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## **United Nations, European Union, OSCE and NATO: Global players towards a reform.**

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I wish to start by recalling two important facts which, though known, are at times forgotten: a) NATO is a (military) alliance, the EU is not, and b) NATO's main role is to defend its allies against aggression, i.e., its role is primarily *within the borders of the Alliance*, whereas the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) is a tool to be used *exclusively outside* the EU's borders.

While NATO is essentially military, the EU's slant has become increasingly civilian in nature. The upshot is that cooperation between the two organisations can only take place through complementarity, avoiding duplication as much as possible –which, at least in theory, should not be too difficult.

Finally, there is the OSCE. With its three "dimensions" –politico-military, economic and environmental, and human, its main merit is probably the one of being there. It is a sort of "Scream Room" in serious need of reform, as already pointed out several years ago by Chancellor Merkel. The changes have not yet been brought about and, given its membership and its non-binding rules, OSCE will most probably never change very much.

### **The EU and NATO**

There have been ups and downs in the relationship between the EU and NATO, but we can safely say that since the joint declarations of 2016 and 2018, cooperation has been stepped up and, today, we have seven areas for concrete *operational* cooperation<sup>1</sup> and a total of 42 implementing proposals and 32 implementing actions that include new topics such as counter-terrorism, women, peace and security (WPS) and military mobility.

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<sup>1</sup> Countering hybrid threats, operational cooperation including maritime and on migration, cyber-security, defence capabilities, defence industry and research, exercises and supporting Eastern and Southern partners' capacity-building efforts.

As Commander for civilian operations it is not for me to dwell on the military aspects of crisis management. There are colleagues better placed than me to do so. I will therefore concentrate on more general issues and, in as much as possible, on the civilian aspects of cooperation in the area of crisis management.

Given that 22 nations belonging to NATO are also EU Member States, cooperation should be a given, as their political masters are the same. However, competition is there. Firstly, it arises from the logic of each institution trying to maximise its mandate and act autonomously anywhere (at least in principle): this happens at institutional level (different views at the Belgian HQs at Rond-Point Schuman and Evere) and also at the national one (different views and sensitivities at the MFA and MoD, for instance). Secondly, potential friction arises because of the different scope and hierarchy between NATO's Article V collective defence clause and the EU's Article 42(7)<sup>2</sup>. Finally, a third area of potential dissonance comes from the past rather than the present: which institution can claim credit for preserving peace in Europe (both the EU and NATO provide resilience and deterrence but their strategic narratives often - mistakenly - overlook each other's important role).

In fact, the EU and NATO have a single set of forces, so deterrence –at least understood as those assets that would discourage any enemy to consider an attack on Europe– is common to both organisations.

As of 2016 (the fact that the year is the same as the one of the first Joint Declaration with NATO in Warsaw is not a coincidence), the EU has put at the centre of its external action the so-called Global Strategy. It is the political manifesto, as it were, of the preceding comprehensive/integrated approach: the EU has a magnificent and wide range of tools that can be used consecutively or simultaneously to address any crisis. From trade, through diplomacy, development aid, sanctions, etc.... all the way to CSDP, the Union can act decisively but also subtly before having to make recourse to Teddy Roosevelt's big stick. To spell it out: the EU is mainly, but not only, about soft power above all<sup>3</sup>. Today, out of a total of 16 ongoing missions, 10 are civilian with a large concentration of efforts (4 civilian and 3 military missions) in Africa.

I cannot gloss over one issue that has been dogging CSDP for number of years as far as the use of military forces is concerned. I am referring, of course, to the EU Battlegroups

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<sup>2</sup> It is worthwhile recalling that ultimately both use Article 51 of the Charter of the UN as their basis.

<sup>3</sup> The HR/VP Mogherini stated that: "...Global" is not just...geographic... (it comprehends) wide array of policies and instruments (such as)...military capabilities...anti-terrorism...it deals with peace-building...resilience of States and societies... The EU...(is not just) a soft power... the European Union currently deploys sixteen military and civilian operations, with thousands of men and women serving under the European flag for peace and security – our own security, and our partners. ...for Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand..."

