DEFENDING THE EU: VECTORS, PERSPECTIVES, PARADIGMS

PESCO and the Threat of Illegal Migration

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Abstract: The current situation in Europe, in the context created by events like Brexit, the 2015 refugees' crisis, the hybrid threats coming from Russia ask for a different approach to the security matters. Creation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) within the framework of EU's Common Security and Defence Policy while largely criticized, seems to engender a refreshed relation of cooperation between NATO and the EU regarding the European security. Evaluated as part of a larger picture, PESCO answers the needs of the moment, while it is the very trait of a more mature EU, able to manage one of the most important contemporary security challenges: the illegal migration

The 2015 refugees' crisis, added to the perennial illegal immigration from different North-African countries into EU member states, as well as president's Trump election in 2016 brought into discussion new elements related to EU's security. Besides the Russian threats for the Eastern Europe – the intricated relationship between Russia and the Baltic States and the 2014 annexation of Crimea – new vectors within the EU security policy emerged. The rampant terrorism, as a consequence to the almost incontrollable wave of immigrants from different MENA states, and especially from Syria is one of the major issues. Also, the Brexit process plays an important role, as the prospects of a non-deal Brexit are becoming more and more realistic. In this context, delivered by some uncertain transatlantic relations, as well as the positions of non-EU NATO members like Turkey and UK, starting with the Spring 2019, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) seems to be able to provide the answer for the "local pains" engendered by the aforementioned security problems in Europe

However, as NATO has a long tradition in ensuring the security for most of the EU countries, debates regarding the necessity of PESCO have arisen. The main question to be asked is, therefore, whether PESCO must be seen as a political instrument in the post-Brexit balance

of power among the NATO members, as after this moment "80% of NATO defence spending will come from non-EU Allies"[1].In connection to this question, the paper builds its argumentation on the idea that the establishing of PESCO (as other initiatives before it, like the European Defence Community-EDC, the European Political Cooperation – EPC, the European Security and Defence Policy – ESDP and the Common Foreign and Security Policy – CFSP) must be seen as a part of EU process of redefining its post-Westphalian, post-World War 2 and post-Cold War political identity. The both occurrence of new threats (the migration crisis, hybrid attacks etc.) and recurrence at a higher scale of older issues addressing the EU's defence capacity -765 failed, foiled or completed attacks in the European Union from 2014-2017"[2] require an updated approach.

Therefore, while damaging in their very nature, these threats might be seen as a necessary evil in pushing aside the obsolete traits of the EU-NATO cooperation and leading to a refreshed relationship. While one may argue that PESCO can be seen as an alternative to NATO, the paper will argue for the complementary relationship of the two.

Historical context

In order to understand the real contribution that the PESCO brings, one should take a look at both the historical and political contexts. The period right after the World War 2 found Europe in a sensitive position from a political, economic and social point of view. As Dean Acheson said at that moment "no such step as a United Sates of Europe is feasible…at this stage, but rather a series of concrete steps to solidify the remarkable progress already made"[3] During that period and the Cold War, as Henry Kissinger described the situation in a more specific manner, "the objective of European policy was primarily psychological: to oblige the United States to treat Europe as an extension of itself in case of an emergency"[4].

Through the Marshall Plan and the creation of NATO, the Western European countries managed to find a coagulant for the transatlantic relations and a more coherent foreign policy. The political context at that time was synonymous to the zeitgeist. The Western European

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[1] J. Stoltenberg, 2017. *Doorstep*. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_148840.htm, accessed 27 August 2018.

[2] Statista, 2018. *Number of failed, foiled or completed attacks in the European Union from 2014 to 2017*: https://www.statista.com/statistics/746562/number-of-arrested-terror-suspects-in-the-european-union-eu/

[3] NATO Defence College, 2000. *Secretary General's Eisenhower Lecture; The Relevance of Atlanticism*: https://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2000/s000915a.htm, accessed 27 August 2018

[4] H. Kissinger, 2014. *World Order,* Penguin Random House UK, p. 89

countries had to deal with the Eastern proximity, mostly kept together by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. In this context, the threats were different, as well as the economic situation, as it is the case of, for instance, of the refugees during the World War 2 who were Europeans and not perceived in the same manner in which the immigrants to Europe from the MENA regions would be perceived today. Moreover, the cohesion between the NATO members was stronger as the efforts to contain the Soviet Union were representing a vital objective.

