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**research paper**

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**THE STRATEGIC COMPASS:  
A GUIDE FOR EUROPEAN DEFENCE  
AND EU-NATO COOPERATION?**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates the potential role that the European Union's (EU's) recently launched Strategic Compass can play in guiding European defence planning, improving collaborative capability developments via PESCO, and reinforcing EU-NATO synergies.

We first provide a general overview of the development of the EU's Level of Ambition, from the initial 'Headline Goal' to the EU 'Global Strategy' of 2016, and the resultant capability needs. Next, we revisit recent EU defence initiatives' main features, and the relationship between these tools. Our analysis then moves to a comparison between EU and NATO defence planning, to try to identify any similarities and differences, followed by a reflection on some common priorities, and divergences between the two organisations.

Finally, after a brief exam of the status of PESCO, the paper ends with an illustration of the Strategic Compass' potential as political guidance for EU defence planning and PESCO, as well as for a clear division of labour between the EU and NATO.

**Keywords:** Strategic compass, European defence, European Union, NATO, PESCO

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## **1. Introduction**

Both the EU and NATO are passing through periods of reflection.

Firstly, the EU, having never achieved its Headline Goal, and with PESCO dormant, has had to come to terms with Brexit; it has seen an increase both in global instability, and a deterioration of the transatlantic relationship, at least at the high political level, during the years of the Trump presidency.

Having realised its need for more autonomy with the 2016 Global Strategy, the EU took important steps towards defence integration, launching several initiatives during 2017. Here we identify: Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), through which Member States (MS) participate in projects aimed at the common development of military capabilities; the revised Capability Development Plan (CDP), which should guide national defence planners in pursuing, via European cooperation, the development of capabilities crucial to achieving the new EU Level of Ambition; the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), which provides an assessment of the European defence landscape, and aims to incentivise the harmonisation of national defence planning processes. Subsequent proposals were: the European Defence Fund regulation, which aims, via a bonus for PESCO projects, to induce MS to pursue the CDP's priorities; and, finally, a reflection process, launched in 2020, to define further the EU's security policy, expected to finish in 2022, with the publication of the Strategic Compass.

The second organisation, NATO, has met both new global challenges, and its relevance and capability to face them has been put into question. As such, this triggered the 'NATO 2030' reflection process. In addition to this, the production of a new Strategic Concept, launched at the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021 Brussels Summit, and as we show, is a key document in NATO defence planning.

Attempts at developing a European Defence capacity during the integration progress were often met with scepticism from some NATO members, particularly the United States and the more 'Atlanticist' European MS, due to risks of duplications between the two organisations. In addition, NATO represents, for many EU Countries, the main guarantee of their collective security. European Defence efforts cannot ignore such bonds.

This paper aims to show some of the main ways in which the Strategic Compass can contribute to the advancement of European Defence integration, from the definition of guidance for the EU's defence planning process and the PESCO framework to allow better EU-NATO synergies, and a clear division of labour between the two.

The first part of the paper provides an overview of the evolution of the EU's Level of Ambition, from its Headline Goal to the 2016's Global Strategy and its Implementation Plan. Then, with the support of an IISS/DGAP analysis, we evaluate the fulfilment (or not) of the new Level of

Ambition. The second part consists in a summary of the functioning, main features and objectives of recent EU defence initiatives. In the third section, and in light of the need for greater coherence between the EU and NATO, which is frequently reiterated in both organisations' official documents, and was also reaffirmed recently by the Italian Defence Minister Lorenzo Guerini,<sup>1</sup> we proceed with a comparison between the EU's and, NATO's more homogeneous, defence planning processes, in order to identify eventual overlaps and differences between the two. The fourth part will, after a brief examination of the current state of PESCO and EDF, illustrate what contributions the Strategic Compass can make to improving EU Defence planning processes, capability development under the PESCO framework, EU-NATO synergies and the division of labour.

## 2. The EU political and military levels of ambition: between aspirations and reality

The first attempt at defining a defence policy for the EU can be traced back to the Anglo-French St. Malo agreement, signed on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1998. With it the United Kingdom, traditionally opposed to conferring military competences on the EU, radically changed its approach in a bid to regain relevance in European integration, after its opting-out from the single currency.<sup>2</sup> This opened the way to important steps in defining European Defence Policy. At the same time France, which had always sought a European Security Policy autonomous from NATO, had to accept the establishment of formal links between the two organisations.<sup>3</sup>

With the subsequent December 1999 Helsinki European Council Conclusions,<sup>4</sup> the Heads of State and Government of the EU MS agreed on setting a defence objective, to be reached by 2003: achieving the capability of deploying a force of 50,000 – 60,000 troops, to be deployed in 60 days, and sustainable for at least a year, to carry out what became known as the 'Petersberg Tasks'.<sup>5</sup> The tasks as defined include humanitarian and rescue missions, conflict prevention and crisis management, and include peace-making.<sup>6</sup>

With the Helsinki, and later Nice European Council meetings, it was decided to create three new structures with European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) responsibilities: the Political and Security Committee (PSC), composed of MS' ambassadors based in Brussels; the EU Military Committee (EUMC), composed of the Chiefs of Defence of the MS, represented by Military Representatives; and the EU Military Staff (EUMS), personnel seconded from the MS.

The EUMC, in particular, provides advice and recommendations on military matters to the PSC and is responsible, with the support of the EUMS, for the Capability Development Mechanism

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<sup>1</sup> S. Pioppi, *Italia-Germania a Difesa dell'Europa (nella Nato). Il dialogo tra Guerini e Akk*, Formiche, 27 April 2021. (<https://formiche.net/2021/04/guerini-akk-strategic-dialogues/>; last accessed 25/09/2021).

<sup>2</sup> C. Gegout, *The french and british change in position in the CESDP: a security community and historical institutionalist perspective*, *Politique européenne*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2002, pp. 62-87. (<https://www.cairn.info/revue-politique-europeenne-2002-4-page-62.html>; last accessed 15/07/2021).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>4</sup> European Council, *Presidency Conclusion*, Helsinki, 10-11 December 1999, II. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hel1\\_en.htm](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hel1_en.htm); last accessed 15/07/2021).

<sup>5</sup> The name refers to Hotel Petersberg, located near the city of Bonn.

<sup>6</sup> EUR-Lex Website, *Petersberg Tasks*, Glossary of summaries ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/petersberg\\_tasks.html?locale=it](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/petersberg_tasks.html?locale=it); last accessed 15/07/2021).

(CDM).<sup>7</sup> Since 2003, the EU can also call on NATO assets and command structures under certain conditions, to assist in interventions in crises where NATO is unwilling to get involved, thanks to the Berlin Plus agreement.

The Helsinki Headline Goal was updated in 2004, and became the Headline Goal 2010 and included new potential crisis management operations derived from the 2003 European Security Strategy, such as joint disarmament operations, support for Third Countries in the fight against terrorism, and security sector reform.<sup>8</sup> In addition, MS recognised the existence of capability shortfalls, and committed themselves to creating rapid reaction force packages, based on the new 'Battlegroup' concept, able to operate both autonomously and as part of a larger-scale operation.

The EU Battlegroups, theorised by the EUMS following French, German and British initiative, is a battalion-sized military unit (1,500 troops, plus support elements), deployable in a 5 – 10 days timespan, capable of self-sustaining for at least 30 days, and up to a maximum of 120 days with proper resupply.<sup>9</sup>

Despite having reached operational capacity in 2007, EU Battlegroups have never been used. This is for various reasons, ranging from the lack of fundamental capabilities to the high deployment costs and disagreements between MS, which are often reluctant to put their Battlegroup at the EU's disposal for operations unrelated to their national interests. The generation of a European Force remains problematic as well, and remains a slow, highly conflictual and inefficient process. In a good example, the EUFOR Tchad/RCA operation in 2008 (with a size of around 3,700 troops), the force generation process took 10 months, and the operation had to be launched with the contribution of helicopters from Russia, with reconnaissance capability shortfalls, and without a strategic reserve force.<sup>10</sup> As for the Headline Goal, it still has to be reached.<sup>11</sup>

With the Lisbon Treaty, the list of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP, previously ESDP) missions was expanded beyond the Petersberg Tasks. Article 43 TEU, aside from humanitarian and rescue missions, peacekeeping missions and peace-making missions, included disarmament

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<sup>7</sup> European Council, *Presidency Conclusions*, Helsinki, 10-11 December 1999, Annex 1 to Annex IV. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hel1\\_en.htm](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hel1_en.htm); last accessed 15/07/2021). Regarding the EUMC's and EUMS' role in the EU's CDM, see F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, European Parliament, Brussels, 2018, p. 23.

([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 15/07/2021).

<sup>8</sup> European Parliament, *Headline Goal 2010*, A.2.

([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/dv/sede110705headlinegoal2010\\_/sede110705headlinegoal2010\\_en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/sede110705headlinegoal2010_/sede110705headlinegoal2010_en.pdf); last accessed 15/07/2021).

<sup>9</sup> Eurocorps, *European Battle Group*. (<https://www.eurocorps.org/readiness/european-battle-group/>; last accessed 15/07/2021). See also EEAS, *EU Battlegroups Factsheet*, Updated April 2013 ([https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/esdp/91624.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/esdp/91624.pdf); last accessed 29/09/2021)

<sup>10</sup> S.E. Anghel, *The European Council and common security and defence policy (CSDP) Orientation and implementation in the field of crisis management since the Lisbon Treaty*, 14 June 2019, p.16. (<https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/f511a905-9a82-11e6-9bca-01aa75ed71a1>; last accessed 13/08/2021). See also A. Mattelaer, *The Strategic Planning of EU Military Operations - The Case of EUFOR Tchad/RCA*, IES Working Paper 5/2008, p.24. (<https://www.ies.be/node/1055>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>11</sup> U. Morelli, *La politica di sicurezza e di difesa dell'Unione Europea*, in G. Finizio e U. Morelli (edited by), *L'Unione europea nelle relazioni internazionali*. Carocci, Rome, 2015, p. 33.

missions, military advice and assistance operations and post-conflict stabilisation missions. These tasks could also contribute to the fight against terrorism, including by supporting Third Countries in combating terrorism in their territory.<sup>12</sup>

The December 2008 European Council Conclusions defined a more precise military Level of Ambition. As stated, the EU should have been able to simultaneously conduct:<sup>13</sup>

- Two major stabilisation and reconstruction operations, with a suitable civilian component supported by a maximum of 10,000 men and with a duration of at least two years;
- Two rapid response operations of limited duration employing the EU Battlegroups;
- An emergency operation for the evacuation of European nationals in less than ten days;
- A maritime or air surveillance or interdiction mission;
- A civil-military humanitarian assistance operation lasting up to 90 days;
- Around a dozen civilian CSDP missions of varying formats, including a major mission (up to 3,000 experts) which could last several years.

In the span of just a few years the international scene seems to have changed considerably compared to the optimistic vision of the beginning of the 2003 ESS,<sup>14</sup> forcing MS to deal with growing challenges from the East and South.