(EUBGs). They are to a large extent the distillate of the initial Headline Goal (HG) that was created at the beginning of this Century. From the initial HG of 60,000 troops deployable anywhere in the world where EU interests would be at stake, ambitions have trickled down to about 2,500 troops deployable for 120 days before being replaced by a subsequent EU Battle Group(s). EUBGs are perfectly certified and ready to deploy, as required, very quickly. True, in some cases enablers would need to be added (e.g. amphibious capabilities), but by and large EUBGs are a wonderful asset that so far has only had two discernible functions: making EU nations' armed forces learn much more about each other, and acting as a deterrent.

From a strictly decision-making point of view, Member States have preferred to proceed via traditional force generation. This, in my view, indicates that there is not yet a sufficient political will at this time to deploy a common military force: those Member States that are interested in acting with military means under the aegis of the EU banner are welcome to do so, provided the others are happy to abstain, but the EU ambition in the field of defence seems to be oriented differently and elsewhere.

It is also important to bear in mind that whereas for military endeavours the line of command is quite straightforward, for civilian missions it is definitely not: besides the MFA, the Ministries of the Interior and Justice and the different police authorities are involved as well. The level of ambition at the highest level may be hampered by real difficulties (financial and human resources being the usual suspects). For the civilian "line" ministries it is often difficult to reconcile their national interest (inside the country's borders) with the country's interest outside, i.e., it is hard to grasp what has been called the internal/external security nexus: what happens outside *does* matter and has a direct influence on what is happening inside<sup>4</sup>. Transnational crime or terrorism, by definition, do not stop operating at *any* border. The same applies for cyber hostilities or, to use the latest catchphrase, Hybrid Threats or asymmetric conflicts.

To remedy these difficulties, in order to develop civilian capabilities that should strengthen civilian CSDP, the EU has come up with a four-step approach: a forward looking concept on the strengthening of civilian crisis management (the Concept), a civilian capability development plan (the CCDP), a "Civilian CSDP Compact" for Member States to enter (non-binding) capability development commitment, and National Implementations Plans (NIPs) alongside efforts from the institutions to mirror them.

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<sup>4</sup> In December 2003, the EU Strategy designed with the Document "A Secure Europe in a better World", the so called "Solana Document", defined the concept of "forward defense" meaning the deployment of crisis management instruments in areas of crisis that could affect the security of the EU.

This flurry of activity has already produced a number of results: capability gaps are being identified and will be addressed. Training, which is probably the most important capability development tool we have, is in the process of being redesigned and strengthened, and interoperability with our external partners, especially NATO and the UN, is the name of the game (cyber and hybrid being at the top of subject matters).

It is especially in this context that I believe we have the best probabilities for progress. For the defence related issues, as pointed out earlier, the EU has a single set of forces which it will use, as required, either for its own CSDP or to contribute to NATO efforts: but neither the EU nor NATO have a single set of civilian forces, and it is highly unlikely that there will ever be one.

We know for a fact that mustering capabilities in the civilian area is very difficult: we are all fishing in the same pond. CSDP, the CGBGA (Frontex), Europol, etc. are all vying for the same resources. It follows that when dealing with irregular migration, countering terrorism or hybrid threats, if we are to work with NATO we will have to ensure that we are not adding an extra layer of competition. Not only, we need to work more closely and deconflict as much as possible.

A first step in this direction has been taken by organising two consecutive Parallel and Coordinated Exercises (PACE) with NATO. And in theatres such as Ukraine, Kosovo and Iraq we already have an excellent level of coordination in place.