Current political context

The current political context is a much more different one and involves, also, different threats that require new instruments of cooperation. This aspect, in its very essence, strongly challenges the traditional approach towards the EU-NATO cooperation as the NATO resilience needs time and some of the threats are directed strictly towards the EU security as not all the EU members are Allies and vice-versa. This aspect does not suggest any incapacity of NATO to adapt to different external threats for its EU members, but it can rather manifest disagreements in regard to the relation between the threats and the non-Allied EU members.

This relation, as we will see further, represents the main gap in the EU-NATO cooperation that not only justifies the existence of PESCO, but it also brings into discussion a more diversified approach of the current political situation and its nuances. Moreover, "military capacities developed within PESCO remain in the hands of Member States that can also make them available in other contexts such as NATO or the UN"[5]

The issue of migration with its 2015 peak is a multifaceted one, and it created many debates and dissensions among the EU members states. In relation to the European security, there is one major consequence of these dissensions and this are represented by the fact that "some member states are intent on continuing to rely on NATO for all defensive capabilities while others are looking to wield their sovereignty and expand defensive capabilities bilaterally, and through the EU"[6].In the bigger picture, it is obvious that the European Union has to deal with a more complex situation than right after the World War 2. Beside the fact that the number of EU members states is bigger than the one that the Coal and Steel Community had in 1951, the threats are more diverse and multiplied. In this context, we can talk about a Europe that is

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[5] Permanent Structured Cooperation – PESCO, Deepening Defence Cooperation among EU Member States, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/pesco_factsheet_22-06-2018_2.pdf, p.4
[6] H. DeMint, 2018. *EU-NATO Relations: A Future of Cooperation or Conflict*? p.5

closer to the post-Westphalian spirit of division, than to the one of the European Recovery Program.

Without a doubt, the 2015 migration crisis found an already divided Europe with strong right-wind and far-right parties in countries like Hungary, France, Austria, Slovenia, Poland and Sweden. However, the migration had also a major contribution to events like Brexit or the recent election of the Freedom Party of Austria. Are these divisions signs of weakness for the EU structure or they rather should be interpreted as the manifestation of a political maturity of the EU members states? It is obvious that the members states expect a more proactive bureaucracy in Brussels, as also the involvement of the EU abroad is growing. As the EU wants to be a more important actor on the global political scene, each member state wants its share of participation.

In the context of the 2015 refugee crisis, an important role was played also by the relation between the EU and Turkey. The role played by Turkey as a gatekeeper for Syrian refugees has to be seen as revelatory, if not for a full membership prospect, then for a seriously improved relationship between the two parts. On the night of July 15 "we (EU) stood on the side of Turkey's democracy and of the democratic institutions (…) There is much the European Union and Turkey can do together starting with Cyprus or against terrorism, for our economies and our business, on refugees for the future of Syria and for the stability of the Caucasus" (EEAS, 2016). Mogherini's words represent, alongside its solidarity core, a clear declaration of EU's security priorities not only in its relation with Turkey, but in general. EU's desire to cultivate its mercurial relationship with Turkey is obvious and it was reiterated through EU's response to the US decision to relocate its Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. However, regardless the silent consensus between the two in regard to this kind of issues "Turkey is expecting much more from EU when its border security is concerned"[7]. Not less can be said about EU's expectations when it comes, for instance, to the issue of human rights in Turkey[8].