From the East, Russia's assertiveness in Crimea and Ukraine<sup>15</sup> have once again demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the EU's foreign policy instruments, and starkly highlighted the problem of Europe's inability to guarantee its collective defence without NATO and, more precisely, the US.<sup>16</sup>

From the South, the Arab Spring events, and the subsequent Arab Winter, caused major instability in the Mediterranean and North Africa (MENA) region. This generated pressures on the EU in two principal areas: First, terrorist groups managed to exploit the resulting power vacuums to expand their operations and even gain, in ISIL's case, control of a large territories, comprising considerable parts of Syria and Iraq,<sup>17</sup> with some European countries hit by terrorist attacks

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<sup>12</sup> Official Journal of the European Union, *Treaty on the European Union (consolidated version)*. ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF), last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>13</sup> Camera dei deputati, *La PESCE e la PSDC dopo il Trattato di Lisbona*. (<https://leg16.camera.it/561?appro=882>, last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>14</sup> See High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003. "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free." (Available for download at: <https://eclan.eu/en/eu-legislatory/a-secure-europe-in-a-better-world-european-security-strategy>; last accessed 30/09/2021).

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed view of the Eastern European security landscape as of 2014, see A. Missiroli, G. Stang et al., *A changing global environment*, EUISS Chaillot Paper N°133, 2014, Chapter 5. ([http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/e8aedacd-ea48-4dde-b1b7-4cfb9fe305fa.0001.05/DOC\\_1](http://publications.europa.eu/resource/cellar/e8aedacd-ea48-4dde-b1b7-4cfb9fe305fa.0001.05/DOC_1); last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>16</sup> See D. A. Shlapak, M. Johnson, *Reinforcing Deterrence on NATO's Eastern Flank: Wargaming the Defense of the Baltics*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016. ([https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1253.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1253.html); last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>17</sup> L. Farral, *The fall of the ISIS 'caliphate'*, in Briefing Book. Key issues for the 46th Parliament, Parliament of Australia, 2019, p. 208.

perpetrated by ISIL-affiliated cells.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, the migration crisis that originated from the situation in the region divided and, continues to divide to this day, EU MS over which political solutions to employ in tackling the emergency.

Next, two particular events were particularly instrumental in leading the EU Institutions and MS to revise their Level of Ambition and their commitment towards a common defence.<sup>19</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic, the November 2016 election brought a strongly isolationist President to the White House. Donald Trump set himself apart from his predecessors through his unprecedentedly harsh declarations towards NATO and its European allies, coupled with erratic behaviour and changes of mind.<sup>20</sup>

The asperity and volatility of the new US President undermined Europeans' faith in ongoing American protection, although official documents defining the US's Security Strategy repeatedly reaffirmed the American commitment towards Europe and in NATO, and progress towards EU-NATO cooperation was made with the 2018 Brussels Summit.<sup>21</sup> As such, there are conflicting views on how much (and if) the transatlantic relationship was damaged. Still, during the last four years, the US lost substantial credibility among European governments and citizens alike, a fracture which may not be reset by simply changing the US President.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the EU had to come to terms with the UK's decision to trigger Article 50 of the TEU and leave the Union. For European defence, Brexit represented both a positive and a negative event. On the positive side, the departure of the UK coincided with the removal of the major obstacle to any progress of defence integration: the British vision had drastically changed since St Malo, with Prime Minister David Cameron and the Tories firmly opposed to expanding the EU's role in defence,<sup>23</sup> to the point of considering leaving the European Defence Agency (EDA).<sup>24</sup> The

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([https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/BriefingBook46p/ISISCaliphate](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook46p/ISISCaliphate); last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>18</sup> For a list of ISIS or ISIS-inspired terrorist attack updated to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2016, see T. Lister, R. Sanchez, M. Bixler, S. O'Key, M. Hogenmiller, M. Tawfeeq, *ISIS goes global: 143 attacks in 29 countries have killed 2,043*, CNN, 2016. (<https://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/index.html>; last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>19</sup> See J.D. Giuliani, A. Danjean, F. Grossetête, T. Tardy, *Defence: Europe's Awakening*, European Issues n°474, Fondation Robert Schuman, 2018, p. 13. "The major security challenges to which this progress is supposed to rise do exist and were identified a long time ago. [...] Although these phenomenon should objectively be deemed to be the triggers of the realization of Europe's vulnerability and the imperious necessity for a collective response, we might well be surprised that it took until mid-2017 for a European response to finally be formulated.". (<https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0474-defence-europe-s-awakening>; last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>20</sup> R. Gray, *Trump Declines to Affirm NATO's Article 5*, The Atlantic, Brussels, 25 May 2017. (<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/05/trump-declines-to-affirm-natos-article-5/528129/>; last accessed 15/07/2021).

<sup>21</sup> A. Dimitrova, *The State of the Transatlantic Relationship in the Trump Era*, European Issue n°545, Fondation Robert Schuman, 03 February 2020. (<https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0545-the-state-of-the-transatlantic-relationship-in-the-trump-era>; last accessed 15/07/2021).

<sup>22</sup> R. Fontaine, *It's Still Hard to Be America's Ally*, Foreign Policy, 8 April 2021. (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/08/allies-us-europe-nato-trump-biden/>; last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>23</sup> See BBC, *Cameron 'prepared to block bigger EU defence role'*, 19 December 2013. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-25443389>; last accessed 16/07/2021). See also Pop V., *UK snubs Ashton over EU military headquarters*, EUobserver, Brussels, 19 July 2011. (<https://euobserver.com/news/32639>; last accessed 16/07/2021).



anticipated departure of the UK allowed the other MS to proceed along the path of defence integration with the launch of PESCO and the European Defence Fund (EDF).

On the negative side, which we examine in more detail below, the departure of the UK also meant the loss of the EU's second nuclear power, and one of its major militaries, with severe consequences in terms of the availability of military capabilities.

The convergence of all these events pushed the EU Member States to give the go-ahead to High Representative Federica Mogherini, to produce a new security strategy fit to face the changes through which the international environment had gone over the decade. The result was the EU's Global Strategy,<sup>25</sup> published on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

Even though the strategy recognised that, for many EU MS, NATO remains the primary framework for collective defence, it aimed to achieve a capacity for autonomous action, reflecting the need to strengthen the EU as a security community.<sup>26</sup> It reaffirmed that, such capacity, if reached naturally, would not undermine the partnership with NATO nor the Transatlantic relationship. On the contrary, an augmented EU military capacity, and the fulfilment of an EU strategic autonomy, would represent an added value for NATO, allowing Member States to contribute more to the organisation and to foster a healthier partnership with the US thanks to a fairer burden sharing.<sup>27</sup>

To fulfil these goals, the fourth Chapter of the Global Strategy underlines that “. . . Member States need all major equipment to respond to external crises and keep Europe safe.”<sup>28</sup> This means, as the document further states, the possession of the full spectrum of military capabilities: land, air, space, sea and strategic enablers.

The November 2016 Implementation Plan on Security and Defence sets out, on the basis of previous commitments and agreed objectives such as the Headline Goal 2010 or the December 2008 European Council Conclusions, the military operations that the EU should be able to autonomously conduct.<sup>29</sup> These place an increased focus on high-intensity operations, when compared to the December 2008 Level of Ambition. The Implementation Plan states that the EU should be able to carry out the following possible operations, some concurrently and some of

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<sup>24</sup> Reuters Staff, *FACTBOX - Tories' stance on foreign policy*, 17 March 2010.

(<https://www.reuters.com/article/britain-election-policies/factbox-tories-stance-on-foreign-policy-idUKLNE62G03X20100317>; last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>25</sup> General Secretariat of the Council, *European Council meeting (25 and 26 June 2015) – Conclusions*, Brussels, 26 June 2015, II.10.b. ([https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21705/euco-conclusions\\_26062015\\_it.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21705/euco-conclusions_26062015_it.pdf); last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>26</sup> EEAS Website *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign And Security Policy*, Brussels, June 2016, p.20. (Available for download at: [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/17304/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/17304/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en); last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.

<sup>29</sup> High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission, and Head of the European Defence Agency, *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*, Brussels, 14 November 2016, p.16. (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22460/eugs-implementation-plan-st14392en16.pdf>; last accessed 16/07/2021).

which may take place in situations of higher security risk and underdeveloped local infrastructure:<sup>30</sup>

- Joint crisis management operations in situations of high security risk in the regions surrounding the EU;
- Joint stabilisation operations, including air and special operations;
- Civilian and military rapid response using the EU Battlegroups as a whole or within an *ad hoc* Force package;
- Air security operations including close air support and air surveillance;
- Maritime security or surveillance operations, including those over the longer term, in the vicinity of Europe;
- Military capacity building through advisory, training, and mentoring missions, including robust force protection, if necessary, as well as military monitoring/observation missions.

Consequently, the Capability Development Plan (CDP), approved in June 2018, whose functioning we explore in the following section, reflects the EUGS 2016 Level of Ambition.<sup>31</sup> The resulting capability priorities are the following:<sup>32</sup>

<p><b>Cyber Responsive Operations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperation and synergies at EU level and in the EU-NATO framework;</li> <li>- Harmonised standards and adequate education and training for operators;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ground Combat Capabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New manned and unmanned Main Battle Tanks and armoured vehicles;</li> <li>- Precision strike capabilities and anti-tank weapons;</li> <li>- IED and CRBNe<sup>33</sup> Force Protection;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Space-based information and communication services:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Space-Based Earth Observation capabilities;</li> <li>- Satellite communication for Member States and CSDP actors;</li> <li>- Space Situational Awareness and Positioning, Navigation and Timing services;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Air Superiority:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Next generation air combat platforms;</li> <li>- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance air platforms;</li> <li>- Area denial capabilities;</li> <li>- Air-to-Air Refuelling;</li> <li>- Ballistic missile defence capabilities;</li> </ul>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*  
<sup>31</sup> EDA Website, *The EU Capability Development Priorities*, Brussels, 3 December 2018, p.3. (<https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-publications/eda-brochure-cdp.pdf>; last accessed 16/07/2021).  
<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-18.  
<sup>33</sup> Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and high yield Explosives

<p><b>Information superiority:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvement of Communication and Information Systems infrastructure and capabilities;</li> <li>- Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance networked capabilities;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Enhanced logistic and medical supporting capabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Military Mobility;</li> <li>- Improvement of logistics and medical support;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Air mobility:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic Air Transport aircraft;</li> <li>- Tactical Air Transport aircraft, including MEDEVAC;</li> </ul>	<p><b>Naval manoeuvrability:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maritime Situational Awareness;</li> <li>- Naval Superiority;</li> <li>- Power projection;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cross-domain capabilities contributing to achieve EU's LoA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Innovative technologies (such as AI or advanced materials, processes and technologies);</li> <li>- Enabling capabilities (such as permanent CSDP Strategic, Military and Tactical Command and Control capabilities);</li> </ul>	<p><b>Integration of military air capabilities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Military access to airspace;</li> <li>- Interoperability and cooperation between military and civilian aviation;</li> <li>- Adaptation of military air and space Command and Control capabilities;</li> </ul>
<p><b>Underwater control:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anti-submarine and counter-mine capabilities;</li> <li>- Harbour protection;</li> </ul>	

An IISS and German Council on Foreign Relations study published in November 2018 provides a clearer picture concerning the capability needs, considering both the new Level of Ambition and the departure of the UK.<sup>34</sup> It theorises plausible operation scenarios, drawn from the EU's LoA, and determines which requirements are needed for each operation. These are then compared to the capabilities available to the EU28, and then to the EU minus the UK.