The Global Strategy and several recent Council Conclusions have stressed the need to strengthen our coordination with NATO and with the UN. The EU has already initiated, through the EDF, PESCO and CARD, an important effort to strengthen its capabilities development in the military area. That said, we are only too aware of the resistance this is finding at the other side of the Atlantic, where the EU's objective of pushing forward with its "strategic autonomy" is viewed with suspicion<sup>5</sup>. Suddenly, it is no longer only a question of Europe spending more for its defence (an old request by NATO in general and the US in

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<sup>5</sup> The concept of an "EU/European strategic autonomy" in the area of security and defence is a debate ongoing inside the Institutions with some "distinctions" among the MS. The main problem for some of the more Euro-Atlantic MS is the possibility that such a strategic autonomy will give the wrong impression of the EU detaching from the NATO, while the links among the two main Organisations should become even more interconnected.

The main elements of the concept would, mainly, consider the possibilities linked to: (1) a different political decision making and planning (incl. intelligence gathering and situational awareness, command control, political will, strategic consensus...), (2) the availability of the necessary civil/military capabilities (covering notably space, air, land, sea and cyber domains) and their further development; (3) a solid European defence industrial and technological basis.

The strategic autonomy will, most probably, imply the need to enhance the freedom of action, in unity and coherence, with a different, more consistent, approach to relevant partnership aspects.

The main debate, in the near future, will most probably focus on the relevant aspects related to the fundamental vulnerabilities, gaps and dependencies that can have the potential to hamper the EU in taking more responsibility in security and defence.

particular): it is also a matter of allowing foreign (US) companies to partake in the EU exercise and to ensure that a captive market stays that way.

In any case, the EU is now in the process of mirroring its defence oriented effort also in the civilian area. It is key that this effort is made taking fully into account the civ-mil aspects that will make our interaction on the ground more effective with NATO.

### **The EU and the UN**

If in terms of common defence the EU and NATO are natural allies, when it comes to peace keeping, conflict prevention, state building, security sector reform, etc., the UN takes over as our dancing partner. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that the UN's remit is much wider. The EU's concern is (mainly) to bring stability and peace to those areas which, close or far away from Europe, directly impinge on the continent's interest.

The EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security policy (FAC 06/16 and CC 11/16) talks about the integrated approach of diplomacy, security, defence and development. In Nov. 2016 the Foreign Affairs Council decided upon the concepts of three strategic priorities on Security and Defence: (1) responding to external conflicts and crises (Crisis Management), (2) building capacities (and resilience) of partners (Capacity building) and (3) protecting the EU and its citizens (Internal-External Security Nexus).

Considering the above strategy, for me it is clear that the main objective of our civilian missions should be in the interest of the host countries in which we are operating, building (or reinforce) their capacity to manage the internal security (and defence): too often we have heard criticism whereby it would appear that Europe conducts operations to foster its own interests. This is not the case and never will be. Yet, it is clear that our Global Strategy does put the security of EU citizens at the centre of our external action, and it could not be otherwise. In an era of scarce resources it is very difficult, if not impossible, to justify spending large amounts of taxpayers' money without a narrative that speaks of "return on investment".

I know this is a contentious issue: some Member States view our actions only upon their merit as tools to assist fragile or failing states. A return on investment is not even considered. But perceptions inside Europe have led to major changes in national politics. So one way or another those perceptions are going to find their way into our external action. The recent push to vastly strengthen FRONTEX is there to prove it.

For the UN this is not the case. Their perspective is global (in terms of geographical coverage), is open-ended and can rely on large budgets. This last issue is especially

important: where Member States believe that the UN is already making progress, there is reluctance to invest also in EU action as this means paying twice for the same objective.

This means that our action with the UN (constantly followed by the EU/UN Steering Committee that meets twice a year) always needs to be complementary. This is easier said than done. Progress is being made, no doubt, but is slow. The UN mandates, lines of command and timelines are totally different from those of the EU, so the convergence is rare. There are areas such as SSR, especially policing, where synergies are picking up speed. Shared logistics might one day be partially implemented. But the real areas of cooperation and development thereof should probably come from combining the EU's nimble approach with the UN's long haul capabilities.

