensive approach to crisis situations. As long as the Europeans have not developed yet neither an intricate set of military capabilities to tackle crises nor to allow them to respond to complex situations by themselves, as showed more recently by the operations in Libya in 2011, their biggest comparative advantage in front of other organizations consists in the ability to combine civilian and military power and provide an integrated response to crises.

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Not least important, one should also pay attention to the operational pillar of ESDP/CSDP. With twenty plus operations and missions around the globe the EU turned itself in a rather short period (from 2003 onwards) into an active international actor sought after by the other organizations with responsibilities in the field of international security, especially the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU).

And in order to have the full picture of ESDP/CSDP the various partnerships of the Union towards other organizations, such as the UN, NATO and AU, as well as the strategic partners US and Russia-type (with the other states in the BRICs [8] group following suit), should be also seen as an important part of this particular dimension of the EU establishment.

4.A European way of war?

4.1. Ascertaining ESDP/CSDP

Before answering the question proper it is worth noting the main trends in the evolution of ESDP/CSDP over the last decade or so, i.e. from 2000 onwards.

First of all, on a positive side of the overall picture one could mention: the swift growth of EU-led operations and missions, in spite of their limited scope, size or intensity, the increasing interaction between civilian and military side of the EU house in tackling crises, as well as a streamlined capability development process better harmonized with NATO's defence planning.

However, there are plenty of challenges and shortfalls: the need to envisage the possibility of taking on more demanding military operations, both in scope and terms of an increased role for the <<hard>> power; the need to improve cooperation with other international actors involved in a conflict; the need to make good the already "old" but by no means obsolete or no longer up-to-date capability shortfalls stemming both from the strategic planning process (i.e. the analysis and evaluation of MS voluntary contributions at the EU disposal against the defined set of requirements enshrined in the Requirements Catalogue 2005 - RC 05) and the operations/missions run by the organization (via a lessons identified process).

It is absolutely clear that the scope and size of most ESDP/CSDP operations and missions conducted so far has been rather limited but the main purpose of launching such endeavors lies rather in the power of the example and precedent it sets as the vivid proof of the ever closer Union at work in the sensitive realm of security and defence.

While the ESDP/CSDP has clearly contributed to the strengthening of the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy [9], it has also added a new dimension to the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, beyond its role in development aid, negotiations with other economic blocks and so on.

Although the European Security Strategy in 2003 and its adapted version in 2008 played an important role in the evolution of the Union as an international actor, there seems to still be a void in terms of clear cut conditions and criteria based on which to decide when and where the EU should initiate ESDP / CSDP operations and missions.

4.2. How do the Europeans wage a war?

These all boil down to the fundamental question: is there a particular way of Europeans to wage wars (although one has to admit this is a very limited approach to the war concept) by that meaning to conduct military operations and civilian missions in response to international crises?

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A possible simple answer could be hammered out by referring to the existing set of instruments, both civilian and military ones, made available for the EU, mostly by the MS and sometimes by NATO, in order to respond to international crises. This integrated or comprehensive approach to crisis management can and in fact makes the difference between the EU and other international organizations. But the question of the scope of such endeavors and their real impact on the areas of the world in real need is still a meaningful one.

However these are just bits and pieces of an overall approach to crisis management, bearing in mind the potential of the Union (as the largest donor of development aid in the world and the second global defence spender after US). The biggest difference consists, more likely, in the way the Europeans have decided to use the huge defence allocations in order to have their flag on the international stage: rather maintaining obsolete and costly capabilities matching the Cold War era security paradigm instead of investing in modernization of their armed forces across the full spectrum of lines of development of a capability (from personnel, equipment and infrastructure to training, performance, readiness and through deployability and sustainability) [10].

But the US is now “calling for an ESDP with teeth, contradicting the argument that European defence means a weakened Atlantic alliance” [11]. Reflecting this crucial shift, the April Bucharest NATO Summit in 2008 followed up suit with the Alliance’s first explicit statement of support for European defence.

Is there any sense for the Europeans to try to match the American prowess though?

Bearing in mind the American way of war, based on state of the art technology and complex sets of doctrines and procedures, it seems that there is no or at best little way of catching up for the Europeans.

Based on the facts mentioned above when ascertaining the overall ESDP/CSDP performance it seems that neither the scope nor the nature of the EU-led interventions cannot, by no means, match the American prowess.

On the other hand, the Europeans have to always rely on the “unanimity rule” in the field of defence which not only slows down the decision making process but also means that each and every decision for the EU to act has to be also be assessed against a set of sometimes diverging interests of the various MS.

This also makes the beauty of the contest and process: once agreed upon a set of principles all the MS will then have to play from the same sheet of music although sometimes the common denominator can really be so small that the impact of the EU endeavors fades away as a meaningful actor.

Beyond capabilities and decision making proper, another aspect seems to come into play when assessing and evaluating a European way of war: the will of Europeans to assume a greater share of the burden to respond to international crises. The relatively recent American decision to support the development of European capabilities to reinforce NATO as an international security actor, corroborated to the repeated statements on the advent of a “Pacific century” at the expense of the US presence on the European soil should act as incentives for the European political masters to pay attention to the developments in the defence sector [12]. But while the US will “of necessity rebalance towards the Asia-Pacific region” [13] the old continent is recognized as the US “principal partner in seeking global and economic security, and will remain so for the foreseeable future” [14]. This comes also at a cost: the need to be a reliable partner able to provide credible capabilities, as noted by different analysts: “The shifting focus of US foreign and

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security policy as a response to evolving conventional and emerging threats lends urgency to counter these threats through European political will and military capacity” [15].

