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**THE COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY –
EVOLUTIONS AND CHALLENGES**

Maria Constantinescu, Associate Professor, PhD

DRESMARA/ National Defense University Carol I/ Brasov/ Romania

Abstract:

The future of the Common Security and Defense Policy is closely linked to the future of the European Union itself. Although the birth of the EU is linked to economic cooperation and integration, its evolution over time has made it impossible to return to a simple economic multinational framework. The current changes in the security and defense environment have brought the issue of a European defense, the various ways it can be achieved and the degrees of integration and cooperation it requires, in the attention of the political decision makers and public opinion. This paper intends to analyze the history and evolution of the EU CSDP concept and to outline some of the most serious challenges it faces in the volatile current security climate.

Key words: defense, CSDP, PESCO, scenarios, challenges

1. Introduction

The Common Security and Defense Policy, although it has been part of the European Union framework for some time, has recently come into the spotlight following the dramatic shifts in the regional and international security and defense environment. The deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, the volatility of the security situation at the very borders of the EU, the migration crisis, the shift of the US security interests towards the Asia-Pacific area, combined with the severe reduction of the EU military capabilities in the years following the onset of the economic and public debt crisis have brought into the attention of politicians and public opinion alike the fact that the EU can no longer afford the path of existing just as an economic and political union, based on a rather rigid and complex framework, that has not been adapted to the current environment. This paper intends to analyze the history and evolution of the EU CSDP concept and to outline some of the most serious challenges it faces in the volatile current security climate.

2. History and evolution of the European common security and defense concept

The subject of a European Defense, although intensely discussed recently, is not a new debate, as the idea of common defense preceding even the creation of the European Union. The subject actually is approaching the venerable age of 70 years, as the first idea of a common European defense policy originated in the aftermath of the Second World War, in 1948, when France, UK, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Treaty

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of Brussels. It contained a mutual defense clause as set forth in Article IV, and beginning in April 1948 the parties to the Brussels Pact decided to create a military agency under the name of the Western Union Defense Organization, formally established on September 27–28, 1948.

After the creation of NATO in 1949, the first step towards a strictly European defense, without the involvement of the US, was a treaty signed in 1952, proposing a European Defense Community (the Pleven Plan) [1], which was supposed to include West Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries. The purpose was to control West Germany's military power, as the US was supporting its rearmament within NATO, to counter the Soviet influence. The European countries, France especially, feared a return of German militarism, so the European Defense Community was supposed to work as a pan-European military, with a framework for centralized military procurement, a common budget, arms and institutions. This military was supposed to be divided into national components, with the French, Italian, Belgian, Dutch and Luxembourg components reporting to their national governments, and the West German component reporting to the EDC.

The plan failed after the refusal of the French Parliament to ratify the Treaty, but the idea was not abandoned and the Paris Agreements [2] of 23rd October 1954 established the Western European Union, a defensive alliance formed by Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Its objectives were to create in Western Europe a firm basis for European economic recovery, promote the unity and encourage the progressive integration of Europe and, on the defense side, to afford assistance to each other in resisting any policy of aggression. Although the practical utility of the WEU remains debatable, it provided the framework for the creation of a European defense policy and it even survived the Cold War, until the late '90s, as the main framework of consultation and dialogue regarding security and defense issues in Europe, second to NATO. Following the Treaty of Lisbon, all functions of the WEU have effectively been incorporated into the EU, and the WEU was closed down in 2011.

The creation of the European Economic Community in 1957, through the Treaty of Rome, between Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany served as a base for the development of the idea of a European foreign policy. Although in the previous two decades the European Community members tried to give the internal market a foreign policy dimension, they only succeeded in 1970, with the creation of the European Political Cooperation (EPC), as the predecessor of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) set in the Maastricht Treaty defining the creation of the European Union, in 1993.

Within the EU, the concept of a European Defense slowly began to take shape within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), through the definition of the so-called "Petersberg Tasks" (the conditions under which military units could be deployed), the "Berlin Plus agreement" giving the EU, under certain conditions, access to NATO assets and capabilities, the development in 2003 of a Security Strategy for Europe, entitled 'A Secure Europe in a Better World' and the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, a cornerstone in the development of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP).

