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PROSPECTS FOR EURO-ATLANTIC COOPERATION

ISABEL FERREIRA NUNES

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Isabel Ferreira Nunes

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Instituto da Defesa Nacional

Calçada das Necessidades, 5, 1399-017 Lisboa

Tel.: 21 392 46 00

Fax.: 21 392 46 58

E-mail: idn.publicacoes@defesa.pt

www.idn.gov.pt

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Isabel Ferreira Nunes

Head of the Research Centre of the National Defence Institute (IDN), directs the National Defence Course and represents IDN at the Executive Academic Committee of the European College of Security and Defence. She was Deputy Director of National Defence Institute for the period between 2006 and 2008. Holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Twente and a postdoc in International Relations from the University of Groningen. She is a researcher at the External Relations Observatory – OBSERVARE at the Universidade Autónoma, Lisbon. She was a Fellow Researcher of the Foundation for Science and Technology (2002-2005 and 2009-2010) and got a scholarship for a NATO Scientific Research Program (1999-2001). She was advisor at Secretary of Defence International Relations Cabinet (1987-1990) and at International Relations Department of General Defence Policy (1990-1995). She is external reviewer for ‘Journal of Common Market Studies’ and ‘International Relations’. Her latest publications include “International regimes as an analytical tool” (2016), “Comprehensive Approach in Crisis management: A literature review” (2017), “The British Referendum and European Security and Defence” (2017) and “European Defence Cooperation (2018)”.

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Abstract

This working paper briefly examines how literature and policy-oriented approaches address EU-NATO cooperative relations and how they inform perceptions about the two organizations. It debates how internal and external challenges affect the euro-Atlantic region and create opportunities for better euro-atlantic cooperation, whether in the context of diverse security and defence configurations or within the formal settings of the two organizations. It argues that a saturation of the security and defence environment, through the proliferation of multilateral, minilateral and through strategic approaches does not hinder euro-atlantic cooperation. It highlights contexts of opportunity and advantages of enhanced cooperation between EU/CSDP and NATO. Finally, it envisages the development of current and expected venues for euro-atlantic cooperation.

Keywords

Multilateralism; security and defence cooperation; CSDP and NATO.

Resumo

O presente *working paper* examina concisamente os contributos teóricos e aplicados sobre as relações de cooperação entre a União Europeia e a NATO e como é que ambas as dimensões informam percepções sobre as duas organizações. Debate como é que os desafios internos e externos afetam a região euro-atlântica, criando oportunidades estratégicas para uma melhor cooperação, no quadro de configurações de segurança no plano multilateral, minilateral e das parcerias estratégicas e como é que estas beneficiam o domínio da segurança cooperativa. Por último evidencia contextos de oportunidade no desenvolvimento da cooperação entre a EU/CSDP e a NATO e antecipa quadros de evolução da cooperação entre as duas organizações.

Palavras-chave

Multilateralismo; cooperação no domínio da segurança e defesa; PCSD e NATO.

1. Security Contexts of Cooperation in Literature

This working paper looks at the contemporary security challenges at the European and transatlantic level from the perspective of opportunities to improve EU-NATO cooperation. The study with a more policy oriented than theoretical focus, does not offer an exhaustive literature review, but rather introduces an explanation on how contexts of political and strategic opportunity translate into the EU and NATO security discourse and practice at the multilateral, unilateral and “strategic bilateral” level from a security and defence policy perspective. It examines the advantages of euro-atlantic cooperation with respect to the political and strategic relations between the two organizations, in terms of collaborative practice and in the context of adaptation of the two organizations. Despite the presence of challenges, the adaptive cooperative behaviour of both organizations proves their persistence and resilience to the evolving changes in the international environment. The study identifies modalities that may lead to better cooperation between the EU and NATO, considering the distinct nature of both organizations.

Strains regarding cooperation between European and transatlantic allies date back to the Cold War period at a time when, growing tensions led President Charles de Gaulle, in a letter sent to President Lyndon Johnson,¹ to announce the withdrawal of France from NATO’s integrated command structure. Since then, numerous academics and policy makers, whenever assessing euro-atlantic relations tend to stress more the divisive, than the binding aspects of security cooperation between the European Union and NATO. Across time, academic research on the EU and NATO relations, whether one refers to more theoretical approaches or to research with a policy oriented focus, evolved from an interest in the more contending aspects of cooperative relations (Ojannen 2006; Everts 2003; Brooks and Wohlforth 2005; Hyde-Price 2004 and 2006; Hunter 2002; Duke 2008; Lodgaard 1992), to a focus concerned with what may bring them together in terms of security and defence cooperation (Koops 2010 and 2017; Duke 2019). After early 2000, research started to express an interest in aspects related to the euro-atlantic organizations institutional design and their role in international security, leading to studies on institutional isomorphism (Nunes 2006; Hoffman 2009) at a time when, NATO seemed to absorb some civilian tasks² and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) sought to develop a more strategic and military based approach to its international and regional relations.³ Throughout the decade, the adaptation process of NATO and the EU (Walt 2008; Wallender 2000), deserved different levels of attention, largely focusing on the

1 Letter from President Charles de Gaulle to President Lyndon Johnson on France’s withdrawal from the NATO command structure (March 7, 1966).

2 The concept of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) was first tested in Afghanistan, in the provinces where the coalition forces were operating. The PRT were created to promote reconstruction projects in the region and provide support to development initiatives, leading to better stability in the country. After 2003, these teams were led by countries, other than the U.S., in a total of 16 countries. Also, in Afghanistan, NATO sought for the first time to invest on Security Sector Reform in order to improve coordination between Afghan security forces and NATO contingents in the country. For further reading see Karp and Ponzio (2007, pp. 219-238).

3 See Nunes (2006).

impact of the enlargement process, the role of bureaucracies and international socialization in the construction of communities of practice, bound by common practices (Schimmelfennig 2003; Adler 2008; Græger 2017), having NATO gained more interest, as compared to that of EU/CSDP.

The changes that occurred at the international level, following the interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria with the global fight on terrorism, increased domestic and international competition among security actors. It pressed organizations for alternative forms of international and regional cooperation in order to meet an evolving strategic environment, characterized by the so called “new threats” of maritime piracy, hybrid and cyber threats.⁴ In the face of new security contexts, organizations such as NATO and the EU, were not strange to the necessity to develop strategic partnerships, as a process to enhance cooperation (Schori 2005; Smith and Gebhard 2017; Drent et al. 2015). In the case of Europe, that was strengthened in 2003 by a recently acquired strategic focus, with the endorsement of the European Security Strategy. Additionally, other contributions focused on how strategic partnerships worked in the context of integrated systems (Grevy 2012; Renard 2016). The period that followed the presentation of the EU Global Strategy, in 2016 and its claim of greater strategic autonomy informed much of the research contributions on whether this aim would further European political integration (Barbé and Morillas 2019; Hooghe and Marks 2019; Tardy 2018; Schimmelfennig 2019) or it would strengthened or weakened EU-NATO cooperation (Heisbourg et al. 2000; Howorth 2018 and 2019; Græger 2017; Smith and Gebhard 2017; Binnendijk 2018). This would renew the research focus on inter-organizational competition between the two organizations, sourced in the EU ambition towards strategic autonomy (Leonard and Shapiro 2019a; Howorth 2019 and 2019a; Biscop 2019).

This particular emphasis on inter-organizational competition (Howorth 2014; Simón 2019) happens as NATO strategically returned to the foundational area of application of the Washington Treaty. This was the case with a gradual withdrawal of the US and NATO from Afghanistan and Iraq, following the out of area era period, amid the intensification of war in Syria and Libya and Russia’s revisionist foreign policy in Ukraine. While in the EU case, the EU/CSDP post 2016 institutional developments signalled not only the will to strengthen its strategic autonomy and reinforce its security-defence nexus, but also to welcome the role of new defence actors in the CSDP structure, such as the European Commission, as studied by Haroche (2018 and 2019), Besch (2018; 2019; 2019a), Marrone and Ungaro (n.d.), and Chappell et al. (2019). The participation of actors other than the Member States, the European Council and the European Defence Agency (EDA), such as the European Commission, also added to research on European defence, perspectives concerned with organizational change and adaption, driven for reasons of public management and “business cultures” (Norheim-Martisen 2016). Others departed from the institutionalization of new security and defence roles for new actors, to highlight the conditions under which defence institutions evolve in response

4 For further reading see Lindstrom and Tardy (2019).

to operational demands and to the interdependence of defence markets (Fiott 2017 and 2019).

2. Strategic Strains as Opportunities

The emphasis on inter-organizational competition, on duplication and burden sharing of risks and costs, it is far from being a new theme among euro-Atlantic relations. Four reasons may explain the recurrence of competing visions on security and defence. First, it may occur more often whenever organizations' strategic ambitions, mandates and capabilities become similar or when one of them seeks to acquire greater strategic autonomy, beyond traditional political and "functional leadership" (Swielende 2019, p. 4). Second, it may result from the tensions derived from the obligations that result from membership overlap and states preferences, for one or several particular strategic partners. In the EU-NATO case, twenty-two countries are full members of both organizations. Third, it may be exacerbated by functional dependency of the major power(s), which alone cannot undertake the full spectrum of security and defence tasks, reason for which it relies on "middle powers" (Chase 1996) to fulfil power goals regionally and internationally. Fourth, discussions on inter-organizational competition may be guided by business/industry related interests, retained by those states which are more robust in strategic, technological, research and industrial terms.