The implementation of the EU Battlegroups concept represents for sure a case in point: therefore the debate over the flexibility and usability of these multinational formations and the already famous saying “use it/them or lose it/them” as an instrument contributing to enhancing interoperability and a vehicle for transformation of the armed forces in the participating MS is more relevant than ever.

The process of professionalization of the Armed Forces in the majority of the EU MS is also a step into a improving the military instrument, provided that the resources freed up from the conscripts-based system are directed to the upgrade and development of capabilities.

Another good step into the right direction seems to be the growing sense of complementarity between NATO’s Smart Defence process and the EU’s Pooling and Sharing initiative, both aiming to make better use of the scarce defence resources in a challenging financial context.

The Treaty of Lisbon, already mentioned above, provides for a mutual defence clause in case of an aggression against the territory of an EU MS, but no real, concrete steps have been taken in this respect so far. Does this mean that the Europeans will continue to focus on those capabilities allowing them to rather react to the lower spectrum of crisis management operation or will they assume a bigger share in the realm of security and defence?

The “US strategic defence guidance” [16] sees Europe as largely peaceful requiring less US assistance than the country currently provides.

This should clearly have an impact on the way the Europeans should prepare to wage wars, i.e. to better adapt the mix of capabilities to the needs of the 21st Century defence. **A defence who’s first lines are no longer at the borders of the MS proper but in demanding and protracted operations and missions to respond to international crises in remote areas of the world.**

And to add even more to an already complicated picture, there is still another cumbersome question: the decisions to go for filling various “niche” capabilities rather than building full-spectrum military forces were the right ones? Let alone the painful outcome of the respective decisions on the local industry in various MS.

Are those authors right referring to the emergence of a genuine European pillar of NATO or is it merely a speculation [17]?

4.3. Looking into the future

The experience of the operations in Libya in 2011 proved that America is prepared to step back and rather assume a “leading from behind” role while the Europeans are to take on greater responsibilities.

The list of necessary improvements has not changed dramatically since late 1990s when the late Western European Union (WEU) conducted the audit of forces and capabilities: command and control (C2), intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), strategic transport and air-to-air refueling, precision guided munitions (PGM) [18].

The legitimate question continues then to be out there: what will Europe do to become more relevant in the security and defence realm?

As the US actually admit that Europeans continue to be America’s best allies, at least at declaratory level within the US “strategic defence guidance” there may be some sense of relaxation on the “old continent”.

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However, the best solutions for Europe seems to be, in the short and medium run at least, to make meaningful contributions within NATO and by that to demonstrate that the Alliance has a role to play in the US security (hence a need for the latter to strengthen the Alliance), while enhancing the mix of civil and military instruments to be deployed in the management of crises around the world. The jury is still out whether the balance is to be tipped in the long run to a <<hard>> power Europe at the expense of merely <<soft>> one.

5. Conclusions

Defining a set of principles or identifying issues underpinning the development of a specific area seems to play an important role in advancing on the path to progress.

If there is also some structural approach in the respective proposals and meaningful solutions to overcome the identified challenges and shortfalls then the goal of such an endeavor may have been reached.

The Europeans have clearly benefited from NATO's and especially US presence over the last 60 years or so, both economic- and security-wise. The end of the bipolar world in early 1990s gave rise to a unipolar [19] and nowadays multipolar world where the EU wanted to have its share.

Although for much of the first decade after the demise of the Soviet Union and during the Western Balkans chain reaction crises the Europeans rather paid lip service and were reactive in nature, there was a shift in paradigm in 1998, once the French and British leadership decided to back up the establishment of a genuine ESDP/CSDP.

The set of structures and mechanisms, backed up by capabilities and leading to more than 20 operations and missions across most continents are clear signs of EU's intent to assert its identity on the international stage in the realm of security and defence.

The set of instruments at its disposal, civil and military, interlinked in a comprehensive approach to crisis management, is an important feature of the EU as an international actor.

In spite of the list of recognized shortfalls and challenges flawing ESDP/CSDP, the biggest weakness of Europe seems to consist in its limited capacity to agree upon set of universal principles to describe the strategic vision to underpin its international actions in terms of criteria to lead to the launching of operations and missions. And this goes in hand with the indecision to start implementing the provisions of the basic treaties, such as the possibility to go for a permanent structured cooperation as a step to a definition of a genuine common defence policy leading in time to a common defence, if the European Council so decides.

But of course the art here would be to devise such a process in a way that strengthens ESDP/CSDP, on the one hand, while assuming a significant share within NATO and convincing the US that Europe is serious about security and defence, hence it is a credible and reliable partner.

As rightly pointed out some years ago and still valid today "the EU and NATO are different organizations with different purposes. The EU needs a defence capability because it has, on some issues, a common foreign policy (...) NATO serves a different purpose to the EU – which is to promote transatlantic cooperation on security policy and military affairs (...) The ESDP is needed for when the Alliance as a whole is not engaged" [20].

Hopefully, the initial lukewarm support to the establishment of a ESDP, embodied in the so called 3 Ds policy [21], i.e. decoupling / de-linking, discrimination, duplication, expressed by the then US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, in 1998, shortly after

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Saint-Malo moment, has made room for more Europe in the field of security and defence and seems to be plenty of space on the international stage for both the EU and NATO.

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