The treaty stated a mutual assistance and a solidarity clause and set the framework for the creation of European External Action Service (EEAS) under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), in order to group the EU defense assets and to apply a "comprehensive approach" to EU crisis management.

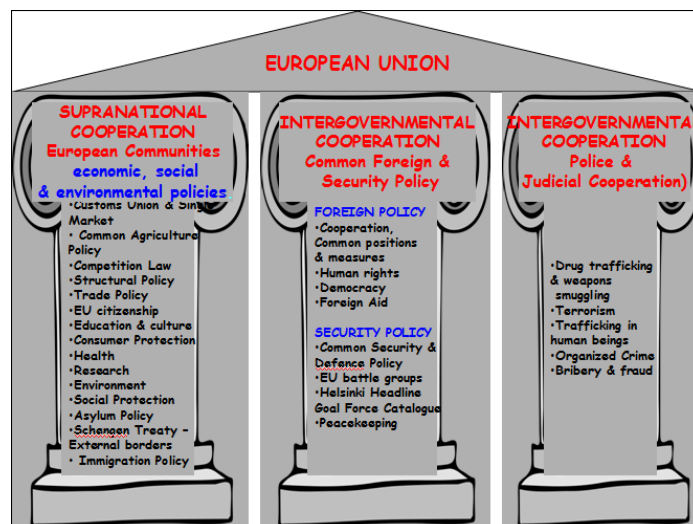
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The adoption of the Military Headline Goals 2010 was another cornerstone towards a European Defense, as they were meant to ensure that the EU has the military capabilities required to conduct the full range of missions defined by the Petersberg tasks. They were designed after the Cologne agreement stating the EU goal of possessing an autonomous military capacity to respond to crises (outside NATO framework), and they also referred to the ability of Member States to deploy forces up to corps level.

3. Current status and future challenges for the Common Security and Defense Policy

Probably the most important challenge the promoters of a common European defense have to face is the European Union itself – more precisely, the fact that the EU has been primarily designed as a politic and economic union of 28 member states that remain diverse in the level of economic development, political, economic and security priorities, despite the integration efforts. The limits of a political concept in the face of reality have been obvious even in areas where the integration and coordination mechanisms have been long put into practice, such as the Euro zone or the Schengen area. As the events following the 2008 economic crisis and the more recent immigration crisis have shown, these projects were designed for stability and their reaction in face of unpredictable events demonstrated the limits of European cooperation, as countries were faced in different degrees by these events and began to favor national political and economic measures and priorities to a common EU view.

The EU initially operated as a supranational and inter-governmental decision making entity that has developed overtime an intricate standardized framework of agreements, legislative framework and institutions, based initially on three main pillars.



The Treaty of the European Union (Treaty of Lisbon) meant a step forward in the attempt to strengthen the role of the EU as an international actor and increasing cohesion of action, by conferring legal personality to the EU and giving up the pillar structure. Another advance in the CSDP area was made within the Lisbon Treaty by the creation of the position of High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, supported by the European External Action Service, who will be responsible for the conduct of the

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CSDP, in a more unitary and effective way, by coordinating its civilian and military aspects.

The 2009 Treaty of Lisbon also featured some ambitious concepts that could promote a more effective common European defense, such as the extension of the Petersberg Tasks to “joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilization. All these tasks may contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting third countries in combating terrorism in their territories”[3].

Also, the concept of Permanent Structured Cooperation was introduced [4], setting the framework for a closer cooperation between the member states in the area of harmonizing the defense mechanisms, increasing interoperability, coordinating the development of military capabilities, coordination of the financial efforts, common development of defense equipment manufacturing programs. The formulation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in the Treaty of the European Union is rather ambiguous, “those Member States whose military capabilities fulfill higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions shall establish permanent structured cooperation within the Union framework” [5]. The purpose behind PESCO is further explained when taking into considerations the stipulations regarding it in the Protocol on Permanent Structured Cooperation established by article 28 of the Treaty of the European Union, which states that a Member state wishing to join the PESCO framework can do so if they wish to “proceed more intensively to develop its defense capacities through the development of its national contributions and participation, where appropriate, in multinational forces, in the main European equipment programs, and in the activity of the Agency in the field of defense capabilities development, research, acquisition and armaments (European Defense Agency)”[6].

