

Threat Perceptions and Scenarios for EU Security and Defense

Outcomes Report of the Mercator European Dialogue Workshop
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On 10 July 2018, a group of 17 Members of Parliament from across Europe met at the King Baudouin Foundation's headquarters in Brussels on the sidelines of the NATO summit. The meeting was dedicated to exploring the national parliamentarians' perspective on threat perceptions, and to co-developing scenarios for European security and defence politics. A number of high-ranking expert speakers joined the conversation to substantiate it with the newest insights from NATO, the European institutions and think tanks.

EXPERT VIEWS AND CONVERSATIONS

The workshop was an opportunity for participating members of parliament, as well as experts, to discuss **key risks and opportunities for the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy and the future of NATO**. It was a chance for MPs to talk about perceptions in their own countries of main threats to security and to share views on defence priorities, as well as ideas for communicating with constituencies about these important policy areas.

The meeting provided MPs with the opportunity to deepen their **understanding of security and defence trends and emerging issues, as well as to learn about approaches and views from their peers in other countries**. Importantly, the discussion also revolved around ways to build closer relations among EU member states to address common security challenges and to strengthen collaboration towards stronger EU capabilities in the sectors of security and defence.

Prominent guest speakers at the workshop gave their input on recent crises along the EU's borders, the transatlantic relationship and the current state of NATO, as well as the state of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy.

The opening of the workshop included a presentation by **Maciej Popowski**, Director General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations at the European Commission. The speaker gave an overview of threats and trends impacting on EU security, particularly in Southern and Eastern neighbourhoods. Several themes were discussed, including **relations with Turkey, the situation in Libya and more broadly in North Africa and relations with the Western Balkans (including**

prospects for EU integration).

Recent developments in EU's Common Security and Defence were presented by **Minhea Motoc** – Deputy Head of the European Political Strategy Centre (European Commission's think tank), and by **General Michail Kostarakos**, Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (CEUMC). The officials discussed the establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO); the launch of the European Defence Fund (EDF), the potential for joint research and capability projects, as well as for better synchronization of EU defence planning. They made a **clear plea for Member States to work together more effectively, and to achieve a viable compromise among their internal political differences**. A good example of potential for acceleration of collaboration in the area of Common Security and Defence was the **"military Schengen"**, for improved military mobility on the continent, by taking down physical, legal and regulatory barriers.

The session "Qvo vadis NATO" focused on the future of NATO in a multipolar world. It included a presentation by guest expert - **Stefanie Babst**, Head of the Strategic Analysis Capability (SAC) for the NATO Secretary General and the Chairman of the Military Committee, followed by reflections from **Ian Lesser**, Director GMF Brussels Office. The discussions focused on directions for NATO in the current international environment, the greatest challenges ahead and recommendations to overcome them. The subject of **strengthening NATO-EU relations** was raised, including challenges and opportunities in that relationship. Among the greatest challenges where NATO needs to increasingly direct its attention, **relations with China and the cyber-sphere** were mentioned. It was also pointed out that NATO is no longer sleep-walking about the increased threat from Russia. An effort was also made to **calm anxieties about US policies**, claiming that frictions are more part of the showmanship in the context of populist policies, but that the foundations of the transatlantic alliance remain firm.

"The nexus between external and internal security is where the EU can bring added value - so the question is how well we are equipping ourselves to address this challenge."

The scenario-building exercise built on a set of triggers and trends that participants believed to have a particular influence on security and defense policy.



Triggers

Several triggers were identified to be on the watch list – for having a large impact. Despite low probability, they could happen, having significant consequences for EU security.

- An unlikely, but major threat is **US revision of engagement in NATO**, with possible scenarios of either steady withdrawal from Europe, or a more abrupt instance of failing to act on article 5 commitments, during an aggression;
- **Relations with Turkey** have been ranked as having major impact. Although considered as of rather low probability, concerns about the collapse of the deal with EU regarding migration have been raised, as well as predictions about a rocky future for Turkey-NATO relations, including a possibility of Turkey leaving NATO (or being expelled);
- **Escalation of tensions between the US and China** has been another significant risk identified, particularly a situation that could lead to military confrontation between the two powers at the South China Sea;
- In Eastern Europe, **potential incidents with Russia**, including aggression against the Baltic States, hybrid activities involving “green men” and local minorities used to steer secessionist tendencies;
- Return to open **warfare in Western Balkans** – a situation that could be encouraged by Russia should the process of integration with the EU accelerate;
- A wide-scale **cyber-attack in a NATO country** (most likely CEE or Baltics) resulting in significant damage to state infrastructure;
- A **major disaster** – man made or natural- is not a high probability event but cannot be ruled out (also taking climate change into account). Hence, it is important to be prepared to deal with a nuclear incident, a pandemic or an act of biological terrorism or an ecological disaster.