In fact this has already been the subject of talks between the two organisations in terms of using military means. Whether through traditional force generation or EUBGs, the EU may spearhead a mission and then withdraw to let the UN transition into longer term action, where the EU could then contribute through its (smaller) civilian capabilities.

#### The EU and OSCE

The relations between the EU and OSCE have always been well regarded, considering that all the EU MS are part of the OSCE.

The European Union has continuously moved forward to further strengthen its cooperation with the OSCE, setting up a framework between the European Commission, the European External Action Service, and the OSCE's Secretariat, autonomous institutions and field operations.

To this end, the High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini, and the Secretary General of the OSCE Thomas Greminger, exchanged letters in 2018.

The consideration behind those links are in the concept of OSCE being a pillar for the European security order and security: the European Union, which contributes more than two thirds of the OSCE's main budget<sup>6</sup>, as well as to additional projects and through personnel and equipment, fully supports the organization's work for stability, peace and democracy.

The EU contribution to the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine is a concrete commitment to bringing peace to Ukraine through the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, and

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<sup>6</sup> This is not an isolated case: the EU is also a main contributor for all the UN activities and Agencies and in many cases there is a dichotomy between the financial support given to OSCE or UN and the cooperation/coordination on the ground, where sometimes EU finds itself in a subordinate position to those Organizations that, without the EU, would not even be in the position to implement their own mandate.

the coordinated work through election observation missions to strengthen democracies; from Kyrgyzstan to Albania are examples of the strong links and common goals. Joint forces, to run training courses in everything from judicial standards, to journalism, to environmental protection are the most common instruments used, and it is clear that working closely together can have a real added value and can achieve much more.

It is also clear that the presence of Russia in OSCE is a factor that has to be constantly considered and that has an impact on the overall policies that can be put in place, but those considerations are part of a larger debate on the political stance the EU and the MS must consider in dealing with Russia

Concretely, the existing framework established between EU and OSCE will set up regular consultations on all levels, designed to maximize efficient and effective cooperation in areas of common interest, to engage on common priorities, to exchange best practice, and to create synergies between EU and OSCE projects in the European neighborhood, enlargement regions, Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The EU, like the OSCE, addresses security in a comprehensive manner: as such, this enhanced cooperation will cover all areas of the OSCE's work, from conflict prevention, mediation and cross-border cooperation, to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; from the promotion of the rule of law and democracy, to strengthening States' resilience to trans-national threats.

Final considerations.

The links between EU and the major players, UN/NATO/OSCE, are getting tighter and tighter in an effort to better use the specific competencies and, in a world so interlinked and facing common threats<sup>7</sup>, to find common solutions to defend the interest of the MS.

There is a continuous effort made by the EU to seek for better, more effective and coordinated work with the other main actors and in this sense the EEAS plays a major role in trying to define the policies and the possible solutions. A main point of resistance is the debate internal to the MS. It's utopia to think that the EU strategies and policies are unique: the EU agenda conflicts, more than often, with the national agendas and to find a common point of convergence is very difficult.

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<sup>7</sup> The EU MS, have an array of available policies to counter hybrid/conventional threats so to protect (digital) economy, maritime, space and energy domains, security of borders, critical infrastructures and environment. The countermeasures are based on resilience and are ongoing feature of the EU external and internal action: those measures take financial and human resources, information sharing and intelligence exchange, common risk assessment.

Sometimes the agreed policies re the bare minimal ones and the possibilities to achieve stronger positions (that will reflect on a stronger posture of the EU on the world scenario) bluntly conflict with national interest, reflected in the outcome of the European political decision making process: as said before: major concepts such as the Strategic autonomy or the participation in the PESCO (**PE**rmanent **ST**ructured **CO**operation) will continue to fuel the internal debate that will last until the National Agendas, and not the EU policy, will find a point of convergence.