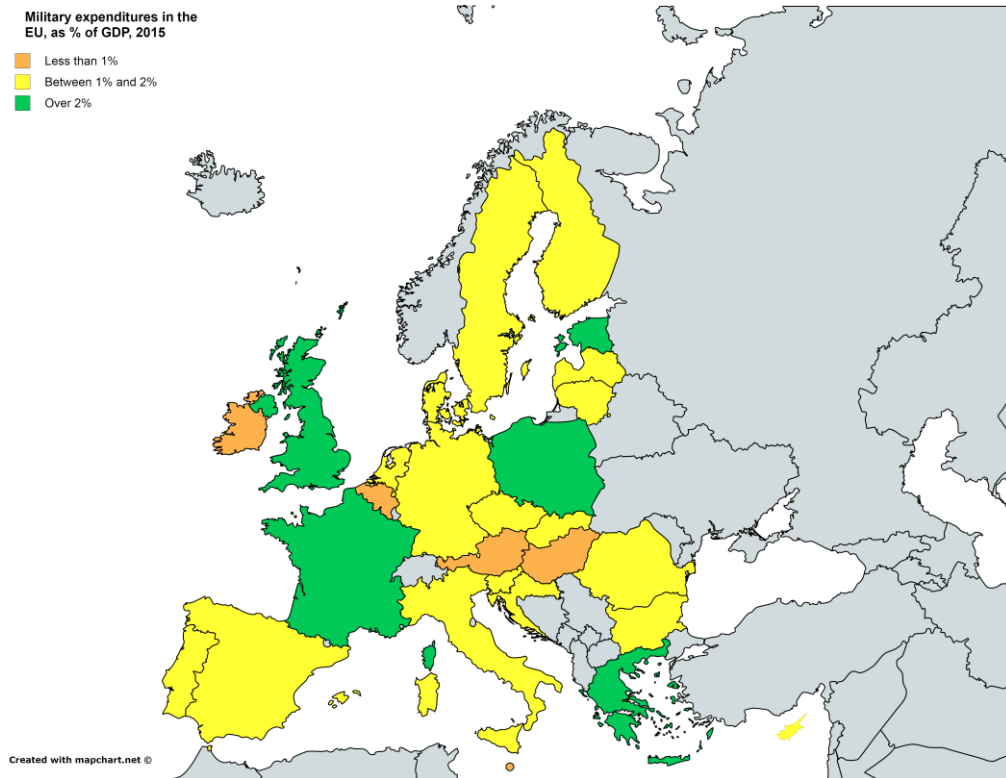
The question that arises is why member states would need the framework of PESCO to have more “binding commitments”, when they could already do so if they so desired in bilateral or multinational cooperation frameworks. The purpose of PESCO can be better understood if correlated with the provisions of the article 42 of the Treaty of the European Union, which states “the common security and defense policy shall include the progressive framing of a common Union defense policy. This will lead to a common defense, when the European Council, acting unanimously, so decides”[7]. In other words, PESCO can potentially be a mechanism for setting up a permanent framework of cooperation, beyond the bilateral or multilateral frameworks already existing, in order to allow for a genuine common defense.

Although the Lisbon Treaty had some important contributions to a potential increase in the defense cooperation within the EU, it came into being in a time when the focus of the EU had already begun to shift towards the economic problems caused by the financial crisis and the ensuing public debt crisis. This led to a decline in the defense expenditures of most of the EU members, over the next 6 years, and to a lack of interest, from the political class to the public opinion, regarding the issues of a common defense. The security environment of the EU was rather stable and predictable, with no clear risks and threats, so the provisions remained at the level of political statements.

Also, the strong opposition of the UK to a more unified European defense, seen as a competitor to NATO and as a useless overlap of capabilities, has further decreased the interest for an enhanced common defense policy.

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Still, the reality is that the defense capabilities of Europe have been on a continuous decline for years and they are currently insufficient to provide a credible defense for the EU, without the support of the US. Most of the EU countries spend between 1% and 2% of GDP for defense, with only 5 members exceeding the NATO guideline of 2% in 2015.