All these reasons have been conditioning security and defence relations between the two sides of the Atlantic. During President Bill Clinton second mandate (1997-2001), Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in a firm reaction (Rutten 2001; Albright 1998) to the Joint Declaration, signed between the France and the United Kingdom on defence cooperation, on the 4 December 1998, known as the Saint Malo Declaration (Franco-British St. Malo Declaration 1998), voiced against any division of the decision making process in transatlantic security and defence; any discrimination of non-EU allies and any duplication of means between the two organizations. This reserve appeared to have ignored the fact the agreement, despite celebrated between two major European security and defence players, was in fact a bilateral agreement, signed outside the EU structure, signalling a formal 'rapprochement' between two allies, in the aftermath of Balkan crisis and of the intervention in Kosovo, in 1999.

Public and political declaratory expressions of inter-organizational and functional competition between the United States, the EU and NATO have been continuously tested by the ambivalences sourced in the political narrative and even in the strategic guidelines of American administrations, whenever referring to European allies or the EU. The notion of a European Security and Defence Identity or that of a NATO's European pillar⁵, is often at odds with the American pressure for an increase in budgetary contributions of European allies, materialized in the 2% of defence spending and demand for stronger commitment to NATO's military operations, versus the revindica-

5 A designation that dates back to early 90s which persistently lasted in policy documents almost until 2003. See also North Atlantic Council (1990).

tion of a more independent operational output by the EU. These incongruities on political, financial and operational transatlantic collective commitment versus strategic independence of EU/CSDP, sometimes demanded and others refuted by the U.S., hindered cooperation in the euro-atlantic context.

In the end of 1990s, following the adoption of NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiative (North Atlantic Council 1999) and in accordance with NATO 1999 Strategic Concept, the Alliance non-Article 5 crisis response tasks gained a new focus calling for smaller scale and better multilateral cooperation with partners, even with a "limited access to existing NATO infrastructure" (North Atlantic Council 1999, § 3), for operations outside the Alliance territory. The capability gap between American and European allies was evident with respect to the capacity of their armed forces to adapt to the demands of the post-Cold War international security environment in the sense of creating smaller, more deployable and sustainable forces for out-of-area operations, combined with effective airlift capabilities and better strategic intelligence.

The diplomatic position of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was soon balanced by the public statements reiterated by NATO's Secretary General Lord Robertson and the United States Secretary of Defence William Cohen, with the support of the High Representative Xavier Solana⁶ underlining the need for better cooperation on the base of "indivisibility" of the transatlantic relations, on the "incremental" nature of capabilities development and on the "inclusiveness" of all allies in the euro-Atlantic transformational process of security cooperation.

This more inclusive approach was crucial at a time when allies were divided following NATO's intervention in Kosovo, without a UN Security Council mandate. In 2001 this situation was aggravated by the American intervention in Afghanistan, despite the fact Canada and European allies offered to invoke Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, in support of the United States, following the attack to its territorial integrity on the 9 of September.

During President George Bush term, the administration adopted a harsher tone on what concerned relations between NATO and Europe, triggered by the Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld's views about long standing allies, such as Germany and France, by defining them as "the old Europe", due to the reserves invoked by both to the interventions in Iraq. The cooperative relation between the two organizations was to witness another setback with Rumsfeld public suggestion that, those operations at the high-end of the defence spectrum were to be undertaken by the United States and the low intensity ones were to be assumed by European allies, setting aside the notion inclusive cooperation. These political, diplomatic and strategic tensions led, during the Tervuren Summit⁷ in 2003, to the proposal on the constitution of a European headquarters with

6 Lord George Robertson was NATO's Secretary General between 1999 and 2003, William Cohen was appointed United States Secretary of Defence from 1997 till 2001 and Xavier Solana High held the position of High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy between 1999 and 2009.

7 Meeting of the Heads of State and Government of Germany, France, Luxemburg and Belgium on European Defence (2003).

the support of France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands against the position of the United Kingdom, which would end up by obstructing the institutionalization of an EU headquarters for European-led missions and operations.

It was in this unlikely atmosphere that the Berlin Plus Agreement was signed on the 17 March 2003, through a formal exchange of Letters between the EU High Representative and NATO's Secretary General. The first materialization of the agreement was implemented in 2004 during Operation Althea, a EU-led operation in Bosnia Herzegovina which succeeded NATO's SFOR Operation, meant to further cooperation with Bosnian authorities in securing the region. This agreement led to an appeasement between European and transatlantic allies. This rapprochement was already noticeable in previous years, with respect to Germany, related with NATO's process of ratification on changes to the Washington Treaty, completed in 1999, which enabled the beginning of the enlargement process to Central and Eastern Europe. Additionally, a certain disinvestment of the United States in southwestern allies was preceded by a new strategic valorisation of relations with Germany and with Central and Eastern European countries, for reasons of military mobility and force projection, following the US led intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq.

With President Barack Obama Administration, the call for a stronger European engagement in NATO⁸ did not ease. The White House, through Defence Secretary Robert Gates (2011), expressed concerns that European allies would not be able to meet the then current threats without "structural institutional reforms" and "actual share" of risks and responsibilities. In 2011, during his farewell speech in Brussels, Gates in a strong tone, underlined that although "NATO Libya mission did meet its initial military objectives", it was affected by scarce funding and limited military participation by European allies. The statement, regardless European allies collective support to the mission, voiced concerns that NATO would turn into a divided alliance between those specialized in "soft humanitarian, development, peacekeeping, and talking tasks, and those conducting the hard combat missions" (Idem, *ibidem*)⁹, echoing Donald Rumsfeld tacit suggested division of strategic work, between north Americans and Europeans.

In 2014, the several revisionist attempts of Russia's foreign policy towards Eastern European countries, which culminated with the intervention and occupation of Crimea, not only strengthen the role of EU-NATO cooperation, but also that of the EU and Germany.¹⁰ In March, on the first meeting of the European Council after the annexation of Crimea, the EU and Member states endorsed the anticipation of the signature of

8 See *Quadrennial Defence Review* (2014).

9 In Libya, Operation Unified Protector started on the 22 March 2011 through a NATO-led coalition of the willing, under the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 with the aim to protect Libyan civilians, enforce the arms embargo and create a no-fly zone. All Allies participated in the mission, either directly or indirectly, made use of NATO's command structures and common funding in support the operation. Partner countries such as Sweden, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates also provided support to the operation, see https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_71652.htm.

10 European Council (2014/EUCO7/1/14).

political provisions, regarding the Association Agreement with Ukraine and accelerated the process related to similar agreements with Georgia and Moldova, in an attempt to provide political guarantees to Ukraine and neighbouring countries, in case further attempts against sovereign rights were made by Moscow. This political and diplomatic initiatives were followed by measures leading to financial assistance and to political and economic reforms in Ukraine.¹¹ Humanitarian aid to the country was made available by the European Commission. Germany took the lead in the imposition of sanctions towards Russia and conducted the majority of high-level diplomatic meetings with President Putin.

NATO on its hand would strengthen measures to protect the Baltic States airspace, it carried out exercises in Central and Eastern European countries and it reinforced operational readiness by committing Very High Readiness Joint Task Forces in the territorial periphery of the Alliance. In the defence domain, NATO and the EU agreed, through NATO's Secretary General Stoltenberg and the EU High Representative Mogherini on tightening political contacts and coordinating exercises, paving the way to what would be the EU-NATO joint declaration that would follow. The exogenous pressures related with Russian foreign policy and the consequences of the 2015 refugee crisis, led NATO and the EU to identify common ground to cooperate in a more strategic manner. As observed by Dempsey, this new opportunity for cooperation allowed both NATO and the EU/CSDP to "transcend traditional responses in which NATO performs hard-power tasks and the EU takes on soft-power tasks" (2016, p. 14). These external challenges opened up new collaborative opportunities from crisis management in response to terrorism, hybrid and cyber threats, to cooperation on strengthening resilience and improve local ownership.

The situation in Ukraine was to a certain extent decisive in the way the EU and NATO forged what would be the EU-NATO Joint Declarations of 2016 and 2018 and perhaps determinant in the choice of the security and defence platforms from which to draw cooperation, notably on how to handle state led disinformation, cyber defence and hybrid warfare.

In 2016, following the election of Donald Trump, the contending arguments that often hampered euro-atlantic security and defence cooperation would persist, with the White House constructing a(n) (in)security narrative that valued the isolationism of American foreign policy and the deepening of traditional bilateral relations with the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Saudi Arabia and Israel.¹² In 2018, the Quadrennial Defense Review, the most public and authoritative document that encompasses central strategic guidelines to American defence policy, was replaced by the National Defense Review. The document reiterated that the American executive "expects European allies to fulfil their commitments to increase defense and modernization spending to bolster the alliance in the face of our shared security concerns" (2018, p. 9), in a recap of what is a constant feature of American foreign and defence policy.

11 European Council (2014/EUCO 237/14).

12 For further reading see National Defense Strategy (2018).

It was in this context characterized by American unilateralism and isolationist turn, Russian revisionism and attempts to further develop European defence, that a second and third EU-NATO joint declarations were forged.

The military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, and NATO's participation on the International Security Assistance Force epitomised, in operational terms, the concept of out-of-area giving it a new purpose.¹³ But it was the failure of this fourteen years long endeavour in creating the desired stability, in achieving internal political reconciliation, in contributing to prevent the establishment of a Taliban safe haven and Al Qaeda's consolidation of a stronghold, as well as its helplessness in containing the birth of the designated Islamic State in 2014, that sent NATO back to its original area of strategic responsibility,¹⁴ for reasons of collective fatigue and common interest. This despite NATO's significant and successful military presence in the coast of Somalia, through Operation Allied Provider, in conjunction with the EU NAVFOR Atalanta on anti-piracy and anti-armed robbery at sea. Both helped keeping sea lanes safe and ensure the protection and support to the UN World Food Programme.¹⁵ However, these missions were kept separated, only with occasional "ad hoc interaction" (Koops 2010, p. 55).¹⁶

To Europe, NATO's necessity to remain in out-of-area, further intra-Alliance tensions, while the EU consolidated its ambition for a more strategic approach to international affairs, guided by the principles of respect for international multilateral order. With it, the EU sought to acquire a renewed legitimacy, reiterating its value-based approach to international security by increasing its cooperation with the United Nations and by attaining a new strategic stand in crisis response, with successive institutional improvements of its crisis response system, within European External Action Service.