The results are troubling: only two of the hypothetical scenarios (rescue and evacuation in South Africa and humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh) did not generate capability shortfalls for the EU28.<sup>35</sup> With the UK's absence, these operations face capability shortfalls too, particularly in the naval domain.<sup>36</sup> Some of the most important capability shortfalls which would reoccur in the various scenarios are: aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines and amphibious assault ships for naval theatres; heavy air transport, air-to-air refuelling, Drones/Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for Combat ISR<sup>37</sup> missions, electronic warfare aircraft, ISR aircraft for air superiority; Information Operations capabilities, civil-military cooperation capabilities, Explosive Ordnance Disposal

<sup>34</sup> See D. Barrie, B. Barry, H. Boyd, M.L. Chagnaud, N. Childs, B. Giegerich, C. Mölling, T. Schütz, *Protecting Europe: Meeting the EU's military level of ambition in the context of Brexit*, IISS/DGAP, 28 November 2018. (<https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/protecting-europe>; last accessed 08/08/2021).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Combat Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance.

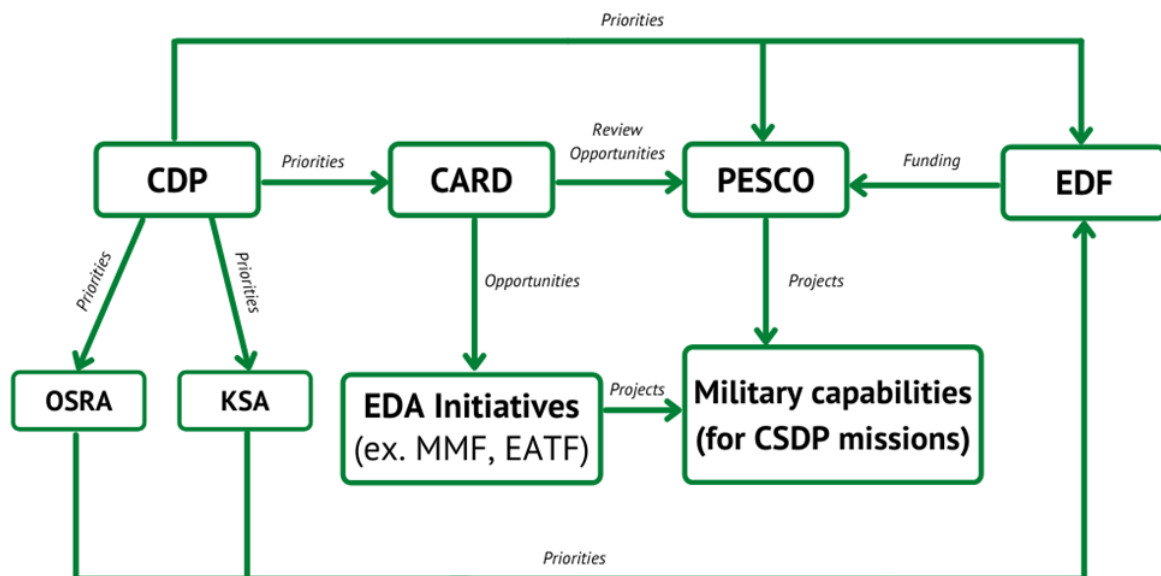
capabilities, military police, ISR capabilities, plus mechanised, amphibious and special forces units for land theatres.<sup>38</sup>

Considering that the EU's new LoA includes the possibility of conducting several concurrent operations, the study concludes that the EU is very far from having the necessary capabilities to the pursuit of its new CSDP objectives.<sup>39</sup>

The situation is anticipated to improve by 2030 as consequence of development and procurement activities concerning some of the capability shortfalls, although important deficits will continue to exist.<sup>40</sup>

### 3. The new EU defence tools: CDP, CARD, PESCO, EDF

To intensify defence cooperation and work towards achieving the new LoA, EU MS have put in place, or updated, a series of instruments which together form a framework, from the identification of capability priorities right up to the collaborative development of these. In addition, there are several capability development projects managed by the European Defence Agency, which is also an important actor in the framework discussed above; here it assumes the objective of ensuring its coherence along the following scheme, which is derived from the one produced by the Agency itself:



The first tool, as mentioned, is the Capability Development Plan (CDP), first introduced in July 2008 and followed by two other versions, in 2010, and 2014. With its latest version, published in June 2018, the CDP has been revised to take the EU's new LoA into account.

<sup>38</sup> See D. Barrie, B. Barry, H. Boyd, M.L. Chagnaud, N. Childs, B. Giegerich, C. Mölling, T. Schütz, *Protecting Europe: Meeting the EU's military level of ambition in the context of Brexit*, IISS/DGAP, 28 November 2018, p. 33-34. (<https://dgap.org/en/research/publications/protecting-europe>; last accessed 16/07/2021).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp, 35-36.

The CDP aims to provide policymakers with a detailed overview of the military capabilities which are deemed necessary on the long run. This is to enhance coherence between national defence planning processes, and to foster cooperation between MS following to the identification of common operational needs and capability development priorities.<sup>41</sup>

The CDP's priorities are derived from short term (identified shortfalls *vis-à-vis* the EU's LoA and lessons learned from operations), medium term (planned capabilities and cooperation opportunities) and long term (capability trends analysis up to 2035 and beyond).<sup>42</sup> These capability development priorities should allow MS to have a clearer common understanding of existing capability shortfalls, multinational cooperation possibilities in the medium term and necessary capabilities in the long term.<sup>43</sup> In addition, CDP results should also support the development of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) by identifying key areas and technologies.<sup>44</sup>

CDP's results should then guide MS's actions in PESCO: one of the 'binding commitments' MS undertook at the moment of its launch was to fulfil the Capability Development Priorities and shortfalls identified by the CARD,<sup>45</sup> as CDP priorities also feed into CARD.<sup>46</sup> The same applies for the EDF: to be eligible for funding, actions "shall be consistent with defence capability priorities commonly agreed by Member States within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and in particular in the context of the CDP".<sup>47</sup> Two other priority setting tools are informed by the CDP's output: the Overarching Strategic Research Agenda (OSRA), which identifies common Research & Technology priorities, and the Key Strategic Activities (KSAs), which are priority activities for the pursuit of European technological, industrial and strategic autonomy.<sup>48</sup>

The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) was officially created in November 2016, with a Council Decision tasking the HR/VP to submit proposals concerning its functioning by spring

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<sup>41</sup> EDA, *Capability Development Plan*, (<https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/activities/activities-search/capability-development-plan>; last accessed 28/07/2021).

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> D. Fiott, *EU defence capability development. Plans, priorities, projects*, Brief Issue 6, EUISS, 2018, p. 2. (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/eu-defence-capability-development-%E2%80%93-plans-priorities-projects>; last accessed 29/09/2021).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6

<sup>45</sup> Council of the European Union, List of ambitious and more binding common commitments undertaken by participating Member States in the five areas set out by Article 2 of Protocol 10, annex to the Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 of 11 December 2017 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017D2315&from=EN>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>46</sup> EDA Website, *Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)*. (<https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-card>); last accessed 13/08/2021). See also Roland Van Reybroeck, *What's in the CARDS?*, Security Policy Brief No.103, EGMONT Royal Institute for International Relations, 2019. (<https://www.egmontinstitute.be/whats-in-the-cards/>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>47</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/697 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the European Defence Fund and repealing Regulation (EU) 2018/1092, Brussels, 29 April 2021, Whereas n. (5). (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/697/oj>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>48</sup> EDA Website, *Priority setting*. (<https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/priority-setting>; last accessed 20/08/2021).

2017.<sup>49</sup> Its trial run was launched in the autumn of 2017 and was concluded by November 2018, with the presentation of the first CARD report, and the EDA's Ministerial Steering Board agreeing to turn the CARD into a standing activity.<sup>50</sup> The first full CARD cycle ended in November 2020 and confirmed the current unfeasibility of the EU's new LoA.<sup>51</sup>

The objective of this biannual defence review process is to provide MS with a picture of the current defence and capability development situation, and identify cooperation opportunities, while avoiding duplications with NATO, fostering a gradual synchronisation of national defence planning processes.<sup>52</sup>

The CARD report drafting process is divided into four phases. In a first phase, the EDA, together with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the EUMS, collects the 'initial information': available information on defence expenditures and capability planning of each MS, plus defence cooperation ideas and opportunities.<sup>53</sup> The second consists of the validation of the data collected through bilateral dialogues with all 26 participating Member States.<sup>54</sup> These dialogues discuss other issues as well, such as the implementation of the CDPs, coherence of defence planning and European defence cooperation.

During the third phase, the CARD's initial information, enriched by bilateral dialogues' outcomes, are transposed into the CARD Aggregated Analysis, which presents the aggregated national defence data and paints a picture of future trends and cooperation opportunities.

In the final stage, the EDA and EUMS derive political conclusions from the Aggregated Analysis data and propose recommendations to MS to foster higher European capability development coherence. The draft CARD report is then presented to the Steering Board for approval.

One way to seize the cooperation opportunities identified by CARD is through the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) process.

Introduced with the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the possibility of launching PESCO was forgotten until mid-September 2016, when Juncker, as incumbent President of the European Commission, reminded MS of PESCO, and urged them to exploit such options.<sup>55</sup> It was launched officially in December 2017, following a compromise between the opposite visions of France and Germany.

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<sup>49</sup> General Secretariat of the Council, *Council conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of Security and Defence*, Brussels, 14 November 2016, p.9.

(<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/22459/eugs-conclusions-st14149en16.pdf>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>50</sup> EDA Website, *Outcome of EDA Ministerial Steering Board*, 20 November 2018. (<https://eda.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/2018/11/20/outcome-of-eda-ministerial-steering-board>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>51</sup> EDA, *2020 CARD Report: Executive Summary*. (<https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/reports/card-2020-executive-summary-report.pdf>; last accessed 03/08/2021).

<sup>52</sup> EDA Website, *Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)*. ([https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-\(card\)](https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/EU-defence-initiatives/coordinated-annual-review-on-defence-(card)); last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>53</sup> EDA, *First CARD report published. Wake-up call and pathfinder*, in *European Defence Matters*, Issue #20, 2020. (<https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-magazine/edm20-magazine.pdf>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>54</sup> All Member States minus Denmark, due to its opt-out from European defence policies

<sup>55</sup> European Commission, *State of the Union Address 2016: Towards a better Europe - a Europe that protects, empowers and defends*, 2016. ([https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH\\_16\\_3043](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_16_3043); last accessed 04/08/2021).

Paris had pushed for a more ‘selective’ PESCO, with more stringent and ambitious commitments and criteria to ensure it could a) really contribute to the much yearned for Strategic Autonomy and b) gain independence from Third Country security providers; American ones in particular.<sup>56</sup> Berlin, in turn, aimed for a more inclusive PESCO.<sup>57</sup> Germany’s vision prevailed, and all MS adhered to this latter concept, with the exceptions of Denmark (due to CSDP opt-out), Malta (due to the neutrality principle enshrined in its Constitution) and of course the UK.