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute defense expenditures data

This situation changed starting with 2013, as the EU security and defense environment suffered drastic and unexpected changes, following unprecedented terrorist attacks on EU countries, the migration crisis, the deterioration of the situation in the Middle East, the Ukrainian crisis and the aggressive Russian policy etc.

As a result of the changing environment, the need for a clear and comprehensive strategic document, outlining the EU's security policy. The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy presented this document, namely the EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy, in June 2016.

The document is a crucial step ahead, at least from a political point of view, in building a more credible European defense, as it is the EU's equivalent of a national security strategy, that is a political document that outlines a vision and strategy for implementing its values and interests, setting the framework for future actions in the field of security and defense. One of the most important stipulations in the document is that "the EU needs to be strengthened as a security community: European security and defense efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO". [8] The formulation regarding the autonomous action has generated a lot of debates, as it can be interpreted as a statement that Europe intends to develop its own defense (ambitiously called a European Army or a European Defense Union) outside NATO framework and perhaps becoming a competitor

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for NATO. This is an unacceptable prospect for UK and other member states, for which NATO is the main framework within which the defense of Europe is ensured. On the other hand, the term can be interpreted in a more modest and perhaps realistic way, as the foundation for building a more credible and integrated defense cooperation framework within the EU, perfectly compatible with NATO, but relying more on the European capabilities than those of the United States.

Such a strategic political document needs a concrete and realistic framework in order to yield results and not remain at the level of inconsequential political statements, but the achievement of that framework requires a complex interaction of factors: determination and political will, creation of concrete mechanisms and framework of cooperation, a consensus on the main security and defense goals and objectives, a clear strategy, coordination of national defense planning mechanisms, harmonization of different military cultures, increased defense spending and increased efficiency of the current defense allocations, to mention but a few.

In September 2016, the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker presented his 2016 State of the Union address [9] in front of the Members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Among other key areas presented, such as Europe at a critical juncture, preserving the European way of life, a Europe that empowers and a Europe that takes responsibility, he reiterated his vision on a Europe that defends, restating the need for a Defense Union: "Europe needs to toughen up. Nowhere is this truer than in our defense policy. The Lisbon Treaty enables those Member States who wish, to pool their defense capabilities in the form of a permanent structured cooperation. I think the time to make use of this possibility is now." [10]

Mr. Juncker's vision has its share of proponents and adversaries, but the fact remains that Europe can no longer afford to maintain the status quo in defense matters, under the risk of becoming irrelevant from a military point of view. The idea is not new, as it has been stated, in various forms, even before the signing of the Treaty of the European Union. The EU Battlegroups, the Permanent Structured Cooperation, the idea of Permanent Operational Headquarters, or newer forms of multilateral defense integration and cooperation such as the Framework Nation Concept have been, in various forms, attempts to solve the issue of insufficient European military capabilities and perceived lack of hard power.

EU already has a multitude of bilateral and multilateral enhanced cooperation frameworks, but they are far from an efficient and effective integrated cooperation, and they are usually drawn outside the EU defense policy framework. Besides the ones mentioned above, there were initiatives based on regional, political, military and even economical considerations, such as the Nordic Defense Cooperation (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden), the Benelux Defense Cooperation, the Visegrad Group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia), the Polish-German Defense Cooperation, the Dutch-German Defense Cooperation, the British-Dutch Amphibious Force, the Baltic Defense Cooperation, the Eurocorps. It is also worth mentioning the ambitious Lancaster House Treaties of 2010 signed between France and the UK in order to cooperate in matters of defense and security, operational matters, industry and armament, and nuclear stockpile stewardship. Unfortunately, these cooperation agreements and frameworks were designed to serve the interests of the participating countries, and not of the EU as a whole, and as such their effectiveness in terms increasing EU defense integration, or increasing the efficiency of EU defense spending, for that matter, was limited.

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A serious challenge that the EU will have to overcome in respect to the CSDP is the UK's decision to leave the European Union and the launch of the EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy came in an unfortunate moment, following the Brexit referendum.