In Europe and in the neighbourhood, Russia's foreign policy in the East and its presence in the Levant region, simplified the return of NATO to the North Atlantic Treaty founding geography and to its original "motivation for partnership" (Walt 1997, pp. 159 and 161). Three years later, during his first visit to NATO Headquarters, for the occasion of the meeting of Heads of State and Government, President Donald Trump would question NATO's strategic utility, affirming the obsolescence of NATO and questioning the loyalty and strategic reliance of European allies.¹⁷ Additionally, by

13 This new purpose would translate into a new strategic outreach for NATO and its allies, better operational output and substantial technological developments in the ways of conducting warfare.

14 That is, with a special focus on the security of its eastern border following Russia's intervention in Crimea.

15 See Operation Allied Provider available at <https://shape.nato.int/page13984631.aspx> EU NAVFOR Atalanta and available at <https://eunavfor.eu/mission/>.

16 Joachim Koops offers one of the most complete research accounts of EU-NATO relations for the period comprehended between 1949 and 2010 offering a rich literature embedded and empirically driven explanation. See Koops (2011 and 2017).

17 This was not President Donald Trump only diplomatic legacy to the world, it would be followed by the withdrawal from the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnerships Talks, from the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the questioning of the utility of the nuclear agreement with Iran, the moving the US embassy to Jerusalem and more recently by cancelling the restrictions imposed by the former Obama Administration prohibiting American military forces from employing anti-personnel landmines outside of

not endorsing NATO's commitment to collective defence, the American President put into question the support to mutual assurances drawn from Article 5, in case a military aggression to allied countries occurs. This raised apprehensions over the collective defensive nature of the Alliance and its guarantee¹⁸ of mutualisation of security and defence risks. Both collective defence and the integrity of the European project could have been at stake, in a particularly sensitive time for European cohesion due to the pressures of nationalism, populism and the exacerbated manifestations of national interests that led to the British referendum.

3. Cooperation in Times of Diverse Security and Defence Configurations

Since 2002, initiatives in the direction of closer security and defence cooperation, happen as a different European security governance system started to take shape around the idea of a European interests-based approach to international affairs, first with the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) and in 2016 with the EU Global Strategy (EUGS). The fact the EUGS was not endorsed by the Council, did not prevented it from paving the way to a variety of new security and defence initiatives of voluntary and also contractual nature (Nunes 2017). This shows that the EUGS offered opportunities for Member States to agree, even in a juridically binding manner¹⁹, outside the formality of the endorsement of the document that was to replace the ESS. Similarly, the EES although often criticized for not having the characteristics of a "strategy", did not prevent the EU from an instrumental approach to NATO leading to the 2003 EU-NATO Joint Declaration.

The development of this new European strategic approach reveals a constant tension between two political centres, within which engagement in collaborative crisis management can happen. That of Brussels, calling for further security and defence integration, while cooperating with NATO and that of capable and willing European member states interested in preserving their sovereignty and strategic autonomy. These developments towards what sometimes appears to generate conflicting courses of action, has produced a layered system where cooperation occurs in different configurations. These configurations coexist and sometimes compete with formal organizations such as the EU/CSDP and NATO and the cooperative framework that result from EU-NATO Joint Declarations of 2016 and 2018. This system of security governance is a three-layered system where multilateralism, minilateralism and strategic bilateralism coexist, allowing participants to accommodate goals, benefits and security practices that emanate at the EU and NATO level, with those driven by particular national interests.

the Korean Peninsula, by suspending financial support to the World Health Organizations and withdrawing the United States from the Open Skies Treaty

18 On this particular condition of persistence of an alliance, see Walt (1997, p. 157).

19 It was the case with the approval in 2017 of a Council Decision establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation.

Each serves a different collaborative purpose. Multilateralism²⁰ in the framework of cooperative security arrangements comprehends a majority of participants in a given security regime²¹ for instance that of the UN, NATO or EU, leading to the development of formal and long-lasting cooperation and coordination among states and organizations. Conversely, minilateralism comprises a few like-minded and willing participants, with similar national interests and approaches to foreign and security policy, as well as identical operational output. Distinctive from multilateralism and minilateralism, “strategic bilateralism” (Renard 2016, p. 14) involves particular forms of selective engagement of strategically able and willing participants with self-interested motives in converging security views and policies, whether those are defence and security policies or security issue-based concerns such as terrorism, cyber or hybrid threats.

Being beyond the scope of this paper, these security configurations offers analytical space to empirical research allowing to test in which conditions, how this coexistence strengthens or conversely weakens cooperative security and how it impacts on Euro-Atlantic security. The inclusion of a multilateralist focus in major political and strategic documents, such as the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Security Strategy (Council of the European Union 2003), the EU Global Strategy (High Representative 2016) and NATO Strategic Concept (North Atlantic Council 2010) is accompanied by references to a normative and ruled based multilateral stand, on which both the EU and NATO are founded and from which they draw legitimacy for their external action in crisis management and conflict resolution.

This constitutive base for common security and collective action has also been shaping the base for cooperative output between the two organizations, having the EU’s interpretation of multilateralism, a normative and regulative emphasis that binds individual to common interests and obligations, while promoting “issue-based engagements” (Council of the European Union 2019, § 8 and 9) preferred by Member States and partners. Since 2016, an officially assumed interest-based approach to security and defence can be identified in several EU documents, such as the EU Global Strategy, the European Commission statements on the launch of the European Defence Fund or in the process leading to the institutionalisation of a Directorate General for Defence. Such initiatives may also translate what seems to be a more strategic European approach to new concepts, such as resilience or ownership²², while “principled pragmatism” appears as the new guiding principle for common foreign, security and defence policy, to use the expression adopted by the EU Global Strategy itself.

20 Multilateralism is considered as a set of constitutive collective rules based on reciprocity of rights and duties, regarding the security dilemmas of participants, the containment of potential deviant policy behaviour and the guarantee of transparency concerning anticipatory behaviour. This enables a threefold base for international cooperation to happen under the form of “international order, international regimes, and international organizations” (Ruggie 2011, p. 332).

21 International regimes are narrower in competences, being issue specific regarding which consensus on policies and procedures may lead to broader coordination and cooperation and even to de-securitization of security themes within and outside international and regional organizations.

22 European Commission and High Representative (2017/21 final). See also Romanova (2019).

In the EU context, this emerging security governance discourse and practice based on effective multilateralism seeks to help confirming the Union as a security provider. First, it legitimises and reiterates the international stand of the European Union through international law, on the base of values, but also of interests that constitute a given multilateral structure. Second, it informs a normative and regulative basis for internal and external relations of Member States by reducing the space between these two levels of security. Third, it sets a comprehensive platform of cooperative engagement to harmonize implementation of guidelines, to improve coordination and to enhance cooperation at different levels: the international, the regional and the local. Fourth, in those non-juridically binding policy domains or on those areas which fall outside the *aquis communautaire*, it offers the opportunity for willing compliance among Member States (Nunes 2018). Due to the EU institutional design, with multi-level decision making levels, complex formal decision-making structure and wide-ranging external relations, multilateralism offers a broader multi-layered and trans-sectoral scope for policy action. It comprehends diverse policy domains with security implications from crisis management to humanitarian and development aid, adding to security new themes such as cyberspace or climate change and making available different policy instruments, whether one refers to those of trade, foreign policy, security and more recently defence.

The EU forms a regional order, within which the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and CSDP constitute a security regime shared by Member States, where the EU leads various multilateral processes (Ujvari 2016, p. 2) from trade to development. In a European context, multilateralism also means a system of governance within which traditional actors such as the UN, NATO and African Union coexist with emergent actors like China or India or with decision-making frameworks²³ such as the North Atlantic Council.

Multilateralism has been a cross cutting theme in the EU and NATO policy documents.²⁴ Being suggested by some as hindering national interest, it is acknowledged by others as a prevailing governance system. This despite a tendency for bilateralization of policies, manifestation of preference for intergovernmental decision-making methods or regionalization of security and defence through unilateralism of security and defence initiatives, as explained further ahead. Multilateral platforms, such as NATO and the EU, favour jointness of action and harmonization of understandings on security. Despite the presence of other cooperative configurations, it is still a lasting method of cooperation in the euro-atlantic context for several reasons. First, it is likely to gain support for legitimacy reasons adding normative guidance and representativeness to security practice, due to the number of participants involved, serving both common and particular interests. In June 2019, the European Council Conclusions describes it as “the best way to advance national, as well as collective interests” (Council of the European Union 2019, § 2). Second, for reasons of self-regulation of security and defence relations among

23 Cf. Ujvari and Balazs (2016, p. 3).

24 Council of the European Union (2019). See also Parajon *et al.* (2019).

participants, predisposing them to self-restrain, as opposed to “more common unilateral and less restrained methods” (Jervis 1985, p. 59). Third, for facilitating ad hoc access to resources and security and defence goods, such as common or collective knowledge, expertise and capabilities.