Trends

Several trends were reviewed and identified as highly likely to continue having a strong impact on the future of EU security and defence planning and capabilities;

- Participants identified high risks of **turbulence in the international security environment**, given intensifying global competition, but also changing US global strategy and transatlantic policies;
- There was consensus that **Russia will continue using hybrid warfare** in various forms to achieve political objectives, and increased assertiveness from Moscow can be expected;
- In this context, we will witness continuing **disinformation campaigns**; societies in both sides of the Atlantic are distrustful towards institutions and this process will continue in the visible future, with additional harm to rules and values inside the transatlantic community;
- Russia will be increasingly **exploiting inter-ethnic tensions** in order to keep governments off balance and undermine trust within the EU & NATO;
- **Military spending** in the EU will not match the speed of other powers’ military modernization and growth, China’s in particular.
- Despite recent efforts, there will be **continuing suspicion** towards and slow collaboration of EU member states on defence, through mechanisms like PESCO;
- In some other areas more progress is expected, like in **military logistics cooperation** among some EU countries, easing infrastructure constraints on the region (military Schengen), or strengthening border protection through Frontex;
- A global trend, which will strongly affect EU, is **machine learning** and rapidly increasing automation, which can result in creating new threats. EU is not sufficiently prepared to respond to these.
- On a positive note, we should observe **increased collaboration among EU** countries in combating climate change – and slow but continued mitigation of environmental risks.



A central part of the workshop included discussions on how to get substantially closer to a common security and defence policy by 2025, out of which several observations have been made and recommendations developed.

- **Improve communication** between member states, and internally within defence and security government and private sectors. This would be especially important in the case of the European Defence Fund;
- Make a **clearer distinction between security and defence**. It may be much easier to integrate closer policies around security, especially when it comes to areas such as preventing violent extremism, anti-terrorism, anti-trafficking and crime and especially in terms of protecting borders. It is much harder to integrate closer military establishments, and the defence industry in particular;
- A key issue is improved **intelligence sharing**. Possible improvements include information sharing, closer relations between departments through more regional- and European-level meetings. Another recommendation was to create a joint “situation centre” and a European intelligence agency;
- Cooperation **towards a common security and defence policy** can also be strengthened through establishing more institutional exchanges below the top political level, and create better mechanisms for improving institutional memory, so there is **adequate continuity in these policy areas** among EU countries;
- **Increasing defence spending** among EU member states is a clear priority. It should be also broadly communicated that the importance of NATO and of European defence cooperation is not just about money, but about improved cooperation. At the same time, the benefits of increased funding should be explained to electorates across Europe;
- **Pan – European campaigns to foster a greater common-security feeling** among the populations should be developed. More cross border projects in the fields of defence should be undertaken;
- Substantially more resources should be directed towards **education and raising awareness** on the importance of increased defence spending and cooperation in the areas of security and defence;
- A **better communication about creating an EU army would be useful**. The idea raises several concerns regarding feasibility, questions about sovereignty as well as duplication within and undermining NATO – all which need to be debated convincingly clarified;
- A discussion about **common military budgets** should start, although currently prospects seem quite remote;
- **Regional initiatives** can increase overall EU cooperation and coordination in security and defence. One good example is the Bucharest nine (B9 group), another could be Belgium and Netherlands or the Baltic States;
- Continue improving **relations between EU and NATO**. Develop more common mechanisms, more platforms for cooperation, work on political climate for improvements in that area;
- It would help to be **more transparent among member states about national security strategies** and develop a better understanding of national priorities each country has. That kind of frank exchange among partners in the EU could create common programs with better chances of implementation, and policies for common security and defence with greater prospects of success;
- Include many more displays of presence of militaries from other EU countries. Make citizens more accustomed to the idea of joint presence of soldiers, including through walking under the same banners at parades, through open days and media campaigns, etc;
- Consider **moving back to mandatory military service**, or propose a form of civic duties, for example in the form of national guard or peace corps or emergency services, which could improve the sense of security and commitment to community security;
- A much larger effort on the side of member states should be undertaken to **promote the EU as key security pillar for citizens**. This should include using the right language by relevant authorities;
- More investment, and exposure should be given to EU’s working instruments in areas of security and defence. Frontex and improving cooperation on borders could be an example. EU missions in the Mediterranean, CSDP missions could be another;

COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS

Participants did also discuss how to communicate security priorities with electorates. For MPs it is of paramount importance to convey the right messages to voters about the changing international landscape and the need for increased investment in security and defence at the EU level.