It is difficult to predict at this point the specific path that will be chosen to separate the UK from the EU, especially in terms of security and defense, as there are many potential courses of action and alternative futures. A Clingendael Report [11] proposes three scenarios in this respect, but of course there are also other potential scenarios to be analyzed.

The first scenario, put forward by opponents and supporters of Brexit alike, considers that UK's exit will severely reduce EU's defense capabilities and military power, forcing the orientation of the CSDP towards the soft approach of civilian operations. It is true that UK did have a sizeable contribution to the CSDP. In terms of defense expenditures, from the total defense expenditures at EU level in 2015, France spent 21.6%, followed closely by the UK with 21.2%, then Germany with 16.7%, Italy with 10.1% and Spain with 6%. The other member states together cover the remaining 24.4%, and their defense expenditures as % of the total EU defense expenditures range between 0.1% for Latvia and Luxembourg to 4.5% for Poland.[12] Also, the UK has sizeable military capabilities, trained personnel and operational expertise that will no longer be accessible to the CSDP.

Still, in the current security and defense context, the scenario of EU's reverting to its diplomatic and civilian approach to CSDP is highly unrealistic, as the risks and threats are increasing and evolving and the member states can simply not afford to continue with the current status quo. Also, there are factors that would support the idea that the Brexit is not going to be a catastrophe for the CSDP. Firstly, the UK was a determined opponent for a stronger CSDP (in regard to increased cooperation, institutional reforms, the creation of a permanent operational headquarter, political statements and also budget increases), for fear of duplication with NATO, but also for national sovereignty and economic reasons. Secondly, it did not have a sizeable contribution to the CSDP in terms of field personnel for missions. As a result, although the UK's exit will definitely influence the future of the CSDP, it will be through a mixture of positive and negative factors of influence, with a potential balanced outcome.

The second scenario proposed seems to be the most realistic, consisting of a combination between PESCO and UK, a continuation of the cooperation through other mechanisms. The scenario is more likely as it makes use of the existing legal provisions regarding PESCO, it offers a framework for permanent structured integration that is not compulsory and could be done by the member states at their own pace, without affecting their national sovereignty in defense matters, but at the same time strengthening the European defense integration and cooperation, increasing the EU capabilities and making use of the potential of cooperation with the UK in the field of defense systems manufacturing and procurement programs and R&D.

This approach is in line with the commitments made at the Informal meetings of the Council of the EU on 27 September 2016 in Bratislava, that set as future courses of action for the CSDP to “ensure full control of the external borders”, “controlling the flow of illegal immigrants”, “broaden EU consensus on long term migration policy and apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity”, “strengthen EU cooperation on external security and defense”[13].

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Still, this scenario is not without difficulties, as it requires the emergence of a strong core of member states (most likely Germany, France, Italy and Spain), to set the initial foundations for a realistic and operational PESCO, to which the other states will gradually adhere. It also requires political will, a coordinated view of the member states on the level of ambition, common strategy and ways ahead of the CSDP, which will not be easy to secure in the current economic and political environment.

The third scenario is in line with the EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's vision about a "joint EU army ...that would show the world that there would never again be a war between EU countries", "would...help us to form common foreign and security policies and allow Europe to take on responsibility in the world" and through which "Europe could react more credibly to the threat to peace in a member state or in a neighboring state" [14]. This scenario, although it has its supporters, it is also highly unlikely on short and medium term, as it would require strong political will and consensus, overcoming national sovereignty issues and the tendency to protect the national defense industries, harmonization of different military cultures and planning systems, and not the least significant financial commitments at a time of slow economic growth at the EU level and continued pressures for the member states to adhere to the provisions of the Stability and Growth Pact, that puts strict conditions regarding the budget deficits and the public debts of the member states.

4. Conclusion

The future of the CSDP is closely linked to the future of the European Union itself. Although the birth of the EU is linked to economic cooperation and integration, its evolution over time has made it impossible to return to a simple economic multinational framework. The concept of a common European defense faces numerous and serious challenges, of political, economical, military and even social nature, but it is clear that the degree to which the EU will prove capable to move from the soft power approach that is clearly inadequate in the current security environment towards a harder power approach depends first of all on the political will of the member states, the attitudes the public opinion on the defense cooperation and the EU itself, and not in the least on the economic evolution of the member states.

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