Inside the PESCO framework, the participating MS would conduct common projects aimed at the development of military capabilities, such as new equipment and weapon systems or enhanced readiness and interoperability. These capabilities could then be employed in CSDP missions and, more broadly, play a vital role in achieving the EU’s Strategic Autonomy: as the December 2017 PESCO Decision stated, “[A] long term vision of PESCO could be to arrive at a coherent full spectrum force package – in complementarity with NATO . . .”<sup>58</sup>

PESCO entailed a series of general, theoretically binding commitments and criteria, divided into five areas:<sup>59</sup>

- reaching the approved defence spending objectives via European cooperation;
- harmonise the national defence apparatus, strengthen operation capabilities and enhance the CSDP’s force generation process;
- work together to address the capability shortfalls identified by CDP and CARD;
- participate (where appropriate) in major joint or European equipment programmes under the EDA framework; Among these objectives, there is also the obligation to
- take part in at least one PESCO project “which develops or provides capabilities identified as strategically relevant by Member States”.<sup>60</sup>

Participating MS also had to present a National Implementation Plan (NIP) before the launch of PESCO. These NIPs assess each MS’s ability to achieve PESCO commitments, their current progress, and the predicted contribution for the first two PESCO phases.<sup>61</sup> The NIPs are updated annually and made available to the PESCO Secretariat and all participating Member States.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> A. Marrone, *Ue: difesa, parte Pesco, cooperazione strutturata permanente*, IAI, 14 November 2017. (<https://www.affarinternazionali.it/2017/11/ue-difesa-pesco-parte/>; last accessed 04/08/2021).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Council of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 of 11 December 2017 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States, Annex I. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017D2315&from=EN>; last accessed 04/08/2021).

<sup>59</sup> *Protocol No 10 on Permanent Structure Cooperation*, Art. 2. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012E/PRO/10&from=IT>; last accessed 04/08/2021). See also PESCO Website, *Binding Commitments* (<https://pesco.europa.eu/binding-commitments/>; last accessed 04/08/2021).

<sup>60</sup> Senate of the Italian Republic, *Nota n.122. Verso la Difesa Europea: la Cooperazione Strutturata Permanente*, p. 5. (<http://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/01062567.pdf>; last accessed 04/08/2021).

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>62</sup> See PESCO Website, *Binding Commitments*. (<https://pesco.europa.eu/binding-commitments/>; last accessed 04/08/2021).

Decisions concerning governance, evaluation, review and projects of PESCO are taken by the Council of the European Union, in its PESCO format (25 MS)<sup>63</sup> and via unanimity, with the exception of votes related to the admission or suspension of a Member State, for which just a qualified majority vote is required.<sup>64</sup> As for the thorny issue of Third Country participation, this was finally clarified by a Council Decision on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020.<sup>65</sup> This possibility did become a reality with the official invitation to Canada, Norway and the United States to participate in the Military Mobility project following their request to do so.<sup>66</sup>

The EDA and EEAS (with the inclusion of the EUMS) jointly, and under the authority of the HR/VP, act as PESCO's Secretariat "other than at the level of the Council".<sup>67</sup>

As for project management, one or more coordinators are chosen among the participating countries and these unanimously decide the scope and modality of their participation, such as the project's requirements, conditions for joining or leaving the project, decision-making processes and provisions related to 'observer status'.<sup>68</sup>

Capabilities developed under the PESCO framework are owned by the MS and "may be used individually by project members or collectively, as appropriate, in the context of activities undertaken by the European Union as well as the UN, NATO or other frameworks."<sup>69</sup>

PESCO is not the only route for common capability development or acquisition. The EDA framework remains an option for Member States, and there are important capability acquisition initiatives being carried out in this format, such as Air-To-Air Refuelling, which aims to solve one of the most important European capability shortfalls by optimising existing resources via training and the setting of common standards, but also increase available tanker aircraft with the pooled acquisition of an Airbus A330 MRTT fleet (MMF Project).<sup>70</sup>

The last piece of the puzzle is the European Defence Fund (EDF), active from January 2021, whose function is to finance European collaborative projects which strengthen the EDTIB and address CDP priorities. With the EDF and its two precursors (PADR and EDIDP), the European Union has,

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<sup>63</sup> All current Member States minus Denmark, due to its opt-out from European defence policies and Malta, due to concerns related to the neutrality clause contained in its Constitution.

<sup>64</sup> Council of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2315 of 11 December 2017 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States, Annex III. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017D2315&from=EN>; last accessed 04/08/2021).

<sup>65</sup> Council of the European Union, Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/1639 of 5 November 2020 establishing the general conditions under which third States could exceptionally be invited to participate in individual PESCO projects, 5 November 2020. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020D1639>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>66</sup> W. Declercq, *Progress in PESCO's Military Mobility Project: US, Canada, and Norway Invited to Participate*, Finabel, 20 May 2021. (<https://finabel.org/progress-in-pescos-military-mobility-project-us-canada-and-norway-invited-to-participate/>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>67</sup> See also Council of the European Union, *Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/909 of 25 June 2018 establishing a common set of governance rules for PESCO projects*, Art. 4. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32018D0909&from=EN>; last accessed 05/08/2021).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 8.

<sup>70</sup> EDA Website, *Air-To-Air Refuelling*. (<https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/all-activities/activities-search/air-to-air-refuelling>; last accessed 13/08/2021).



for the first time in its history, allocated resources specifically to the defence sector. The EU body responsible for the implementation and control of the EDF is the new Commission's Directorate General for Defence, Industry and Space (DG DEFIS).

To be eligible, an action needs to implement the EDF's objectives and must be carried out by a consortium of at least three eligible legal entities situated in at least three different Member States or associated countries: in addition to EU MS, European Economic Area (EEA) countries can also take part in EDF-backed actions.<sup>71</sup>

The EDF's role in the framework of the new capability development initiatives is to incentivise Member States to pursue CDP priorities, possibly within the EU defence framework, PESCO in particular. The EDF, in fact, may grant additional funding for PESCO projects.

The final results remain the property of the entities that produced them and the Union does not claim ownership of intellectual property rights pertaining to said actions.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, the Fund's Regulation does not affect MS' discretion in their defence export policy. However, in case the ownership of the final result of an EDF-backed action is transferred to a Third Country, contravening the Fund's objective or the EU's and Member States' security and defence interests, EDF financing must be reimbursed.<sup>73</sup>

#### **4. EU and NATO: a comparison of planning processes, priorities and common interests**

Whenever EU MS decide to move forward with defence integration in the name of autonomy, the issue of European aspirations' compatibility with NATO and the transatlantic bond presents itself. With the St. Malo summit, the US accepted the development of a European autonomous military action capability, on three conditions, known as the three "Ds": no decoupling, no duplication and no discrimination.<sup>74</sup>

For many EU MS, America's protection guaranteed under the Atlantic Treaty still represents the main source of security from external threats, and NATO is the main point of reference for their defence planning. To ensure that European defence is not seen as a decoupling attempt or a source of unnecessary duplication, a certain degree of synergy between the two organisations' processes should be achieved.

Recent EU progress in the defence sector and the common need of both the EU and NATO to reflect on their ambitions and strategic objectives make this an ideal time to strengthen their coordination. To that end, a comparison between the two organisation's defence planning processes and an assessment of their effectiveness could be useful to identify similarities and differences. Such comparison will be mostly inspired by the document produced by Frédéric

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<sup>71</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/697 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the European Defence Fund and repealing Regulation (EU) 2018/1092, Brussels, 29 April 2021, Arts. 9-10. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/697/oj>; last accessed 13/08/2021).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 23.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> NATO Online Library, *Press Conference by US Secretary of State Albright*, 8 December 1998. (<https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/1998/s981208x.htm>; last accessed 20/08/2021).

Mauro for the European Parliament's Security and Defence Committee, "EU Defence: The White Book implementation process".<sup>75</sup>

First of all, differences in governance should be noted. For NATO, political decisions taken by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) are approved via consensus; for the EU, CFSP/CSDP decisions remain under Member States' control – they are a prerogative of the Council, which votes unanimously. The EDA Ministerial Steering Board votes by qualified majority, except for budget approval and whenever a Member States, for reasons of vital national interest, formally opposes a qualified majority vote. In this last case, it is the Council which decides, voting unanimously.<sup>76</sup> Both organisations, therefore, seem to grant their members a particular discretion, as they can abstain from a decision and have no obligation to implement it.

There is, however, a great difference between the EU and NATO in terms of political and practical leadership. Even though NATO members all, formally, have the same weight inside the NAC, the United States, proponents of the North Atlantic Treaty and highest global defence spender (in 2020, the defence budget was around \$778 bn),<sup>77</sup> contributes heavily to the organisation and has a key role in guaranteeing collective defence. The consequence of this hegemony is that, despite the formalities, the American voice carries more weight. As such, NATO members, especially European, tend to gravitate around the American ally, accepting its leadership in exchange for its continued commitment to collective defence. A similar centre of gravity does not exist inside the European Union, as there is no country among the CSDP participants who has a weight in terms of military assets and political will so large *vis-à-vis* the others that it can give the group a strong direction. There are four main players in the European defence field: Italy, France, Germany, and Spain, which do not always share the same priorities and the same vision for European defence.<sup>78</sup>

These differences in leadership and governance permeate the defence planning processes of the two organisations, resulting for one in a more homogeneous, linear and top-down process and for the other in a non-linear, bottom-up process; the components of both are shaped by different logics.