The minilateralist configuration of security and defence cooperation is characterised by cooperative arrangements among like-minded countries, for instance in the EU case under the form of “Pooling & Sharing” initiatives or “Smart Defence” in the case of NATO, gathering strategically able countries. It may occur within the EU and NATO or outside them. Minilateralism means a “diplomatic process of a small group of interested parties working together to supplement or complement the activities of international organizations in tackling subjects deemed too complicated to be addressed appropriately at the multilateral level” (Moret 2016, p. 2). This means that being a more flexible configuration, than formal multilateral agreements, located within security and defence organizations, it may generate better adherence and compliance from interested participants. In the security and defence domain, minilateralism gathers politically willing, self-interested and militarily able actors in order to advance what Member States perceive to be more difficult to achieve within the binding framework of security and defence organizations. In the European context, minilateralist alternatives are not a novelty being envisaged (Nunes 2018, pp. 53-55) in the Lisbon Treaty through: the mechanism of “Enhanced Cooperation” (TEU Article 327) in the domain of the Union’s non-exclusive competences; through the 2017 Council Decision (Council Decision (CFSP), 2017/2315), which set forward a Permanent Structured Cooperation among willing and able Member States and through the provision of a “Framework Nation” concept, TEU Article 43 (1), through which the Union will retain political control and strategic direction, while entrusting “specific responsibilities” or tasks to a Member State in the context of a EU-led missions and operations.²⁵ In operational terms, minilateralism translates into a process of aggregated and shared capabilities, as referred earlier in the context of “Pooling & Sharing” or NATO’s “Smart Defence”.

In NATO’s case, due to its issue specific nature, minilateralism is invoked in a different manner. It describes a configuration meant to address transnational military and non-military challenges from stabilisation operations to counter cyber and hybrid threats, often positioned at the upper end of defence tasks due to its operational demands. It can also adopt the format of coalitions of the willing²⁶ where some, but not all, of the

25 The concept of framework nation is common to NATO and the EU. It was introduced by Germany in June 2013, during NATO ministerial meeting, in reaction to a decrease in defence budgets and aimed at supplementing the capability gaps identified by NATO’s Defence and Planning Process, Allers (2016, p. 1168). See also Palmer (2016). In the EU context the concept dates back to 2002, when a conceptual basis for the conduct of EU-led missions and operations was introduced by designating a Member State or a group of Member States for, on a voluntary basis, to act as the Framework Nation, see EEAS (2015). It was formally included in the European Union Treaty in 2009.

26 See Nunes (2017, p. 58). For a study on the impact of coalitions of the willing on structures of international law and inclusive multilateralism, see Rodiles (2018) and Weitsman (2013).

Alliance members engage in the pursuit of security and defence goals.²⁷ In this case, it serves the purpose of a more rapid response to threats, with less formal legal boundaries and complex decision-making procedures derived from international law, as those mandatory to the United Nations and EU led-operations or from the constitutive norms of the Washington Treaty, to which the Alliance abides by when acting collectively.

Changes in the nature of security, the transnational consequences of insecurity and the growing selective interdependence of interests among security actors led to a renewed interest in minilateralism. Due to the fact it gathers a smaller number of participants, it is better able to promote convergence of security interests and approaches, to accelerate responses to crises and to improve force generation, thus reducing the impact of security dilemmas, as perceived by states and security communities (Nunes 2017a, p. 18). This is even more relevant in complex security contexts, where different interests and preferences prevail in the face of multiple security challenges and in times of scarce resources.

The “strategic bilateralism”²⁸ although it may occur within multilateral structures, such as international organizations, it also evolves outside the intergovernmental structures of the EU crisis management setting and that of the Alliance’s collective defence. In these cases, international and regional institutions may offer what Renard notes (2016, p. 31) as the role of “framing and institutionalizing cooperation (...) and occasionally in complementing member States, rather than substituting for them”. More often this cooperative configuration denotes a will, as in the case of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada and the United States to favour agreements at bilateral level that safeguard traditional foreign policy interests, outside and without the scrutiny of multilateral fora. Mattelaer (2019, p. 13) considers that the “prominence of bilateral diplomacy represents a symptom rather than a cause of change in the international system”. The revival of bilateral diplomacy can be observed in a wide variety of formats from the formality of the Lancaster House Treaty between Great Britain and France,²⁹ following the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty a year earlier³⁰ to the launch in June 2018 of the French led European Intervention Initiative³¹ or the Franco-Danish Defence Cooperation, known as the European Initiative2 (EI2)³² that followed the Council Decision of 2017, establishing the first EU Council Decision initiative on Permanent Structured Cooperation. The EI2 enabled Denmark to contribute to European

27 These were the cases of the operations in the Balkans (1999), first Gulf War (1990), the intervention against the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan (2001) and Al Qaeda in Iraq (2003) and more recently in Libya, following the deposition of Mohamed Gaddafi’s (2011).

28 Giovanni Grevi calls it “Structural partnerships as an “important bilateral means that can be mobilised to foster international cooperation” (Grevi 2012, p. 16).

29 Treaty between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the French Republic on Defence and Security Cooperation (1998).

30 See also Saxi (2017).

31 Letter of Intent Concerning the Development of the European Intervention Initiative (2018).

32 Franco-Danish declaration on European security (2018).

security and defence, outside the PESCO arrangement.³³ Lastly, the Aachen Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration, signed on the 22 January 2019³⁴ through which the two countries agreed to “deepen their cooperation in matters of foreign policy, defence, external and internal security and development, while striving to strengthen Europe’s ability to act autonomously” (Aachen Treaty, 2019, Article 3). Although these initiatives have been agreed outside the European Union and NATO they aim at strengthening them, as referred in the preamble or provisions foresee in those declarations, while furthering the specific interests and preferences of contracting parts.

Being a common practice in international affairs, these three examples: the Lancaster House Treaty, the European Intervention Initiative³⁵ and the Aachen Treaty³⁶ occur in time, almost simultaneously to other initiatives agreed with the aim to deepen European security and defence cooperation, such as PESCO, CARD, the European Defence Fund and the setup of a DG Defence within the European Commission. This does not necessarily mean distrust by Member States on the political strength, binding nature or operational output of security and defence initiatives launched within the European Union. Strategic bilateralism supplement and is even “conducive to stronger multilateral cooperation” (Grevi 2012, p. 16). It may suggest that multilateral initiatives agreed in intergovernmental fora, only some of which legally binding like PESCO and with the regulative and financial weigh of the European Commission, such as the European Defence Fund, do not exclude the necessity of alternative cooperative configurations, capacities and operational output that multilateral institutions are unable, or unwilling, to deliver as a whole, for reasons of political interest, contextual opportunity and availability of military and non-military resources.

4. Contexts of Opportunity for EU-NATO Cooperation

The point of debate on capability gap still holds true, whether when comparing defence expenditures among the EU NATO member states in the Alliance context, Europe as a whole or between Europe and the United States.³⁷

Twenty years later, the American political and very public discourse calling for greater strategic responsibility by European allies, coincided with the European Union’s

33 According to the Protocol agreed with the Lisbon Treaty, Denmark does not take part in CSDP military dimension.

34 Aachen Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration (2019).

35 The European Intervention Initiative was agreed in 25 July 2018 through a Letter of Intent signed by defence ministers of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom. Participants then agreed to join a “flexible, non-binding forum of European participating states which are able and willing to engage their military capabilities and forces when and where necessary to protect European security interests, without prejudice to the chosen institutional framework (the EU, NATO, the UN or ad hoc coalitions)”, European Intervention Initiative, Letter of Intent (2018, § 5).

36 Aachen Treaty on Franco-German Cooperation and Integration (2019).

37 International Institute for Strategic Studies (2020, pp. 28-63). See also Douglas Barrie et al. (2019) and International Institute for Strategic Studies (2020, pp. 42-43).

claim for more strategic autonomy, following the presentation of the European Global Strategy, the launch of several European cooperative endeavours³⁸ and the development of several bilateral security and defence initiatives, led by strategically strong EU member states.³⁹

In 2016 the lack of formal endorsement of NATO's collective defence by the President of the United States was aggravated by the doubts casted over the ability of European allies to allocate resources and commit to defence in the transatlantic context. This caused a perception of political, diplomatic and strategic "devaluation of the alliance", in the sense attributed by Glen Snyder (1984, p. 467) and posed self-interested conditionalities to allies, beyond the 2% of defence spending target. Although, as Snyder (1984, p. 491) years earlier accurately assessed, the European allies should avoid the "risk of entrapment (consisting of) troop withdrawals, American downgrading of the priority of European defence in favour of other areas such as the Persian Gulf, or a further drift to unilateralism"⁴⁰. These were exactly some of the decisions adopted and initiatives taken by President Trump, as from the earlier years of his presidency. In 2019, during the Munich Security Conference⁴¹ former Vice President Joseph Biden, and a potential running candidate for the Democratic Party in the 2020 Presidential election, did reiterate full support to NATO and to its allies conveying a firm belief in the principle of collective defence. This position was supported by the majority of the forty-five democratic senators in the United States Senate, by various senior military representatives at the Department of Defense, at the Pentagon and senior diplomats and officials in Brussels, proving different perceptions within the American political establishment. Despite the rhetoric, the US has been increasing its commitment to Europe's eastern flank, as the account by the Department of Defense Budget on the European Deterrence Initiative demonstrates.⁴²

It was in a political environment of mutual political distrust, rhetorical and diplomatic controversy, of strained relations between Washington and most European capitals, of fears of rising nationalism in France, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland,

38 The Implementation Plan for Security and Defence following the introduction to the European Council of the EU Global Strategy, the agreement on a Council Decision launching a Permanent Structured Cooperation initiative in the end of 2017, the agreement on a process of commitment followed by implementation of targets through a Coordinated Annual Review for Defence and National Implementation Plans, the development of a European Defence Fund and the CSDP Civilian Compact in 2018.