While of obvious importance for the EU, the relation with Turkey is a clear indicator of Brussels desire to minimize the US influence in certain affairs as a sign of EU's desire to strengthen its position as a global contributor. Additional to other specialized benefits that PESCO may provide like "opportunities for those member states willing to deploy the military

[7] A.C. Erturk, 2018. *EU's PESCO: A New Foreign Policy Instrument or the Same Old Story?*, Gloval Political Trends Center Istanbul Kultur University Policy Brief, January 2018, GPoT No. 51, p.7

[8] EEAS, 2018. *Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the European Parliament Plenary Session on the human rights situation in Turkey and the situation in Afrin, Syria* *https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/39509/speech-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-european-parliament-plenary_en* accessed 29 August 2018

for migration efforts, similar to the Italian mission in Niger"[9], the mediation role played by PESCO is undeniable as, for instance, "before PESCO, it was unimaginable for the EU to reason with members like Cyprus and Austria for defence cooperation"[10] as the two are not NATO members. The Harbour & Maritime Surveillance and Protection (HARMSPRO) is, probably the best example regarding both the particularity of PESCO and its complementarity with NATO's activity. Mainly, HARMSPRO will "deliver a new maritime capability which will provide Member States with the ability to conduct surveillance and protection of specified maritime area (…) in order to obtain security and safety of maritime traffic and structures"[11].

The 2016 election of Donald Trump brought forward a quite unorthodox view on the US' role played within the NATO, as he is "the first US President to openly question the existence of NATO, while the global security situation is increasingly characterised by hybrid threats and transnational terrorist operations"[12]. Additionally, the old arguments between the US and Turkey surrounding Fethullah Gulen, as well as the recent evolutions around the detainment of the American pastor Andrew Brunson including the subsequent sanctions reiterate the need of EU for a political instrument for mediation in matters of defence.

Conclusions

While some deny the complementarity of PESCO with NATO, the relationship within the US-EU-Turkey triangle is just of the many situations in which the EU has to hold with the hare and hunt with the hounds. As one may be argued in the favour any surreptitious use of the PESCO by the EU in its relation with the US, the role of PESCO as an instrument to put together opposed or apparently incompatible state actors on matters of security. The issue of migration in general, in many of its aspects depending to non-NATO or non-EU members as Turkey, is one of the two major reasons – in conjunction with the Russian threats- for the existence of PESCO as an instrument of mediation and cooperation between the EU and other actors, especially NATO.

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[9] J. Himmrich, 2018. *A"Hybrid Threat"? European Militaries and Migration.* Dahrendorf Forum-Debating Europe, p. 20.
[10] A.C. Erturk, 2018, Idem.
[11] Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) first collaborative PESCO projects – Overview, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32079/pesco-overview-of-first-collaborative-of-projects-for-press.pdf accessed 29 August 2018
[12] R. Beckmann & R. Kempin, 2017. EU Defence Policy Needs Strategy: Time for Political Examination of the CSDP's reform objectives. Dutch Institute for International Politics. Berlin:SSOAR, 1-3, p.1

Undoubtedly, in relation to the evolutional and adaptive character of the threats, PESCO will not be the last initiative of its kind. The main argument for this idea is that PESCO, like other initiatives before it is a clear sign of EU's necessity, and in the same time, ability to develop resilience through its projects as part of its main corpus of security and defence policies-CSDP.

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4. EEAS, 2016. *Remarks by High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini on EU-Turkey relations at the plenary session of the European Parliament,* https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/15566/remarks-by-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-on-eu-turkey-relations-at-the-plenary-session-of-the-european-parliament_en accessed 27 August 2019.

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6. H. Kissinger, 2014. *World Order,* Penguin Random House UK.

7. J. Stoltenberg, 2017. *Doorstep.* https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_148840.htm, accessed 27 August 2018.

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10. R. Beckmann & R. Kempin, 2017. EU Defence Policy Needs Strategy: Time for Political Examination of the CSDP's reform objectives. Dutch Institute for International Politics. Berlin:SSOAR, 1-3.

11. Statista, 2018. *Number of failed, foiled or completed attacks in the European Union from 2014 to 2017*: https://www.statista.com/statistics/746562/number-of-arrested-terror-suspects-in-the-european-union-eu/, accessed 27 August 2018.