The following scheme provides a simplified and summarised vision of the phases of both planning processes, which will be then further explored in the following pages:

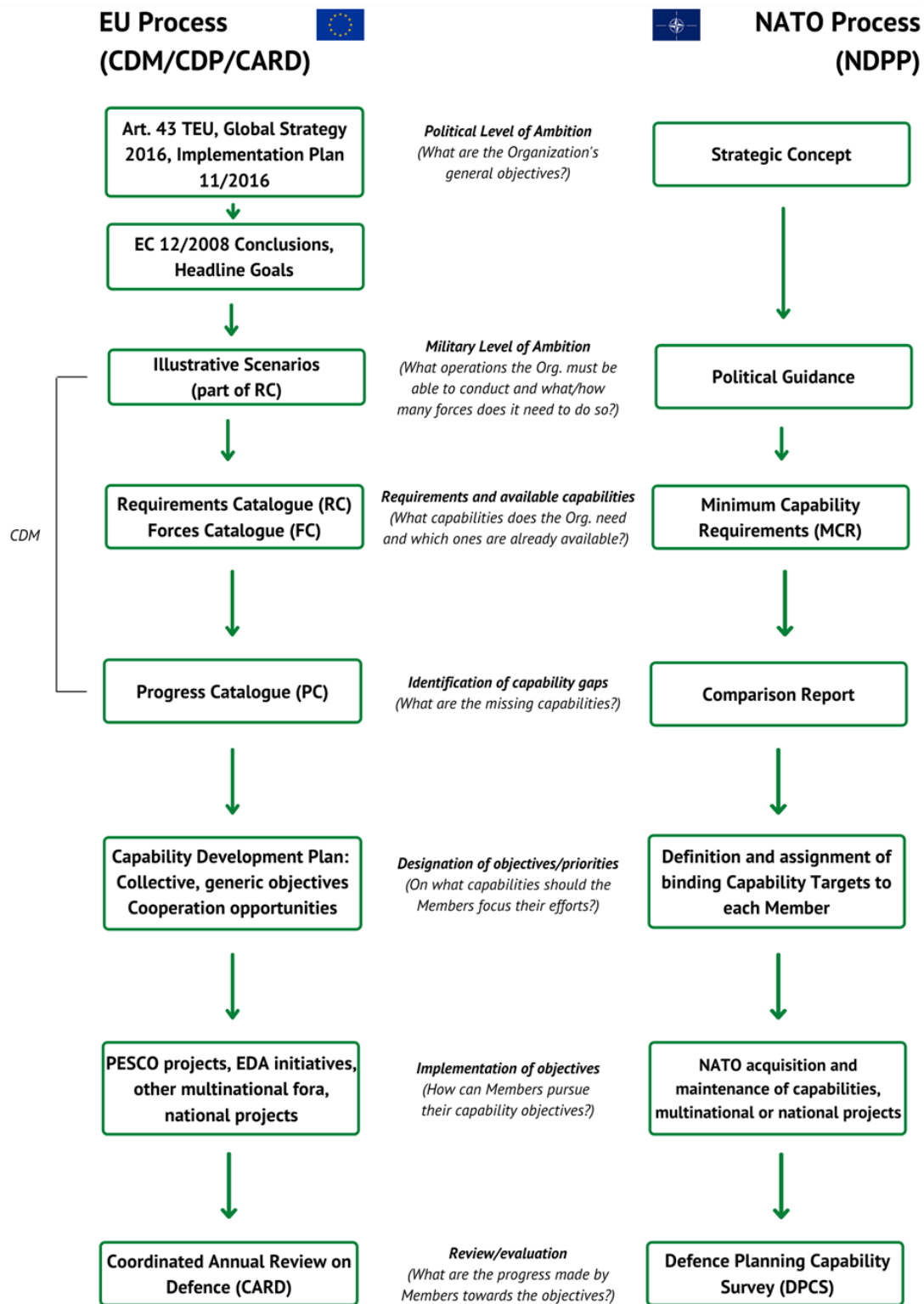
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<sup>75</sup> F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, European Parliament, Brussels, 2018. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 20/08/2021).

<sup>76</sup> Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/1835 of 12 October 2015 defining the statute, seat and operational rules of the European Defence Agency (recast), Brussels, 12 October 2015, Art. 9. (<https://eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/eda-council-decision-2015-1835-dated-13-10-2015.pdf>; last accessed 20/08/2021).

<sup>77</sup> SIPRI, *World military spending rises to almost \$2 trillion in 2020*, 26 April 2021. (<https://sipri.org/media/press-release/2021/world-military-spending-rises-almost-2-trillion-2020>; last accessed 20/08/2021).

<sup>78</sup> As for European defence ambitions, France notably aims for EU autonomy and independence from other actors (the United States). Germany, Spain and Italy do share France's commitment towards European defence, but they view NATO and US-backed collective defence as essential elements of their foreign policy. This is reflected in one of the most important ongoing capability development programmes: the new European fighter, with France, Germany and Spain working together via the FCAS consortium, while Italy and Sweden are part of Team Tempest with the UK.



As previously discussed, the EU derives its actual Level of Ambition from a multitude of documents produced in and across different periods and contexts.

Article 43 TEU provided the general list of tasks the EU might carry out. The two Headline Goals define quantitative objectives regarding the forces that should be made available to the EU. The Global Strategy defines the political Level of Ambition from 2016 onwards, while its Implementation Plan and the December 2008 European Council Conclusions further specify the

possible CSDP missions (and concurrencies) the EU should be able to conduct. These documents all simultaneously inform the EU defence tools and planning processes, making it difficult to understand the relation between them.

The EU planning process.

This can be divided in two phases; the first is purely military, and consists in the Capability Development Mechanism (CDM). It is carried out by the EUMS, with the support of the EUMC; it requires the drafting of ‘illustrative scenarios’, through which the political Level of Ambition is translated into plausible and accurate intervention scenarios, which represent the CSDP military LoA.<sup>79</sup>

From these, the EUMS and EUMC derive a Requirements Catalogue (RC), which states what and how many forces and military capabilities the EU needs to achieve the military LoA. The Requirements Catalogue has been re-drafted following the Global Strategy and its Implementation Plan: first in 2017, then in 2019.<sup>80</sup>

Every two years, MS answer a questionnaire on their military capabilities (EUMCQ), through which they list, on a voluntary basis, the forces they could make available for the EU, plus the capabilities anticipated for the next fifteen years. The result is a Force Catalogue (FC) which, due to its non-binding nature, is not linked to the CSDP force generation process.<sup>81</sup>

Next, the Progress Catalogue (PC) provides an assessment on the progress towards the EU’s military LoA, comparing the RC with the latest FC and taking into consideration national capability development and acquisition programmes. The PC lists the capabilities MS should develop, and make available to the EU, in the short and medium term, to reach the military LoA.<sup>82</sup> The most recently developed Progress Catalogues are PC 2018 and the PC 2020.<sup>83</sup> It should be noted, however, that under current practice the CDM is not a cyclical process, but is activated only when deemed necessary by the European Council.<sup>84</sup>

The second phase of the EU planning process answers not only to a military logic, but to an industrial one as well. The main element of this phase is the CDP. The shortfalls and capability objectives identified by the Progress Catalogue contribute to inform the CDP’s short-term

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<sup>79</sup> F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, Parlamento europeo, Bruxelles, 2018, p.24. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 20/08/2021).

<sup>80</sup> Federal Minister of Defence of the Republic of Austria, *Handbook on CSDP. The Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union*, Volume I, Fourth Edition, p. 201. (<https://www.egmontinstitute.be/content/uploads/2021/06/CSDP-HANDBOO-4th-edition.pdf>; last accessed 06/11/2021).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> See Council of the European Union, *Political and Security Committee*, 10.11.2020.

([https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/meetings/mpo/2020/11/informal-vtc-of-the-members-of-the-political-and-security-committee-\(298276\)/](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/meetings/mpo/2020/11/informal-vtc-of-the-members-of-the-political-and-security-committee-(298276)/); last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>84</sup> Cfr. F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, Parlamento europeo, Bruxelles, 2018, p. 21. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 20/08/2021). “The European capability process is neither linear nor cyclical, in other words – as things currently stand – it is called upon only when the European Council considers that it should.”

analysis, feeding into its ‘Strand A’.<sup>85</sup> There is, however, a ‘Strand C’, which identifies cooperation opportunities based on the capabilities planned by MS. As highlighted by Mauro, this distorts the result of the CDP, which is partially influenced by national preferences: this is shown by the discrepancy between CDM and CDP priorities.<sup>86</sup> Finally, CARD’s role should ideally be to review the progress made towards the capability goals. It is worth remembering that CARD’s assessment is collective and not on an individual basis.

With EDA,<sup>87</sup> and now with PESCO as well, EU MS have various options for acquiring or developing priority capabilities. They can also count on the European Defence Fund’s resources, which, albeit significantly reduced compared to the original proposal, can still provide a useful incentive to push them to pursue projects crucial for the EU’s strategic autonomy.

The NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP).

The NDPP is informed by the Strategic Concept, a document which defines the organisation’s role and its main tasks in the current international security environment. These tasks are re-examined during NATO Summits in the light of any changes in the environment. The responsibilities derived from the latest Strategic Concept and NATO summits are then further detailed in the first phase of the NDPP: the definition of the political guidance.

In this first phase, the Defence Policy Planning Committee Reinforced (DPPC/R) establishes what operations NATO must be able to conduct, what might be their scope and how many of them might have to be carried on concurrently.<sup>88</sup> From this, the political guidance establishes the necessary quantitative and qualitative capability requirements to support NATO’s military LoA. The political guidance is then approved by the North Atlantic Council and, if necessary, by the Nuclear Planning Group. The political guidance is usually reviewed every four years.

The NDPP’s next step is the determination of the capability requirements to achieve NATO’s military LoA. This phase is conducted by the two NATO Strategic Commands – Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT), and results in a list of minimum requirements, the Minimum Capability Requirements (MCR). From a comparison between the MCR, and assets available to both NATO and its members, a Comparison Report is produced, which lists insufficient, adequate and surplus capabilities.

Once the capability gaps to be filled for achieving NATO’s operational LoA have been identified, the ACT, together with NATO’s International Secretariat, drafts a package of capability targets for each member: it lists the capabilities to be maintained or developed in quantitative and qualitative

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<sup>85</sup> EDA, *Capability Development Plan Factsheet*, (<https://eda.europa.eu/docs/eda-factsheets/capability-development-plan-fact-sheet>; last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>86</sup> F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, Parlamento europeo, Bruxelles, 2018, pp. 43-44.

([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 20/08/2021).

<sup>87</sup> EDA Website, *Capability Development*. (<https://eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/capability-development>; last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>88</sup> NATO Website, *NATO Defence Planning Process*. ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49202.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm); last accessed 30/09/2021).

terms “aptitudes of a qualitative nature and quantitative tables of forces”,<sup>89</sup> and the associated priorities and deadlines. These take into consideration each member’s ‘relative wealth’ and are based on a ‘fair burden sharing’ principle. After a review of the packages, via a series of multilateral consultations, they are then approved by ‘consensus minus one’, meaning that no member can veto the adoption of its capability targets.<sup>90</sup>

The fulfilment of capability targets is verified biannually via the Defence Planning Capability Survey (DPCS), which also serves to update the capabilities inventory. As part of this phase, the two Strategic Commands then produce a Suitability and Risk Assessment, which evaluates the risks posed by existing capability shortfalls, and the overall suitability of the members’ defence plans to enable NATO to achieve its LoA.<sup>91</sup>

NATO members can work to achieve their capability targets both nationally and through multinational cooperation. NATO itself owns and maintains important capabilities under its own budget, such as a Boeing E-3A AWACS<sup>92</sup> aircraft fleet,<sup>93</sup> or the HALE RPA,<sup>94</sup> which is based on the US Global Hawk aircraft and is at the core of NATO’s Allied Ground Surveillance (AGS) project.<sup>95</sup>

This comparison between the two processes highlights some aspects of the EU’s defence planning process which limit its scope and effectiveness, compared to its NATO counterpart. First, the NATO process has only one document as its starting point, the Strategic Concept, which sets the organisation’s political LoA and is periodically updated or reviewed. The EU process is instead driven by several documents, without any clear hierarchy. The Headline Goal, which is deemed outdated by some given the new Global Strategy’s LoA, continues to orient the first phase of the EU planning process.<sup>96</sup> The EU’s CDP resembles more a shopping list of industrial cooperation opportunities from which Member States can choose (or not choose), rather than an index of capability shortfalls to be addressed.<sup>97</sup> CARD remains a purely collective review (not individual, like NATO’s DPCS), to which MS contribute on a voluntary basis.