39 Examples of this can be illustrated by the French-led initiative of the European Intervention Initiative and the Aachen Franco-German agreement.

40 Brackets added.

41 Munich Security Conference 2019, Statement by Joseph R. Biden, 16 February.

42 The European Deterrence Initiative (EDI), launched in 2014 during President Obama Administration, was designed to fund an increased American presence in Europe, to support exercises and training, to enhance the repositioning of forces, to improve infrastructure and to develop capacity building of partners. The EDI amounted in 2018 a total of 4,777.3 million dollars and in 2020 an estimated amount of 5,910.6 million dollars was made available, see European Deterrence Initiative (2019, p. 1).

Hungary and the announced withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, that a second attempt⁴³ to formally enhance EU-NATO cooperation took place.

Despite the instability felt in Europe's neighbourhood and the destabilizing effects caused by the consecutive interventions in Middle East, by the regime change in Libya and by the course of American and Russian foreign policy, the European and euro-atlantic institutions proved resilient⁴⁴ to contingencies sourced in the personality of national decision-makers and on the hindrances of party politics.

A realization that the EU-NATO cooperation was an imperative followed two major challenges to transatlantic unity. On the one hand, the coalition force that intervene in Kosovo (North Atlantic Council 1999a and 1999b) with NATO, despite the absence of a United Nations mandate. On the other, the American intervention in Afghanistan, at a time when the United States declined to accept the possibility to invoke Article 5, in reaction to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001⁴⁵.

The 2003 EU-NATO Declaration⁴⁶ paved the way to the so-called development of a "strategic partnership" (Renard 2016b) between the EU and NATO. This led to the Berlin Plus agreement, opening the opportunity to the European Union to use NATO's command and control collective structure and to institutionalise forms of cooperation and political consultation between the two organizations in the field of crisis management and capability development on fight against terrorism, organized crime and cyber-security.

In 2016, the need to foster better EU and NATO cooperation was in part a reaction to two exogenous events. On the one hand, the potential wearing down of transatlantic relations in the face of growing defence spending, following the unilateral involvement of some allied countries in the Syrian conflict and in military operations in the context of fight against ISIS. On the other, due to a continuous ambivalence in relations between the United States, the EU and NATO sourced in the political and strategic narrative of American administrations against the development of European defence integration. The notion of European Security and Defence Identity or that of a NATO's European pillar⁴⁷ prevailed over a more autonomous European defence, while the very same administrations pressed for a more independent operational output of European allies, higher defence spending and stronger commitment of Europeans to NATO's military operations.

Despite the potential for disagreement between the two organizations, contextual events did prove their adaptability to the changing strategic environment. NATO evolved from out-of-area to a new military stance with the return to European and transatlantic core defence functions, after the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The EU/CSDP,

43 Being the previous the signature of the Berlin Plus Agreement in the follow up of the Kosovo crisis and the first interventions out of area following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

44 See Kupchan (2019) and Zandee (2018).

45 NATO Press Release (2001-124) and NATO Secretary General (2001). See also Shea (2004).

46 EU-NATO Declaration on ESDP (2002).

47 A designation which lasted almost until 2003, see also North Atlantic Council (1990, § 4).

although without abandoning its security interests towards the near neighbourhood, turned its security focus to the protection of its citizens, to a more efficient response to external crises and called for better commitment towards regional security and capacity building of partners, leading to stronger resilience and committed ownership.⁴⁸ These almost simultaneous processes of adaptation were accompanied by a closer relation among allies, centred on the principle of “effective multilateralism” and strategic complementarity, contradicting the idea of competition and duplication between the two organizations. This is a reserve frequently expressed among policy makers and analysts, although it has been formally addressed and solved within both organizations.

From an early stage, EU actors have denied the idea of competing or duplicating security and defence projects by stating that CSDP will act “where NATO as a whole is not or does not wish to get involved”, a concern repeatedly underlined since the 2001 Laeken EU Council and reiterated in the Lisbon Treaty (Treaty of Lisbon 2007). More recently a statement adopted by the European Defence Agency assured that “no capacity duplication with other institutions such as NATO” would happen, stressing that PESCO would develop as a “coherent full spectrum force package” (EDA 2018, p. 4) in complementarity with NATO. This intention was also reiterated by the “Implementation Plan for Security and Defence”, by the “European Defence Action Plan” and by the “Notification letter on PESCO to the Council and High Representative”. This concern with avoiding the idea of duplication is also mirrored at the bilateral level among those which are strategically more capable. Recent agreements between actors such as France and Germany, as in the case of the Achen Treaty in its Article 4, emphasises that the bilateral commitment to reinforce cooperation between France and Germany, regarding European security and defence is taken “In light of their obligations under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty of 4 April 1949 and of Article 42 (7) of the Treaty on European Union of 7 February 1992, as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon of 13 December 2007 amending the Treaty on European Union” (Achen Treaty, 2019, Article 4 (1)) formally refuting any interpretations on duplication.

In July 2016, in Warsaw, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and NATO’s Secretary General signed an EU-NATO Joint Declaration on how to further cooperation between the two organizations. This initiative was followed in December, of the same year, by an agreement on a common set of proposals to implement “EU-NATO Joint Declaration” (2016) by endorsing 42 proposals in the 7 areas agreed: defence capabilities; capacity building; industry and research; cyber security; hybrid threats, operational cooperation and exercises. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg called the 2016 agreement “a milestone in our relations,” recognising that “neither organisation has the full range of tools” to address new security and defence challenges unilaterally (NATO Meeting Ministers of Foreign Affairs 2016).

48 See European Union Global Strategy (2016) and NATO Meeting Ministers of Foreign Affairs (2016). For further reading see Howorth (2016).

In December 2017 the Council of the European Union⁴⁹ would underline the necessity to implement the Joint Declaration reinforcing cooperation at the strategic and operational levels between the EU and NATO. A particular interest was placed on the collaboration between the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, staff level cooperation on threat assessment regarding terrorism and on how to counter terrorist threats. The identification of gender indicators and assessments on how they could improve situational awareness, in support of the UNSCR 1325 agreed in 2000, were also addressed. It was agreed to promote EU and NATO staff presence in advisory and preparedness bodies for missions of the respective organizations and better coordination of EU-NATO exercises.

In 2018 a EU-NATO Joint Declaration was signed reiterating the interest and noting the progress achieved on what regards military mobility, counter-terrorism, cyber security, hybrid threats, resilience to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear related risks and promoting the women, peace and security agenda. This was followed by the attendance of the new High Representative Josep Borrell to NATO Defence Ministerial meeting. At the operational level there is a continuous cooperative effort in the Aegean Sea, where NATO has six ships helping to implement the agreement between the EU and Turkey on the refugee crisis, as well as support to Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean.⁵⁰ This measures and actions reflect the particular security and defence concerns of both organizations and how NATO and the EU may contribute to mitigate them. Coherence, complementarity and interoperability remain the three main drivers for EU-NATO cooperation and the only acceptable and feasible in times of limited budgets and increasing new challenges to security and defence.

However, the cumulative nature of the process of cooperation that result from the EU-NATO Joint Declarations cooperation, rather than phased and incremental, may be counterproductive for three reasons. First, for reasons of capacity availability and funding. Second due to the length of national legislative cycles, which may limit the political willingness of Member States to pursue, in a sustainable manner, new cooperative engagements once the political cycle has changed. Third, and as Verbeke notes (2017, p. 5), structural projects such as those related with states “Long term strategic interests or investments (such as energy infrastructure or major defence platforms) are neglected in favour of short-term tactical advantages or pet projects”. This trend may compromise the binding effect of more structural commitments, agreed within multilateral arrangements, such as NATO and the EU.

Each Member State encloses very specific political, strategic, diplomatic and security cultures, distinct historical legacies and operational output. This may be determinant on how security and defence cooperation moves forward and how Member States and participant states accommodate alternative frameworks in multilateral, minilateral and

49 Council of the European Union (2017/14802).

50 This last initiative will be replaced in 2020 by a new CSDP operation, Operation IRINI with the objective to help implementing the arms embargo to Libya.

bilateral settings, adjusting to new processes of security governance. Connected societies are as prone to accountability as they are to the immediacy of results, a demand that fits poorly to the required long-term test to which regional and international cooperation is exposed to, in order to prove resilience to external challenges and efficient output in the face of change.

5. Advantages of EU-NATO Cooperation

Despite considerable improvements leading to better institutionalization of cooperation, between the EU and NATO, academic and policy debates are still focused on traditional divides, which can be systematized in two approaches: on how to address and manage security problems. Those that, in the words of Glenn Snyder (1984:489), postulate the effectiveness of “toughness and confrontation” and those who value a “strategy of conciliation”. This divide has been characterising the cooperative stance between the two organizations for decades and those of Member States foreign relations. To a certain extent, this dichotomy affects both the analytical and strategic approach, when addressing Euro-Atlantic security and defence relations. This varies from a persistent concern with the division of strategic work among European and non-European allies (Yost, 2000 and 2007); to the problem of strategic and financial burden sharing (Kivimäki 2019; Jakobsen 2018; National Defence Strategy 2018) and to the conditionality that results in the fact European defence will only be welcomed by the United States and by the more Atlanticist allies, if and when it strengthens NATO (Brattberg 2018; Billon-Galland and Thomson 2018; Leonard and Shapiro 2019). The specific concern with division of strategic work in a NATO context and the reluctance of some Member States to embrace role specialisation of certain security and defence tasks at the European level, has evolved into a new perception on the disagreements registered among allies on the Alliance collective share of risks and defence expenses versus selective common investments in European security and defence, through Permanent Structured Cooperation. The two moments of strategic strain in 2003 and 2016, did not impair Euro-Atlantic cooperation and despite concerns with duplication and competition, developments have shown that complementarity between the two organizations is valued the most.⁵¹

Several circumstances have been enabling better opportunities for cooperation between the EU and NATO. First, contextual related reasons such as the emergence of hybrid threats in the Eastern Europe, the threat of potential and actual external interferences on allied countries internal affairs, the consequences of the refugee crisis over European unity and the uncertainties caused by the British referendum.⁵² To this already long list, one must add the internal and regional consequences of the conflict in Syria, the position of President Donald Trump regarding NATO and the EU creating a perception of existential threat the long and well succeed transatlantic alliance. On the

51 On the 21 January 2020, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg in an address to the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee and Sub-Committee on Security and Defence welcomed closer NATO-EU relations and recognised its unprecedented level of cooperation.