- Present **NATO as an alliance of both values and interests and a community of trust**. Member states should be more forthcoming and honest about their expectations and needs among each other – especially relating to political implications of actions on their societies;
 - There should be more **direct communication to citizens on security risks and needs** – more awareness building on the importance of NATO for security;
 - Governments should undertake **“smart” communications** – distancing themselves from some of the most sensitive issues, while communicating about NATO (and EU) role in security to their citizens;
 - More investment is needed to improve the quality of communication – making it simpler, with understandable language, which people can relate to. Very **concrete examples** should be used to demonstrate how investing in security cooperation is directly beneficial for voters;
 - In communicating security priorities, the concepts of the **EU, Europe and sovereignty should be used together as much as possible, to create an association**.
- Currently there are perceived primarily as opposites;
- Foreign and security policy matters should be much **more visible in the public agenda** – this could be achieved through more visuals (videos, pictures and use of social media);
 - Increasing defence-related expenses and closer collaboration could lead to **greater innovation and research and development**, as well as the creation of new jobs. This should be communicated, along with relevant examples;
 - The fact that **Donald Trump** is currently in the White House can be also be used to communicate the need to greater efforts to develop European defence capabilities;
 - Security and defence investment should be portrayed as the best **“insurance policy”**. Investing more translates to greater security of the citizens. A greater communication effort is needed to demonstrate the current and potential impact of EU policies for the security of European citizens.

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“ Lets keep in mind NATO is a dialogue space too, not just a place for joint action. The same should apply to the EU. We need those conversations for forecast and foresight, to at least understand our security landscape better and not be taken by surprise, regardless of our ability then to act together as the EU ”



“ We really don't Understand Russia - I mean we don't even really talk to Russians”

“ The EU is not a military alliance. That is not why We join the EU that is why we join NATO ”



#MEDialogue



Stiftung Mercator is a private and independent foundation. Through its work it strives for a society characterized by openness to the world, solidarity and equal opportunities. In this context it concentrates on strengthening Europe; increasing the educational success of disadvantaged children and young people, especially those of migrant origin; driving forward climate change mitigation and promoting

science and the humanities. Stiftung Mercator symbolizes the connection between academic expertise and practical project experience. One of Germany's leading foundations, it is active both nationally and internationally. Stiftung Mercator feels a strong sense of loyalty to the Ruhr region, the home of the founding family and the foundation's headquarters.



The King Baudouin Foundation's mission is to contribute to a better society. The Foundation is an actor for change and innovation, serving the public interest and increasing social cohesion in Belgium and Europe. We seek to maximize our impact by strengthening the capacity of organizations and individuals. We also stimulate effective philanthropy by individuals and corporations. The Foundation's key values are integrity, transparency, pluralism, independence, respect for diversity, and promoting solidarity.

The Foundation's current areas of activity are poverty and social justice, philanthropy, health, civic engagement, developing talents, democracy, European integration, heritage and development cooperation.

The King Baudouin Foundation is a public benefit foundation. The Foundation was set up in 1976 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of King Baudouin's reign.



The German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) strengthens transatlantic cooperation on regional, national, and global challenges and opportunities in the spirit of the Marshall Plan. GMF contributes research and analysis and convenes leaders on transatlantic issues relevant to policymakers. GMF offers rising leaders opportunities to develop their skills and networks through transatlantic exchange, and supports civil society in the Balkans and Black Sea regions by fostering democratic initiatives, rule of law, and regional cooperation.

Founded in 1972 as a non-partisan, non-profit organization through a gift from Germany as a permanent memorial to Marshall Plan assistance, GMF maintains a strong presence on both sides of the Atlantic. In addition to its headquarters in Washington, DC, GMF has offices in Berlin, Paris, Brussels, Belgrade, Ankara, Bucharest, and Warsaw. GMF also has smaller representations in Bratislava, Turin, and Stockholm.



The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) was founded on 11 October 1965 on the initiative of Altiero Spinelli. The Institute's main objective is to promote an understanding of the problems of international politics through studies, research, meetings and publications, with the aim of increasing the opportunities of all countries to move in the direction of supranational organization, democratic freedom and social justice (IAI Bylaws, Article 1). Its main research areas include: EU Institutions

and Politics, the EU's Global Role, Turkey and the Neighbourhood, International Political Economy, Mediterranean and Middle East, Transatlantic Relations, Security and Defence, Italian Foreign Policy, Energy. A non-profit organization, the IAI is funded by individual and corporate members, public and private organizations, major international foundations, and by a standing grant from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



The Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB) is an independent and plural think tank based in Barcelona, dedicated to the study, research and analysis of international affairs. Created in 1973 as an International Documentation Centre of Barcelona, it is a private foundation since 1979.

re that people possess the basic elements to live their lives free from fear and in liberty, by facilitating a dialogue that includes all diversities and which actively defends human rights and gender equality. CIDOB is a dynamic community of analytics that works to produce and offer to all political actors – from individual citizens to international organizations – information and ideas to formulate and promote policies for a more secure, free and fair world for everyone.

CIDOB promotes global governance and good practices – based on local, national and European democratic government – to ensu-



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