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<sup>89</sup> F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, European Parliament, Bruxelles, 2018, p. 15. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 20/08/2021).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>91</sup> NATO Website, *NATO Defence Planning Process*. ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_49202.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm); last accessed 30/09/2021).

<sup>92</sup> Airborne Warning And Control System. An aircraft with a surveillance and C3 (Command, Control and Communications) role.

<sup>93</sup> NATO Website, *AWACS: NATO’s ‘eyes in the sky’*. ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_48904.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_48904.htm); last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>94</sup> High Altitude, Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft.

<sup>95</sup> NATO Website, *Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS)*. ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_48892.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48892.htm); last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>96</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don’t Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, p. 6. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021).

<sup>97</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don’t Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, p. 6. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021). “[The CDP] does not set individual targets for the member states but overall objectives for the EU as a whole; and it focuses on cooperation as a goal in itself rather than on specific requirements. The guidance thus amounts to “take your pick” rather than “fix these”.

The EU process lacks the peer pressure element which can strongly contribute to the EU capability objectives' effectiveness in influencing national defence planners. This comment notwithstanding, it should also be noted that NATO/Member States even struggle to comply with NATO capability objectives; however, as Biscop remarks, these do influence national defence planning.<sup>98</sup> A lack of personnel is also a problem; while EU staff dedicated to defence planning counts around thirty people, NATO counterparts can rely on ten times the personnel.<sup>99</sup> Finally, unlike for NATO, there are no EU-owned and maintained capabilities as yet. Member States remain the owners of the capabilities they collaboratively develop or acquire via pooling & sharing.

An opportunity for enhancing synchronisation between the two planning processes has now emerged; as noted by Mauro, overall communications and coordination between the EU and NATO have improved, despite the challenges of the Trump presidency.<sup>100</sup> European defence integration was welcomed by current NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg,<sup>101</sup> on the basis that stronger European defence would not be mutually exclusive with a stronger NATO. Every recent EU official document on defence matters reaffirms NATO's central role in MS's collective defence. The presence of a (theoretically) more 'Atlanticist' US administration may further facilitate additional cooperation efforts. Another important factor is that all the new tools embedded in the EU defence planning process are now fully functional. In addition, military capability objectives of the two processes seems to partially overlap, as exemplified by the inclusion, in the CDP 2018, of several capability priorities pertaining to collective defence.<sup>102</sup> However, despite the favourable context, there are still bureaucratic obstacles to the exchange of information between the EU and NATO.<sup>103</sup>

These are not impossible to overcome, and observing the developments in the current strategic and security environment, a growing EU-NATO cooperation in the long term is foreseeable. Space is one of several examples; the growth of the space sector, which is no longer monopolised by States, and the importance of space assets not only for the civilian economy, but also for the Armed Forces' communications and intelligence, is the source of growing interest in the defence

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, Parlamento europeo, Bruxelles, 2018, p. 35. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38

<sup>101</sup> NATO Website, Joint press statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, 27 September 2016. ([https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions\\_135422.htm?selectedLocale=uk](https://www.nato.int/cps/fr/natohq/opinions_135422.htm?selectedLocale=uk); last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>102</sup> F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, European Parliament, Brussels, 2018, p. 48. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>103</sup> Cfr. F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, Parlamento europeo, Bruxelles, 2018, p. 38. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 31/08/2021). ""For instance, NATO does not share its 'unclassified' documents with the EU; it does not allow its military experts to present NATO capability subjects to the EUMS; nor does it authorise access to its military training programme to all EEAS personnel. At the political level, the PSC may hold informal meetings with the NAC on capability matters, but the same may not always happen at the military level between the two military committees"

of space. Trump's United States Space Force, which was confirmed by the Biden administration,<sup>104</sup> is an answer to these developments, and particularly to the development of anti-satellite weapons by Russia and China.<sup>105</sup> Some European countries are taking an interest in space defence as well, are creating their own Space Commands, and are taking part in training exercises with their US ally.<sup>106</sup>

NATO itself recognised space as an operative domain in 2019 and drafted its own space policy. On 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020, NATO Defence Ministers decided to establish a Space Command in Ramstein, Germany. With the June 2021 Brussels Summit, NATO countries declared that they would consider any attack from, and to, space as a trigger for the Atlantic Charter's Article 5.<sup>107</sup> The EU has acted as well: with Regulation 2021/696 of 2021/696,<sup>108</sup> it founded a European Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), a testament to European willingness to achieve an autonomous access to space capability, also for military purposes. As specified by the Regulation, the Space Programme does share similar objectives with other EU Programmes, such as the European Defence Fund.<sup>109</sup> Aside from this Decision, the EU is already a relevant actor in space, as it possesses important assets such as Galileo, Copernicus and EGNOS which, aside from their role in the economy, civil protection and climate change monitoring, provide important military observation, positioning and navigation capabilities. An EU (through the EUSPA) and NATO cooperation in the space sector is therefore both foreseeable and desirable. This demonstrates that both EU and NATO will continue to have mutual interests and reasons to cooperate.

## 5. A Strategic Compass for European Defence: clarify objectives, steer projects, promote EU-NATO synergy

So far, the paper has examined the recent EU LoA and its origins, the functioning of new EU defence initiatives, and opportunities for EU-NATO synergies. In this section we focus on the

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<sup>104</sup> Reuters, *Biden decides to stick with Space Force as branch of U.S. military*, Washington D.C., 3 February 2021. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-biden-spaceforce-idUSKBN2A3226>; last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>105</sup> D. Haynes, *British military chiefs criticise China and Russia for 'reckless' behaviour in space*, Sky News, 30 July 2021. (<https://news.sky.com/story/british-military-chiefs-criticise-china-and-russia-for-reckless-behaviour-in-space-12367607>; last accessed 01/09/2021).

<sup>106</sup> France, Germany and Italy have all created a Space Command within their Armed Forces. In addition, France conducted a military space exercise name "AsterX" with the participation of the German Space Situational Awareness Centre (GSSAC) and the United States Space Force. See A. Cuthbertson, *France conducts first ever military exercise in space*, The Independent, 11 March 2021. (<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/space/france-space-military-b1815718.html#comments-area>; last accessed 01/09/2021).

<sup>107</sup> NATO Website, *Brussels Summit Communiqué*, Brussels, 14 June 2021, point 33. "We consider that attacks to, from, or within space present a clear challenge to the security of the Alliance, the impact of which could threaten national and Euro-Atlantic prosperity, security, and stability, and could be as harmful to modern societies as a conventional attack. Such attacks could lead to the invocation of Article 5." ([https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_185000.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_185000.htm); last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>108</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) No 912/2010, (EU) No 1285/2013 and (EU) No 377/2014 and Decision No 541/2014/EU. (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0696&from=EN>; last accessed 31/08/2021).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, Whereas (15).



Strategic Compass and the role it could play in pushing and guiding European defence activities in the right direction.

This statement implies that these activities are not delivering results as expected: Nicolas Gros-Verheyde, from *Bruxelles2* went as far as describing PESCO as a “half-failure” in an article dated 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020.<sup>110</sup>

The main critiques made by Gros-Verheyde can be found in other field experts’ analyses (Sven Biscop, for example) and are focused mostly on the non-respect of the ‘binding commitments’ and the nature of many of the PESCO projects.

Firstly, the vagueness of PESCO criteria and objectives, which can be interpreted as a consequence of a desire to make it as inclusive as possible, has allowed MW to mostly conduct business as usual, declaring they are pursuing the commitments, while not actually changing their approach to defence, and not doing much more than they were doing before. The absence of consequences in the face of insufficient commitment to PESCO (the option of suspending a participating country is likely never to be used) contributes to the ‘culture of non-compliance’, as Biscop has called it,<sup>111</sup> and participating countries seem more interested in pursuing their national objectives, instead of the EU’s objectives within PESCO; what they ultimately seek is access to EDF resources.<sup>112</sup>

Unfortunately, the EDF has suffered a considerable reduction in its initial proposed funding, going from around €13 bn. in 2018 prices to a little more than €8 bn. in 2021 prices for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

As for PESCO projects, there are 46 currently active, with one closed by its participants as it generated duplications of existing structures, which merely needed better synergy.<sup>113</sup> A fourth wave of 14 projects is underway.<sup>114</sup> Aside from there being too many projects, which may lead to an inefficient allocation of scarce EDF funds, there are also doubts pertaining to their qualitative nature. Many of these projects do not seem to be very relevant to the creation of the full-spectrum force package which ‘could’ be the objective of PESCO. There are very few ‘relevant’ projects aiming at filling crucial capability shortfalls.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> See N. Gros-Verheyde, *The half-failure of permanent structured cooperation is looming (v2)*, Brussels2 Editorial, 12 May 2020. (<https://www.Brussels2.eu/2020/05/the-half-failure-of-permanent-structured-cooperation-is-looming-v2/?lang=en>; last accessed 02/09/2021).

<sup>111</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don’t Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, pp. 7-9. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> PESCO Website, *[Closed] European Union Training Mission Competence Centre (EU TMCC)*. (<https://pesco.europa.eu/project/european-union-training-mission-competence-centre/>; last accessed 03/09/2021).

<sup>114</sup> S. Sprenger, *‘We are in a very crucial period’: European Defence Agency boss on collective defense*, DefenseNews, Washington, 3 November 2021. (<https://www.defensenews.com/digital-show-dailies/feindef/2021/11/03/we-are-in-a-very-crucial-period-european-defence-agency-boss-on-collective-defense/>; last accessed 11/11/2021).

<sup>115</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don’t Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, p. 13. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021).

One of these is the MALE RPAS,<sup>116</sup> which was already in development before the launch of PESCO,<sup>117</sup> and which leads to think that, like many other more or less relevant projects, it would have been carried out irrespective of the existence of PESCO. To provide concrete added value to European defence, PESCO should focus on fewer projects, which aim to fill the most important capability gaps, especially those related to force projection. At the same time, as the European Parliament denounced, in its Recommendation to the Council concerning PESCO,<sup>118</sup> the fact that major projects such as the new European MBT (MGCS), and the sixth-generation European fighter (FCAS), still remain outside PESCO, when projects like these should precisely form its focus; these are major development initiatives that need to gain a significant critical mass to be undertaken. PESCO would be the ideal forum for these projects, considering they could be backed by the EDF.

The problems of PESCO do not seem too different from those plaguing other EU defence tools and the planning process itself: the absence of a clear direction; the absence of precise, measurable objectives for all Member States; and the unwillingness of MS to fully comply with established commitments.

The ongoing Strategic Compass process, started on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2020 with a Council Decision, aims to resolve the first problem by contributing to the formation of a ‘common European strategic culture’.<sup>119</sup> The first step of the process was a common threat analysis, completed in November 2020; while the resulting document is itself classified, an EEAS memo sheds some light on its content and underlines the need to strengthen the EU’ security and defence policy.<sup>120</sup>

The memo lists three kinds of threats: at a global level, at a regional level, and ‘hybrid’ threats. At a global level, the EU faces slowing globalisation, growing economic rivalry between global powers, the implications of water and food scarcity as well as of climate change on security, migratory pressures, and the increasing risk of the actual use of military force by various actors. At a regional level, regional powers continue expanding their influence and power base, often using conflicts and instability as leverage *vis-à-vis* the EU. Some regions may see further deterioration due to fragilities of certain States, and the risk of contamination from the instability of ‘Failed States’. There are also several hybrid threats to the EU coming from both State and non-State actors, as well as the threat of terrorism, which may exploit local conflicts and instability to gain additional power.