52 See Baciu (2019).

one hand, it led to the claim that Europe should aim at a stronger role in the security and defence of Europe. On the other, that that strengthened position would only be supported if and when it reinforced NATO. In the face of current security challenges, unforeseeable outcomes of insecurity, limited resources and greater interdependency related with the consequences of uncertainty, the development of cooperation, rather than competition, is an expected outcome for relations among states and within international organizations. The deterioration of insecurity in North Africa, following the collapse of Muammar al-Gaddafi's regime in Libya, the downfall of the so called Islamic state in the Middle East, the consequences of revisionist foreign policies and the spread of terrorist acts in Europe point to the diversity of sources of insecurity and to the necessity for a more efficient and distinct form of security and defence cooperation⁵³, of which military cooperation is just a part. Closer functional cooperation between the EU and NATO may help to better deal with the uncertainties of systemic insecurity in Eastern Europe and on the South and South-eastern rim of the Mediterranean, offering the opportunity to safeguard distinct national and international security interests. Decision makers and international bureaucracies should endorse what Member States do better, whether that is crisis response or conflict management, fight against terrorism, maritime security and mitigation of cyber and hybrid threats, according to different strategic cultures and interests, while fostering ownership and cooperation in response to security challenges.

Second, collaborative practice strives better in institutional environments where international socialization among security and defence actors is high. In strongly connected structures political, public scrutiny may turn collaborative practice into an instrument that adds legitimacy, better mobilizes public and political will and creates more favourable conditions to resource security and defence agencies, such as NATO and the EU-CSDP. NATO and the EU gather relevant strategic players, share a high degree of membership overlap and their international security mandates have a specific focus on European security and defence interests. This brings into Euro-Atlantic collaborative practice both an element of representativeness of interests and a dimension of legitimacy.

Third, power shifts in the international system may lead to changes in the nature of security, opening up a new range of tasks for international organizations beyond their original mandate, from military missions to operations-other-than-war, to humanitarian relief, organized crime eradication and disaster relief. This is reflected in new security tasks, but also in new mobilizing arguments in the way security roles are performed, such as preventive security, pre-emptive military action, mitigation of hybrid threats and crisis response, rather than classical military offensive, an option that governments and public opinions appear to be less inclined to support. New role prescriptions not only demand new military and non-military responses, but also a security discourse that appeals to cooperative action, combining international law, centred on value-based principles and

53 Cf. Leonard and Shapiro (2019).

arguments that serve national interests, while suggesting further functional integration on security and defence. Role specialisation may be an “asset” on demand given that not all armed and security forces can afford to have the full spectrum of capabilities required to mitigate current challenges and threats.

The institutionalisation of new forms of cooperative security, as established between the EU-NATO, by the corresponding declarations on cooperation of 2003, 2016 and 2018, underline the need to share risks and responsibilities in specific security levels, notably in the context of hybrid threats, maritime security to mitigate illegal trafficking of human beings and search and rescue of irregular migrants at sea. A good example of EU-NATO cooperation at the operational level was developed in the Horn of Africa to counter maritime piracy⁵⁴, together with missions in land with the aim to develop capacity building on maritime security, in coastal areas in the region. Other cooperative efforts were developed in 2016, through Operation Sophia, with the aim to lessen the challenges posed by the refugee crisis in the Aegean Sea, in combination with the support given to the Turkish and Greek authorities and the support made available by EU FRONTEX. In each of these missions and operations, both NATO and the EU moved from traditional security and defence in the far border, to counter-piracy and irregular migration in the near border.

The fourth advantage of enhancing security and defence cooperation between the EU and NATO results from the fact that, organizations and the states that incorporate them commit to cooperative frameworks for reasons of easier access to specialized knowledge, information and resources. Currently, the EU already has access to command and planning structures of NATO, under the Berlin Plus agreement and in the future it can be envisaged an eventual access of NATO to the EU-CSDP specific civilian proficiencies of the European crisis response toolkit. The development of both the EU CSDP Civilian Compact (Council of the European Union 2018) and the projects developed under Permanent Structured Cooperation (Council Decision 2017) may contribute to develop European actors roles, knowledge and experience on civilian crisis management, while supplementing the amount of resources needed among participant states in crisis prevention, conflict resolution and in post-conflict situations.

For cooperation to happen political will and trust must be present. These conditions are not mere technical arrangements, sometimes not even financial ones, they are a choice that shapes the opportunity to engage collectively. The participation in new cooperative security frameworks in “conditions of confidence building, transparency, information availability and knowledge” (Nunes 2006, p. 89), enable institutional mimetism to thrive among organizations, thus facilitating cooperation or conversely creating a situation of perceived competition for mandates and resources. In the case of NATO, there is a growing appeal among allies for it to perform civilian security tasks for which the Alliance was not originally created, as a political and military organization. In the case of EU-CSDP, one observes an increasing institutionalization of conditions aiming at a

54 Operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta (since 2008) and NATO’s Operation Ocean Shield (2009-2016).

better operational deliver, following the approval of a Security and Defence Action Plan (European Council 2016) and the agreement on Permanent Structured Cooperation.⁵⁵

Lastly, the fact both NATO and the EU are politically integrated and highly socialised organizations, bound by similar norms and interests, makes political cooperation an opportunity and the prospect of more efficient operational collective engagement more likely. Cooperation is expected to work better in an interdependent security environment, where multiple memberships to organizations are present and where resources scarcity or uneven distribution of resources occurs turning cooperation into a more advantageous and less costly alternative.

6. Developing Euro Atlantic Cooperation

The EU and NATO not only share twenty-two member states, they also congregate actors who are more able and capable of meeting current military and non-military challenges and threats. Regardless their common and collective military power and non-military resources, NATO or the EU do not have the monopoly of international responsibility to address and to solve systemic security challenges. Terms such as “ownership”, “resilience”⁵⁶, “capacity building” and “non-executive missions” are now recurrent in policy guidelines appearing to reflect that understanding, for reasons of interest or constraint. For reasons of interest, because collective security systems are not only powered by common values and principles but also, and perhaps mainly, by the national interests of participant states. Logics of influence and visibility bind national administrations involved in crisis management and shape the expectations of return of investment on cooperative security, according to specific geographies and policy domains of interest. For reasons of constraint, because on matters of international security, Heads of State and Government of Member States respond primarily to national electorates and in a lesser degree to European or transatlantic institutions. These two constraints sometimes justify some disinvestment from roles and tasks at the upper end of the hard security and defence spectrum and a greater reliance on policies, instruments and processes leading to capacity building in security or defence.

The development of a culture of commitment among member states is also a powerful driving force for cooperation to happen and its importance is three-fold. First, to identify areas of cooperative security where organizations benefit from comparative advantages of one as compared to the other, placing them at the service of cooperative security endeavours, whether that is crisis prevention and response, conflict management, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Second, to meet pledges with means, mitigating what Sven Biscop called a “culture of zero compliance” (Biscop 2019), which unbalances the collective efforts of joint action and the effectiveness of common cooperative

55 In 2018, in the context of NATO and the EU cooperation on good governance, in defence and security sector reform of partner countries, the European Commission agreed to contribute 2 million EUR to the NATO Building Integrity Trust Fund for 2019-2022.

56 For further reading see Tocci (2020) and Juncos (2017).

security on the ground. Third, to avoid “gatekeeper”⁵⁷ behaviour which hampers effective multilateral cooperation in theatre by furthering competition for mandates, resources and regional and international visibility.

The fragmentation of challenges and threats, changes in the nature of security and the prevalence of national interest among international players also determine alternative types of cooperative configurations, which compete and sometimes replace international and regional security organizations. In the post-Cold War a myriad of smaller configurations, as addressed in section 3, such as minilateral formations of interested players composed of some, not all, but well capacitated groups of countries, configure what Moret in another context calls “functional multilateralism” (2016, p. 2). This may indicate that circumstances of limited available resources and fragmented threats and challenges, affect member states differently. This is likely to lead them to integrate smaller and more flexible power configurations, for instance for power projection and force display to re-establish security outside the formality and lengthy decision making processes of policies like CSDP or a formal defence organization, such as NATO.

Another trend that may inform future euro-atlantic cooperation takes the form of clusterization of security interests and resources within wider regional frameworks⁵⁸ expressed in a multi-clustered setting “with different clusters of relevant players shaping different areas” (Missiroli 2015, p. 2). The EU Global Strategy itself called for the development of “cooperative regional orders” as “providers of global governance” (EU Global Strategy 2016) and multipliers of international norms and institutions. This reflects three things. First, it indicates an attempt to return regional security responsibilities to local actors or to those that, not being part of that specific geography, have national interests to safeguard in the region. Second, it stresses the presence of more security actors in the system and notes shifts in the recognition of who matters in the power system: loosen cooperative configurations versus formal institutions. Third, it translates the tensions between the changes in the nature of security, transformed into something more than military threats and the necessity of means to meet them other than “threatening and using of force” (Gray 2019, p. 5).

Changes in the power system result in adaptations in the concept of sovereignty and sovereign obligations. As Richard N. Haass acknowledges, a system “built around the protection and prerogatives of states it is increasingly inadequate in today’s globalized world” (2017, p. 1) and international order must reflect the level of security

57 Debuysere and Blockmans (2019, p. 256) drawing on the results of the empirical study, conducted earlier in the framework of a wider research project EUNPACK (2016), note that states that play the gatekeeper in a particular crisis situation constraint the impact of other actors in the field. The authors use the example of the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq and the role of France in Mali with Operation Serval. See also EUNPACK – A conflict sensitive unpacking of the EU Comprehensive Approach to Conflict and Crises Mechanisms (2016) a project developed to assess whether the EU external crisis response is aware of the political and social context on the ground, covering the complete crisis cycle, EU crisis management toolbox and the EU response in distinct regional contexts. The results of the project were presented at a conference held by CEPS in 18-19 March 2019.

58 For complementary reading on theories of regional cooperation see Börzel (2016).

interdependence and interconnectedness one lives in. The complexity and diversity of security problems changed the nature of security, currently located beyond the sole interests of states and the role of the armed forces. It also opened opportunities for greater regionalization of security configurations and for the growing participation of new security actors, such as justice and home affairs actors, asserting Missiroli observation on the presence of “relevant players shaping different areas” (Idem, *ibidem*). Security interdependence and interconnectedness share a twofold relation. Greater interdependence calls for better interconnectedness and vice-versa, whether at the political-strategic or operational level. The EU-NATO Joint Declarations implicitly recognised this condition of interdependence and the requirement for interconnectedness in order to enhance strategic and operational stance.

The cooperative modes of regionalisation and clusterization, rather than hampering cooperation between NATO and the EU may improve it in various ways. First, by being closer to the sources of instability, regional configurations can hold better legitimacy and ownership of the security tasks ahead, engaging and committing local actors. Second, by engaging “shaping powers” (Hellmann 2016, p. 11) regional cooperative configurations such as the G20, regional organizations and local actors such as the African Union, the Arab League and the G5 Sahel may help easing the efforts invested by the EU and NATO in external crisis. Third, it may help balancing the American retrieve of international multilateralism, the semantic hinderances of President Trump towards global (United Nations) and transatlantic (NATO) cooperative security and the turn of its foreign policy away from international regimes. Fourth, it may contribute to balance the decrease or actual lack of compromise of some EU Member States towards civilian missions, which have suffered a total staff size reduction by three times since 2010 (Pietz and Vorrath 2018). Fifth, it may press Europe to develop some degree of strategic autonomy⁵⁹ from the US and NATO, due to its greater experience in the civilian dimensions of crisis management⁶⁰ and its focus on the root causes of crisis and conflicts. Sixth, regional configurations could turn cooperation into a more inclusive endeavour, congregating different actors and modes of governance, able to reflect the socio, cultural and political idiosyncrasies of local realities, often foreign to the EU-NATO families, but determinant to how each organization is perceived by third countries. Last, clusterization of capacities and resources saves investments, although it increases interdependence, helps synchronize security and defence planning, improves interconnectedness and is likely to enhance readiness to intervene in crisis response.

On the past twenty years, security interdependence is greater, power distributions are less polarised and security risks more diffuse. Grevi (2009, p. 24) notes that “to shape

59 Strategic autonomy does not comprehend solely better European military capabilities, but also civilian proficiencies that may allow the EU to act whenever others are unwilling or unable to act holding wider responsibilities in the field of international and regional security and defence.

60 Leonard and Shapiro (2019, p.12) in this context claim that the “EU and its member states should create either a mindset or a policy mechanism devoted to protecting their overall ability to act independently of other great powers”.

multilateral cooperation or lead collective action in addressing international challenges becomes a central feature of power”, so will benchmarking it. Benchmarking multilateral cooperation between EU and NATO could be an indicator of political resolute and effective capability to set a transformative security agenda driven by specific security and defence targets, according to the profile of challenge or threat. This implies more than shared security goals, as expressed in Joint EU-NATO Declarations of 2016 and 2018, it may demand for political, strategic and operational choices for the fittest organization to lead or to complement, whenever needed or wanted.

This assessment calls for a better analysis of who does what in security and defence (Nunes 2015 and 2019). Which organization offers the best resources in security problem addressing and problem-solving, which may lead to consider a review of how strategic work could be better shared? At what level are synergies more likely to complement each other? How committed are states of both the EU and NATO to share information, intelligence and capabilities to counter hybrid threats, assure cyber security and cyber defence or improve maritime security cooperation? How willing are European and transatlantic allies to cooperate in a customized manner according to location, level and nature of the security challenges and threats ahead?

Answering to these questions would include to consider the interests of major strategic players, the possession of strategic assets nationally or collectively owned and evaluate the adequacy of existent models of decision-making by consensus and unanimity. This could set collective decisions free from circumstantial political pressure by member states to push forward matters of national interests or to instigate regional rivalry.

7. CSDP and NATO – The Way Forward

Better cooperation between the EU and NATO is likely to call for institutional adaptation of its structures and capabilities to the changing nature of threats. Current challenges are often different from conventional warfare among equals, for which traditional alliances like NATO were created or whenever they pose a test, which was not present at the founding moment of an organization like the EU, such as the migrant crisis or cyber warfare.

Effective cooperation between NATO and the EU also depends on collective perceptions and understandings on NATO and CSDP distinct security identities and purposes, compelling to reassess perceptions of organizational efficiency of security organizations.

CSDP appears better equipped to make use of preventive action through thematic and geographical strategies, being able to connect various policy levels from security to development and humanitarian relief, making it particularly suitable to deal with complex non-military emergencies. On the other hand, NATO as a defence organization, draws its influence from a condition of strategic dependence among allies, centred on the strategic supremacy of a superpower and that of strategically more capable allies. It benefits from higher strategic and operational leverage due to an agreed strategic concept, common doctrine, a single decision-making under the North Atlantic Council and a well

powered military structure. It is perceived as more efficient due to its operational output, impact of its military capabilities and underlining principle of reciprocity under Article 5, with a tacit guarantee of collective defence. NATO can perform better in situations of conflict management and stabilization, but falls short of experience and capabilities on other than war situations, in the civilian dimension of crisis management, reconstruction, development aid and humanitarian assistance.

The present differences in organizational design, decision making structure, voting methods, purpose and strategic outreach and output generate different levels of political and operational trust. Parallel to this institutional distinction, one observes different degrees of interdependence and functional dependency among allies regarding doctrinal and interoperability standards, training, modernisation of the armed forces and procurement.

These differences affect the comprehensiveness of security agendas of both organizations and those of the member states within them. It shapes – how broad these security agendas are –, thus influencing the constitution of different perceptions of threat, risk and use of force, helping to identify which security referents matter. It also informs the very concept of strategic partnership (with whom to cooperate), determines how participants are more or less willing to cooperate and influences national administrations' assessments of preferred strategic partners.

These layers of differentiation within NATO and the EU reflect member states own security identity and their distinct security and defence focuses. Those who form the euro-atlantic defence stronghold like the US, United Kingdom, France, Italy, Turkey and Poland and occupy the upper end of the security and defence spectrum are willing to project EU-NATO strategic cooperation at a global scale, while meeting their own national interests. The swing member states or allies, like eastern European countries, will only commit to CSDP, if it does not harm traditional relations with US and NATO. Those like the Netherlands and Denmark use EU-NATO cooperative security to advance their foreign, security and defence policies, strengthening their already internationally active stand. Germany the “shaping power”, acquired in the new environment of instability a renewed strategic centrality with the deterioration of security in NATO's eastern border. Finally, the Nordic countries like Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland and also Austria, perceive EU-NATO cooperation as an opportunity to take part in regional crisis management, while acknowledging security instruments as part of a broader set constituted by diplomacy, sustainable development and humanitarian aid.

Several aspects of European and Atlantic security and defence cooperation need careful consideration. First to assess how to improve planning and command options and capabilities for CSDP missions and operations, especially among those who are strategically able and capable.

Second to improve the possibilities of access to capabilities of command, control and assistance in operational planning, in the Berlin Plus framework, for EU led operations in crisis management contexts, which may use NATO collective assets and capabilities. A desirable turn could reflect an adaptation of the Berlin Plus mechanism into a

more flexible arrangement regarding which Turkey, Greece or France could disagree, without blocking access to NATO's command, control and planning capabilities. A similar modality is foreseen in the Permanent Structured Cooperation Protocol for non-participant Member States. This would allow allies to retain their political positions on the Turkey-Cyprus issue, Greece regarding Macedonia or even France on NATO's access to civilian capabilities, without blocking effective and desirable cooperation of the organization as a whole.

Third, to enhance European command options for CSDP operations. The existing planning cell for CDSP operations within SHAPE, in close collaboration with the EU Military staff, backed by sound cooperation between Military Planning Conduct Capability and Civilian Planning Conduct Capability in support of CSDP missions and operations, under the oversight of a joint authority, could improve cooperation. The institutional changes that occurred among the CSDP and crisis response system, since March 2019 (EEAS 2020), may contribute to overcome some of the difficulties felt in the implementation of integrated approach. These changes by concentrating authority and by "integrating, rather than coordinating, different levels of the EU action" (Debuysere and Blockmans 2019, p. 247), bring closer the civilian and the military branch within EEAS, which may enhance cooperation at the multilateral level.

Fourth, to institutionalise forms of civilian and military cooperation and the development of dual use capabilities, under the EU-NATO Joint Declaration of 2018, could be used to meet complex emergencies, for instance to help dealing with the consequences of atypical climate events, that often require sudden emergency relief, in which air and naval means are crucial. This could be a useful and welcomed aspiration.