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<sup>116</sup> Medium Altitude Long Endurance – Remotely Piloted Aircraft System

<sup>117</sup> OCCAR Website, *MALE RPAS - Medium Altitude Long Endurance Remotely Piloted Aircraft System*. (<http://www.occar.int/programmes/male-rpas>; last accessed 03/09/2021).

<sup>118</sup> R. Sikorski, Report on a European Parliament recommendation to the Council and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy concerning the implementation and governance of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), 29 September 2020, point R. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0165\\_EN.html#](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0165_EN.html#); last accessed 22/09/2021).

<sup>119</sup> Finabel, *EU’s Strategic Compass for Security and Defence: A New Approach in 2021*, 1 June 2021. (<https://finabel.org/eus-strategic-compass-for-security-and-defence-a-new-approach-in-2021/>; last accessed 22/09/2021).

<sup>120</sup> EEAS Website, *MEMO Questions and answers: Threat Analysis – a background for the Strategic Compass*, Brussels, 20 November 2020. ([https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89049/questions-and-answers-threat-analysis---background-strategic-compass\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89049/questions-and-answers-threat-analysis---background-strategic-compass_en); last accessed 22/09/2021).

At the time of writing, the Strategic Compass' phase two, which should result in an Outcome Document,<sup>121</sup> is underway. A first draft should be discussed mid- November, while the final document is expected to be approved by March 2022. Phase two's dialogue process is based on four 'baskets'; crisis management, resilience, capability development, and partnerships.

Apart from threat analysis, the other two main objectives of the Strategic Compass are to "agree on clear and achievable strategic objectives for the EU", and to "offer political guidance for future military planning processes".<sup>122</sup>

The Compass can then translate the current EU political LoA in clearer defence objectives and help clarify the current EU planning process, which is informed by multiple political documents, which in turn differ in time period and scope. In this regard, a review of the Headline Goal could be useful, as it is deemed insufficient considering current EU military objectives.<sup>123</sup>

Think Tanks have proposed that the Strategic Compass be reviewed and updated every five years;<sup>124</sup> As suggested by Coelmont, the Global Strategy should also be periodically revised and "based on a foresight analysis spanning the next 5 to 30 years".<sup>125</sup>

Once a clear and widely shared vision of the EU's potential role as a security actor in the international stage has been achieved, it should be easier to determine which capabilities are truly needed and how to fill the gaps. It should also be simpler to identify clear, measurable objectives and monitor MS' progress towards their achievement. Thus, the Strategic Compass can give PESCO and the EDF a clear direction in which to steer.

There is no shortage of proposals in this regard. For Biscop, the PESCO NIPs could become the focus of discussions and consultations between MS,<sup>126</sup> to engender the peer pressure that is missing from the EU planning process, which CARD, in its current form, cannot provide. The idea of a PESCO Peer-Review Process (PPRP) has also been proposed by Lațici, who also alluded to the effectiveness of the NDPP's peer pressure element.<sup>127</sup> Another possibility is extending the scope of the CARD; here Coelmont imagines its transformation into a proper 'Coordinated Review on Defence' (CoRD), steered by the HR/VP not only in their role as head of the EDA, but in their

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<sup>121</sup> Finabel, *EU's Strategic Compass for Security and Defence: A New Approach in 2021*, 1 June 2021. (<https://finabel.org/eus-strategic-compass-for-security-and-defence-a-new-approach-in-2021/>; last accessed 22/09/2021).

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> C. Mölling, T. Schütz, *The EU's Strategic Compass and Its Four Baskets. Recommendations to Make the Most of It*, DGAP Report No.13, November 2020. ([https://dgap.org/sites/default/files/article\\_pdfs/dgap-report-2020-13-en.pdf](https://dgap.org/sites/default/files/article_pdfs/dgap-report-2020-13-en.pdf); last accessed 28/09/2021).

<sup>124</sup> EU Institute for Security Studies, *Event report: Strategic Culture: an elusive but necessary foundation for EU security and defence?*, 18 July 2021, p.3. (<https://www.iss.europa.eu/content/strategic-culture-elusive-necessary-foundation-eu-security-and-defence>; last accessed 22/09/2021).

<sup>125</sup> J. Coelmont, *Seven steps to European Defence, Transatlantic Equilibrium, and Global Europe*, EGMONT Security Policy Brief no. 151, October 2021. (<https://www.egmontinstitute.be/seven-steps-to-european-defence-transatlantic-equilibrium-and-global-europe/>; last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>126</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don't Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, p. 7. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021).

<sup>127</sup> See T. Lațici, *No Pain, No Gain: Taking PESCO to the Gym*, EGMONT Royal Institute for International Relations, 3 September 2020. (<https://www.egmontinstitute.be/no-pain-no-gain-taking-pesco-to-the-gym/>; last accessed 30/09/2021).

authority as Vice-President of the European Commission and head of the EEAS.<sup>128</sup> CoRD would entail not only a review of all military capabilities at the Member States' disposal, but also the functioning of relevant institutions, providing concrete policy recommendations on both the acquisition of necessary capabilities and strengthening of institutions and decision-making processes, with the aim of achieving the Global Strategy's LoA. Mauro makes a case in his report for the need to allocate more resources, both financial and human, to institutions and committees dedicated to European defence planning, and goes on to suggest that the EU defence planning process should be named and described in a single document.<sup>129</sup>

PESCO projects could be classified according to their strategic relevance, with EDF resources accessible only to 'relevant' projects.<sup>130</sup> It would also make sense to consider some form of co-ownership between the EU and the MS for EDF-backed projects. The EU-owned Galileo system shows that this is possible. The participating Member States themselves have expressed their will to enhance PESCO and ensure its credibility in the November 2020 PESCO strategic review.<sup>131</sup> Although they have deemed the current 'binding commitments' adequate, they were in favour of further discussions on the possible introduction of measurable objectives based on existing commitments, with relative progress indicators and incentives. As for the projects, participating States agreed that projects that fail to achieve expected results should be either terminated or revived in order to safeguard PESCO's credibility and effectiveness, and they also suggested the merging or clustering of some projects to avoid duplications and increase synergies and efficiency.

The Strategic Compass could also help in shaping future EU-NATO cooperation. Firstly, with a simplified EU planning process, additional synchronisation with the NDPP would become much easier, especially in the identification of priorities and reviews on defence. This could help both actors in ensuring coordination in pursuing overlapping objectives, without prejudice to the EU's specific capability priorities. Secondly, and mainly through the Partnerships basket, the Compass could help shape a vision for an informal EU-US division of labour inside NATO.

Indeed, this clarification process is even more relevant considering recent international developments. The first is the US's (and Allies') withdrawal from Afghanistan and subsequent return of the Taliban regime, which made the region potentially more unstable, and whose consequences are going to be felt by neighbouring countries, and Europe. If, on the one hand, the way the American withdrawal was handled – with little to no coordination with Allied countries – caused the re-emergence of doubts on America's global security commitment, and especially in

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<sup>128</sup> J. Coelmont, *Seven steps to European Defence, Transatlantic Equilibrium, and Global Europe*, EGMONT Security Policy Brief no. 151, October 2021. (<https://www.egmontinstitute.be/seven-steps-to-european-defence-transatlantic-equilibrium-and-global-europe/>; last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>129</sup> F. Mauro, *EU Defence: The White Book implementation process*, Parlamento europeo, Bruxelles, 2018, p. 7. ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO\\_STU\(2018\)603871\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/603871/EXPO_STU(2018)603871_EN.pdf); last accessed 20/08/2021).

<sup>130</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don't Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, pp. 12-13. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021).

<sup>131</sup> Council of the European Union, *Council Conclusions on the PESCO Strategic Review 2020*, Brussels, 20 November 2020. (<https://pesco.europa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020-11-20-Council-Conclusions-on-PESCO-Strategic-Review-2020.pdf>; last accessed 22/09/2021).

Europe, on the other hand the fact that the Europeans could not remain in Afghanistan, even if they wanted to, and were forced to follow the US's line of action, is a painful reminder of the EU's inability to carry on high intensity operations if such need arises.

Not a month later the UK, Australia and the US announced the conclusion of the trilateral AUKUS security agreement, without apparently informing the EU or Member States, notably France, which has territories (therefore interests) in the Pacific, and lost a defence contract with Australia for the sale of conventional submarines. While the AUKUS can be seen as a stab in the back or simply a clumsy diplomatic mistake, it might also partly be a consequence of a French (and European) ambivalent approach towards China.<sup>132</sup>

These two events are certainly signals of a diminished relevance of Europe in the US's geostrategic priorities' list. Still, they do not necessarily imply a breaking of the transatlantic bond; the US still needs the Europeans to respond, preferably via multilateral institutions such as NATO itself, to security challenges discussed above such as space-related issues and the 'hybrid threats'<sup>133</sup> posed by a variety of State (such as China) and non-State actors. Meanwhile, Europeans still need the US-backed collective defence guaranteed by Article 5.<sup>134</sup>

What is required is the revision of both parties' role in the NATO framework. One hypothesis is to continue to rely on the US for collective defence, with a symbolic US presence on the European continent which would guarantee the US's full involvement in case of attack. Meanwhile, the EU could progressively work, via its defence and capability development initiatives, towards making a significant contribution to NATO's capability needs, reducing America's preponderance (and burden) inside the organisation. Moreover, with the United States focused on the Pacific, the EU should ideally take responsibility for crisis management in the Mediterranean and Middle East, including high-intensity operations.

However, the initiatives that the EU sought to undertake in recent years to develop a common defence have all been thwarted by MS's veto right, and a lack of political will. Despite the increasingly more unstable international environment, and the pressures this has generated for developing a European defence, many countries still seem reluctant to pursue a more ambitious EU security policy. This is shown, more recently, by the Swedish (and others') refusal of a proposal to create a European rapid reaction force.<sup>135</sup>

The EU will never be a credible militarily actor without a force that can be effectively deployed when and where necessary; to avoid repeating the mistake of the EU Battlegroups, the unanimity obstacle must be overcome. This does not seem impossible, nor is modifying the Treaties

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<sup>132</sup> T. Varma, *After AUKUS: The uncertain future of American and European cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, ECFR, 22 September 2021. (<https://ecfr.eu/article/after-aucus-the-uncertain-future-of-american-and-european-cooperation-in-the-indo-pacific/>; last accessed 28/09/2021).

<sup>133</sup> For a definition of the term 'hybrid threat', see the Hybrid Centre of Excellence website. (<https://www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-threats/>; last accessed 06/11/2021).

<sup>134</sup> H. Von Der Burchard, *EU and US need each other to handle rise of China, says NATO's Stoltenberg*, POLITICO, 7 December 2020. (<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-and-us-need-each-other-to-deal-with-rise-of-china-says-nato-secretary-general-jens-stoltenberg/>; last accessed 28/09/2021).