Fifth, to improve capability development drawing on the incentives launched in 2017 by Permanent Structured Cooperation under a new contractual approach to PESCO. This initiative gathers like-minded states, strategically capable and willing, without overstressing interested participant states, concerned with capabilities shortages and budgetary pressure to meet NATO's 2%GDP target. Also in this context, the use of wills and skills of participant states to develop PESCO from prevention to stabilisation and emergency relief, covering the whole spectrum of crisis response cycles.

Sixth, developments in the so called European Defence Technology Industrial Base will affect European defence markets requiring a good coordination between European representatives, institutions and industries. In 2018, the European Defence Agency assessed the persistence of various capabilities gap in Europe, which a better EU-NATO cooperation could contribute to overcome especially strategic air lift, air refuelling, cyber-defence, unmanned aerial vehicles, surveillance and reconnaissance, capabilities leading to suppression of enemy air defences, satellite communications and treatment of high resolution imagery.⁶¹

Seventh, consistent action by NATO and the EU could mutually reinforce common interests, for instance by combining the EU coercive diplomacy with the support of EU

61 See European Defence Agency (2018).

sanctions and NATO's military force and force display. This was already use with some degree of success following Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

The nature and intractable character of challenges and crises in Africa and Middle East, is currently aggravated by lower political solidarity within Europe, which culminated with the announcement of the United Kingdom withdrawal from the European Union and the American ill judgment on an international values-based order. This makes mutualisation of responsibility a valuable asset, perhaps more than a cumulative approach to cooperative processes, in the form of 74 EU-NATO cooperative measures or the three, soon to be four, waves of PESCO projects. Collective defence and cooperative security, based on multilateralization of interests and strategic benefits and obligations, need to include regional approaches to conflicts and crisis, allowing relevant local actors to take ownership of processes and solutions, building a more structural foundation for resilience to strive.

Proliferation of cooperative arrangements at a time when international norms, multilateralism and global governance are at odds with semantic foul and unsubstantiated judgment, on the achievements of international organizations and collective security demand to take the best from the existing agreements and platforms of cooperation. This requires ability to be flexible in the use of instruments of power and influence in crisis and conflict, in a manner able to solve more than military problems. Organizations like the EU and NATO have the resources to contribute to deal with the structural political and societal problems left behind, after crises and conflicts have de-escalated. Flexibility, adaptability and joint action will determine which organizations have the best political and strategic stand to hold positive transformative impact in regional and international affairs.

Final Considerations

The changes that occurred at the international level, following the global fight on terrorism, the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and the significant changes in the foreign policies of international powers, such as US and Russia, led to greater competition among security actors. These events also pressed international organizations to adapt. NATO's return to the foundational area of application of the Washington Treaty and the EU/CSDP institutional developments post 2016, suggest adaptability, but also necessity to preserve political relevance, strategic purpose and rank in international security. There is a significant saturation of the security ecosystem, where security organizations operate, with a significant overlap of memberships, strategic ambitions, mandates, resources and capabilities. In international security relevance and purpose are intrinsically dependent of strategic ambition, technological and operational output, conditioning the way crises and conflicts are successfully addressed and managed.

Crisis response tasks gained a new focus calling for modernization of defence administrations, systems and capabilities, but also claimed for better and more effective multilateral cooperation. Exogenous events sourced in the geopolitical fragmentation of Eastern Europe, on the transnational impact of terrorism and the consequences of

revisionist policies, challenged the international liberal order and created the opportunity for new agreements between the EU and NATO, which transcend their traditional political/civilian and military mandates. After 2016, both organizations evolved in the direction of better collaborative crisis management from crisis response, to resilience, institution building and ownership in the near border.

EU-NATO Joint Declarations have been forged in moments of geopolitical and strategic tension among powers, when unilateralism and revisionism tested the persistence and endurance of both organizations. The 2016 and 2018 Joint Declarations signalled the capacity of the EU and NATO to adapt and strive against exogenous and internal events that may have led to fragmentation. The end of bipolarity launched NATO to out-of-area and stressed the EU/CSDP strong advocacy for multilateralism, international law and peaceful resolution of crisis and conflicts. Later, external contingencies and events in the far border of security in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and in the European neighbourhood sent NATO back to its original area of strategic responsibility, for reasons of fatigue and collective strategic interest, strengthening its military presence in the eastern border. The EU pressed by challenges in the near neighbourhood, posed by regime changes and by the refugee crisis reviewed its position towards cooperation and crisis response, based on ownership, resilience and capacity building. A bold development, in 2016, into the direction of a defence policy in the making, transcended the declaratory tone of previous attempts, supplementing policy declarations with capacities, funding and a renewed motive for cooperation with NATO. This approach brought new opportunities for mutualisation of security and defence responses in the domains of counter maritime piracy, cyber and hybrid challenges and threats, energy security and maritime security in coastal and maritime areas.

New challenges and threats generated different security and defence settings within which interests and preferences can be held and sustained in multilateral, minilateral and strategic partnership configurations. These result from a tension between the core of intergovernmental decision making in Brussels and national interests and preferences of states. However, the participation in these configurations does not necessarily mean that they replace formal security and defence organizations. It simply means they offer space for collective mobilisation, outside or with the cooperation of the EU and NATO, whenever the response of formal organizations, as a whole, is not possible for reasons of self-restraint, lack of consensus, representativeness and resources availability. Often these simplified configurations are able to obtain convergence of security interests outside the formalities and complex decision-making procedures of organizations, like the EU/CSDP and NATO, improving significantly the processes of immediate force generation and force projection in rapid response to crisis.

In the context of EU-NATO cooperation, crisis response gained a new emphasis calling for better cooperation, but the debate on capability gap, competition and duplication still shadows the effectiveness of this endeavour, added by new disputes between NATO's strategic responsibility and Europe's ambition for strategic autonomy. This is a perilous and useless debate, but with potential to affect the purpose and impact of EU/

CSDP and NATO in guaranteeing international security. Coherence, complementarity and interoperability remain the three main drivers for EU-NATO cooperation and the only ones justifiable in a context of new challenges to security and defence and limited budgets. However, the cumulative nature of the process of cooperation that result from the EU-NATO Joint Declarations, rather than phased and incremental may run into its own limits. These regard reasons of political support of Members States, continuous funding and availability of resources required by formal organizations, unlike *ad hoc* security and defence configurations or particular unilateral actions reliant on immediate political gain, in detriment of more structural and effective transformative output.

Consensus around EU-NATO cooperation will always be limited by distinct historical, security and strategic legacies, industrial and technological interests and operational performance. The current need for immediacy of results, fits poorly with the required long-term test to which regional and international cooperation are subjected to, in order to prove effective towards external challenges. The Alliance need for a sustainable collective share of expenses, risks and benefits, cohabits now with selective common investments in European security and defence, notably through Permanent Structured Cooperation.

Terms like ownership, resilience, capacity building fill policy documents expressing reasons of interest and reasons of constraint. Reasons of interest, because collective security systems are not only driven by commonality of norms and principles, but also by influence, visibility and expectation of return of investment. For reasons of constraint, because in democratic systems governments are answerable to national electorates which, in the end of day, will determine their political fate. This leads to some opposition between loosen cooperative configurations versus the formal political, human and material cost of the efforts invested by the EU and NATO in external crisis. Additionally, differences in the comprehensiveness of the respective security agendas influence perceptions of threat, risk and use of force and ultimately outline the choice of preferred partner strategic.

An excessive focus on matters of competition, duplication and capabilities gap, between the EU and NATO, is a domain of analytical solace for both analysts and practioners, leaving open an interesting field of research on cooperation at multiple levels. It is beyond the scope of this working paper an in-depth analysis on the security impact of coexistent configurations such as multilateralism, minilateralism, strategic partnership with formal organizations. This three-layered system offers analytical space to empirical research regarding in which conditions and how this coexistence strengthens or conversely weakens cooperative security. It also enables to examine the current difficulties of regional organizations to deal with security challenges or on the contrary, it may offer evidence of ability of the EU and NATO and their individual Member States to adapt, by sometimes incorporating, others by cooperating with these alternative cooperative configurations, in the field of security.

EU and NATO cooperation may also offer a rich field of research in terms of benchmarking, as an indicator of political resolute and effective capability to set a

transformative security agenda, driven by specific security and defence targets, according to the dimension of the challenge or threat. Current research and practice require a more comprehensive outlook of who does what in security and defence. Which organization offers the best resources in security problem addressing and problem-solving. This may generate useful empirical considerations on how strategic reviews should be undertaken and cooperation improved. At what level are synergies more likely to complement each other? How willing are European and transatlantic allies to cooperate in a customized manner according to location, level and nature of security challenges and threats? Lastly, answering these questions would imply to consider the adequacy of existent models of organization, decision-making and capabilities development, in meeting on the immediate needs in response to complex crisis.

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At a time when political will coincides with strategic necessity for better security and defense cooperation, between the EU and NATO, this working paper examines how academic and policy-oriented work address EU-NATO cooperative relations and how they inform perceptions about the two organizations. It debates how contextual challenges affect the euro-Atlantic region and create opportunities for better Euro-Atlantic cooperation, in the context of diverse security and defence configurations or within the formal settings of the two organizations. It argues that a saturation of the security and defence environment, through the proliferation of multilateral, minilateral and strategic approaches does not hinder euro-atlantic cooperation. It highlights contexts of opportunity and advantages of enhanced cooperation between EU/CSDP and NATO. Finally, it envisages the development of current and expected venues for euro-atlantic mutual cooperative support.