<sup>135</sup> A. Brzozowski, P. Vanttinen, *Non NATO-member Sweden rejects EU rapid reaction force*, Euractiv, 6 September 2021. ([https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short\\_news/non-nato-member-sweden-rejects-eu-rapid-reaction-force/](https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/non-nato-member-sweden-rejects-eu-rapid-reaction-force/); last accessed 22/09/2021).

necessary. One way might be the PESCO project ‘EUFOR Crisis Response Operation Core’,<sup>136</sup> whose goal is to contribute to the creation of a full-spectrum force package and counts the EU defence’s ‘Big Four’<sup>137</sup> among its participants; this project could be used to build a core of MS able to fulfil truly ambitious criteria and willing to deepen their defence integration.<sup>138</sup> Given an adequately shared vision of the common threats and the strategic role of the EU, these core states could work together towards the creation, in the EUFOR CROC framework, of a multinational force with all the necessary support elements (which could be developed via *ad-hoc* PESCO projects).<sup>139</sup> Another feasible instrument is Eurocorps, a multinational Headquarters which counts France, Germany, Spain, Belgium and Luxembourg as its ‘Framework Nations’, while Italy, Austria, Poland, Greece, Romania and Turkey participate as associate members.<sup>140</sup> As theorised by Miglio in a previous Policy Paper,<sup>141</sup> Eurocorps could be integrated into the EU defence framework via PESCO. Willing PESCO participants should join the Eurocorps as Framework Nations, while finding an agreement for associated non-EU countries is possible, considering the possibility for Third Countries to participate in PESCO projects. The next step could then be a merger between Eurocorps and EUFOR CROC to avoid duplications. Eventually, as suggested by Biscop, E2I<sup>142</sup> could also be integrated into PESCO.<sup>143</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

Over the last five years, we have witnessed a deterioration of the international system, and worsening perceptions about the strength of the transatlantic bond. The EU also saw the first ever departure of one of its Member States. These events both pushed and enabled the EU to take defence integration forward with the definition of an EU Global Strategy, the launch of PESCO (which had remained dormant for years), the creation of a European Defence Fund, the revision of the Capability Development Plan and the launch of a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD). Together, these make up a framework in which MS could develop those

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<sup>136</sup> PESCO Website, *EUFOR Crisis Response Operation Core (EUFOR CROC)* . (<https://pesco.europa.eu/project/eufor-crisis-response-operation-core/>; last accessed 25/09/2021).

<sup>137</sup> France, Germany, Italy, Spain.

<sup>138</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don't Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, pp. 12-13. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021).

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Eurocorps website. (<https://www.eurocorps.org>; last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>141</sup> A. Miglio, *A Schengen of Defence? Integrating Existing Clusters of Inter-State Defence Cooperation into the EU Legal Framework*, CSF Policy Paper no.25, July 2017. (<http://www.csfederalismo.it/en/publications/policy-paper/1288-a-schengen-of-defence-integrating-existing-clusters-of-inter-state-defence-cooperation-into-the-eu-legal-framework>; last accessed 05/11/2021).

<sup>142</sup> European Intervention Initiative. It was launched on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018, with an aim to foster the emergence of a common European strategic culture and facilitate coordinated military interventions in crisis scenarios. It comprises 13 countries: France, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Italy. See Ministry of Armed Forces website, *European intervention initiative*. (<https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/dgris/international-action/l-ieil-initiative-europeenne-d-intervention>; last accessed 16/11/2021).

<sup>143</sup> S. Biscop, *European Defence and PESCO: Don't Waste the Chance*, EU IDEA Policy Paper No.1, 5 May 2020, pp. 11-12. (<https://euidea.eu/2020/05/05/european-defence-and-pesco-dont-waste-the-chance/>; last accessed 08/09/2021).

common necessary capabilities which would be difficult to develop or acquire elsewhere. The establishment of a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) in 2017 has been an important step as well.

The EU LoA currently is still out of range for MS, and defence planning and capability development tools still seem to be not fit for purpose. The Strategic Compass currently under discussion can make a significant contribution in steering EU defence in the right direction.

The EU defence planning process struggles to influence national defence planners and needs to be reviewed. To that end, NATO's more linear and effective NDPP could provide some inspiration. The EU process is, compared to NATO's NDPP, highly complex, heterogeneous, too dependent on Member State's goodwill and, in some parts, excessively influenced by purely national preferences. More precisely, the EU process lacks a peer pressure element which, in the NDPP, brings national defence planners to at least take NATO priorities into account. The EU process should be made cyclical in all its parts and contain a periodical review of both the Global Strategy and the Strategic Compass. The inclusion of a peer-review process (in PESCO itself, regarding the NIPs, or through an enhanced and expanded CARD) might strengthen the EU planning process. Like NATO's Allied Ground Surveillance, the EU could consider some form of co-ownership and maintenance of crucial military capabilities developed with EDF contributions.

The importance of NATO, (and the relationship with the United States) for collective defence, is in the eyes of many EU Member States something that European defence can hardly ignore. Coordinating the two planning processes is not only necessary to avoid accusations of decoupling and the creation of unnecessary duplications, but desirable, considering that both actors share several capability priorities. The new US Administration's less hostile posture towards Europeans and a common reflection phase, current within both the EU and NATO, provide a favourable environment for strengthening synergies, and for the establishment of a more equal partnership between the EU and the US inside NATO. Transatlantic cooperation is not going away any time soon anyway, as both actors need each other to address long-term security challenges such as space security and hybrid threats.

The new EU defence tools seem to be performing well below their potential. PESCO counts 46 active projects and one terminated, many of these concern capabilities which are either not really strategically relevant or were already in development before the launch of PESCO. There are almost no projects related to high-end capabilities, and the latest main defence projects undertaken by EU countries, such as MGCS or FCAS, are taking place outside the PESCO framework, which as of now does not seem to provide much added value to European defence. The same goes for the already scarce EDF funds, if they are not correctly distributed. There is also a tendency of Member States to not comply fully with commitments undertaken.

Regarding capability development, the Strategic Compass should lead to the definition of precise and measurable objectives for PESCO, a desire expressed by participating MS in the November 2020 Strategic Review. PESCO participants should also implement reforms to ensure its effectiveness, for example by establishing a hierarchy between projects according to their strategic relevance, with EDF funding available only to 'relevant' projects to optimise the Fund's resources.

The international environment is constantly changing and, as the Compass Threat Analysis states, a stronger European security and defence policy is a necessity. Failure risks an ever-growing irrelevance on the international scene for the EU, and dependence from third actors for our security and the defence of our interests. Regarding the latter, it is evident that, despite common interests and the cordial tone of the new US administration, Washington's attention is increasingly moving towards Asia. The Afghanistan withdrawal is the most evident and recent signal of the American disengagement from the area, which started around a decade ago. The consequence is that Europeans will have to be ready to take on more responsibilities in managing crises in their neighbourhood.

Consequently, a new EU-US division of labour inside NATO must be established. One of the Compass' baskets is dedicated specifically to partnership, including the EU-NATO one. A realistic possibility is that the EU might take on crisis management in the Mediterranean and Middle East, while increasing its contribution to collective defence, for which American support will still be needed. According to early indications, the Compass seems to be oriented in this direction, referring also to the upcoming EU-NATO joint declaration and an EU-US security and defence dialogue, which will take place next year.<sup>144</sup>

For the Strategic Compass to give concrete guidance to European defence, and to avoid adding it to the graveyard of failed defence integration initiatives, the issues of veto rights and the lack of political will must be circumvented; the very recent refusal to create a European first entry force are worrying in this sense. However, Member States who support stronger European defence and the idea of a "28<sup>th</sup> Army" have several options to circumvent these obstacles. Two examples are EUFOR CROC and Eurocorps.

An EU force, even a small one, has the potential to gradually crystallise a definition of harmonised standards, equipment, and a common military culture, ideally resulting in a kernel of federal defence. The proposal contained in the Compass of a 5,000-strong, permanently available rapid reaction force (the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity),<sup>145</sup> is a step into the right direction, especially considering the intention to overcome unanimity. The risk of duplications warrants surveillance, especially with the EUFOR CROC, whose objective overlaps with the Rapid Deployment Capacity. However, nothing stands in the way of a possible future merger of the two.

As shown in this Paper, there is an abundance of possibilities and options. The main obstacle remains today, as it was in the past, an insufficient political will. The ever-growing number of 'wake-up calls' for European countries represents an unequivocal message: any lost chance for a truly European defence will, in light of the changes happening in the international arena, have increasingly higher costs in terms of credibility, military capabilities and, ultimately, security for Europeans.

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<sup>144</sup> A. Brzozowski, *LEAK: What the EU's future military strategy could look like*, EURACTIV, 10 November 2021. (<https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/news/leak-how-the-eus-future-military-strategy-could-look-like/>; last accessed 11/11/2021).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*



## Annex – List of Acronyms

(UE)	European Union
(NATO)	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
(EEAS)	European External Action Service
(ESDP)	European Security and Defence Policy
(CSDP)	Common Security and Defence Policy
(EUMS)	European Union Military Staff
(EUMC)	European Union Military Committee
(PSC)	Political and Security Committee
(PESCO)	Permanent Structured Cooperation
(EDTIB)	European Defence Technological and Industrial Base
(CDP)	Capability Development Plan
(CDM)	Capability Development Mechanism
(CARD)	Coordinated Annual Review on Defence
(PADR)	Preparatory Action on Defence Research
(EDIDP)	European Defence Industrial Development Programme
(EDF)	European Defence Fund
(EDA)	European Defence Agency
(OCCAR)	Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement / Organisation for Joint Armament Co-operation
(EUSPA)	European Union Agency for the Space Programme
(DEFIS)	Defence Industry and Space

(SEDE)	Subcommittee on Security and Defence
(MPCC)	Military Planning and Conduct Capability
(OSRA)	Overarching Strategic Research Agenda
(KSA)	Key Strategic Activities
(EATF)	European Air Transport Fleet
(IED)	Improvised Explosive Device
(ISR)	Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
(MENA)	Middle East and North Africa
(MRTT)	Multi Role Tanker Transport
(MMF)	Multinational MRTT Fleet
(FCAS)	Future Combat Air System
(MGCS)	Main Ground Combat System
(FC)	Forces Catalogue
(RC)	Requirements Catalogue
(PC)	Progress Catalogue
(EUMCQ)	EU Military Capabilities Questionnaire
(NDPP)	NATO Defence Planning Process
(DPPC/R)	Defence Policy and Planning Committee Reinforced
(ACO)	Allied Command Operations
(ACT)	Allied Command Transformation
(MCR)	Minimum Capability Requirements
(DPCS)	Defence Planning Capability Survey

(AWACS)	Airborne Warning and Control System
(AGS)	Allied Ground Surveillance
(MALE)	Medium Altitude Long Endurance
(HALE)	High Altitude Long Endurance
(RPAS)	Remote Piloted Aircraft System
(PPRP)	PESCO Peer-Review Process
(CoRD)	Coordinated Review on Defence
(CROC)	Crisis Response Operation Core

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