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# REPORT

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## **CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY**

### Introduction

Throughout the last decade, the European Union's ambitions and attempts to influence the security situation outside its own borders have changed quite dramatically. During the same period, U.S. interests in European security (in general) and NATO (in particular) have also changed.

As a result, the EU members' *possibilities* to collectively provide a strong voice in many issues related to international security management have increased. At the same time, the *demand* from the outside is also growing, with the EU's special characteristics as an international actor proving to be a great asset in many war-torn areas. The EU is still not always able to convert these possibilities into concrete activities, and can often not meet the growing demands from third states and international organizations.

The last few years' experiences with a growing number of ESDP operations – on three continents – have shown where the EU's strengths as well as weaknesses are the most pronounced. While some of the *institutional* weaknesses will be addressed with the creation of the new post of High Representative and the External Action Service, the Union still lacks a common *strategic outlook*. There are also many civilian and military *capability* problems that need to be addressed, as well as *organizational* and *financial* problems that will have to be dealt with in the near future.

In the period of institutional change that the EU's foreign policy will be undergoing in the next few months, those member states that choose to be active in terms of proposing new solutions will have unusually high chances to affect the Union's foreign policy in the long run.

This paper will examine some of the challenges that face the EU, what its relationship to NATO is and how that is changing.

### Changes within NATO and the EU

NATO has moved from being a collective defense organization to an organization that conducts peace operations on a global scale. An additional change is that NATO members look at the organization in a different way today than they might have done 10-15 years ago.

The US, for example, looks to NATO in hope that the EU member states will contribute troops for various peace operations, whereas the EU perceive the organization for the purpose of providing a collective defense.

Despite these changes within NATO, it still only has a vague political framework and instruments for broad security policy initiatives. NATO does, however, engage in various types of peace support operations and there are currently 3-4 major operations ongoing.

When comparing this to the changes within the EU, one of the major changes is that some ten years ago there were no peace operations conducted by the EU. Today, however, there are several operations in addition to troops wearing EU uniform. One can therefore see that a wider scope has developed within the EU and envisage how it is moving forward.

It is difficult to say whether or not the interests of the EU have become more diverse over the last ten years. It can be argued that the last two enlargements have increased the difficulty of coordinated action than before. This may be the case in some respects but in a lot of situations the new member states position themselves either in the middle or in line with already established camps.

The EU has, however, been successful in establishing a potentially strong political framework and instruments for broad security initiatives. This can be seen as the EU's largest difference from NATO.

The common foreign policy has undoubtedly expanded and there has been an increase in peace relations and relevant operations on behalf of the EU (see Annex I).

The EU has today an equal amount of peace operations running as the United Nations which would not have been perceived ten years ago. NATO only has 3-4 global operations but these are significantly bigger.

### National and international consequences

### *International*

The demand for the EU in these types of activities has increased. This also presents a problem because in Brussels and in the PSC Political and Security Committee (PSC), international organizations are requesting more engagement from the EU but the EU has difficulties with meeting this demand.

The EU and the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) has inspired others, notably the African Union (AU) to take a more active role in things. The framework set up by the EU has been copied by the AU. The UN has also gained a new regional “partner” that can share the burden in providing peace-keeping personnel.

The EU, as a new power, should provide a balance to the UN; however, the EU/ESDP has not yet guaranteed any “balancing behavior”. This is largely because of the EU’s inability to act in unity which can also be seen as its biggest weakness.

On an EU level, the consequences are that the European Commission does not have the same type of influence as it does in other EU areas. It is therefore dependent upon the individual member states carrying out the operations, and the cooperativeness of the governments in question. There has been a need for some kind of central actor and the Council secretariat has started to fill that role and visibility has subsequently become dramatically increased.

It should be noted that ESDP operations have, in some cases, brought member states closer together politically. The conflicts in Gaza and Somalia are two examples. Another positive effect is that EU members, and the Commission, have had to discuss broader and more comprehensive foreign policy issues today than ever before. It has led to Treaty revisions, such as Lisbon, which will support the EU’s role in this respect.

### *National*

As the EU has become more active in terms of foreign security policies, several small countries have been “forced” to broaden their foreign policy outlook. This has put pressure on the foreign ministries of smaller states and increased pressure on inter-ministerial coordination as well as an increasing demand for the gathering of information and intelligence gathering.

There have been discussions on revisions and increased pressure on government agencies possibilities to provide civilian and military personnel. It is often difficult for countries to provide military personnel and this has been shown in many of the EU projects involving civilians.

Once you have taken part in these organizations there is an increased influence on international issues when the EU agrees. This is positive from the perspective of small states as they gain an increased possibility to push their issues if they know how to do it and they are handled correctly.

## Challenges for EU-NATO relations

Few countries have a clear strategic vision of how they would like the EU or NATO to act as there are different agendas among the members. This is also one of the prime reasons why the EU does not have a clear strategic vision. Troop contribution for international missions is also proving itself to be a problem for member states.

Ten years ago no-one would have guessed that the EU would have carried out this many operations at the same time as it is today. This is, however, putting a lot of pressure on the EU's capacity and there is therefore an institutional "overstretch", especially when civilian operations are concerned.

There is still limited knowledge or understanding within the political systems and throughout the general public of how decisions are made within the EU. There is almost no knowledge of how the EU is changing and has changed in the last few years. Many are therefore not aware of all the possibilities that are available.

Financing is also a major problem (including trade off between individual and Athena financing). The funding for various operations is limited and is mostly done on an ad hoc basis for every situation. The effect of this is that member states' foreign ministries have to approach their finance ministries for previously unforeseen expenses. This is sometimes something which the government then has difficulty in gaining public support for.

There are also flexibility problems, and one can even talk about waging "war by committee" e.g. EUFOR (European Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina), RDC and EUFOR Tchad/RCA (the EU mission in Chad and the Central African Republic). NATO and the UN are experiencing the same problems.

The lessons learnt from each operation have become very political and self-criticism is rarely exercised. Thus, it has become difficult to draw lessons from the various types of EU operations.

There is a lack of general visibility, and Brussels is currently undergoing institutional turf wars as the treaty does not distinguish between what the Commission's foreign aid activities are, and what the Council's foreign policy aims are, so this presents an increasing visibility problem.

A main issue in relating to the EU-NATO relations is whether NATO's *raison d'être* is still being fulfilled. Questions are being raised in some countries over whether NATO is still needed in light of the EU's presence? Membership of both organisations prompts competition for troop contributions to different projects. There is also an issue relating to a permanent HQ for EU operations. The EU does carry out more operations than NATO, but does not have a base from where it can direct these operations. Instead, NATO & National HQ's are being used.

## Conclusions and opportunities

There are several reasons for why the EU does not have an overall security policy. The EU has often been perceived as being more efficient and less “corrupt” than UN. The EU has been perceived as more “neutral” and less self-interested than some big nation states. In some cases, the EU has been the only accepted third party in peace negotiations (AMM, RAFAH). The EU also has a more of an ability to go where NATO can't go, for example Georgia and Moldova.

The EU can also be seen as a welcomed addition to the US on the international arena and in some cases the UN even gets increased credibility from joint EU-UN cooperation. The EU states get a greater say in international politics by being part of the EU since it has grown and advanced its possibilities (compared to NATO and compared to bilateral activities). Finally, the EU has become a very unique type of actor in respect to their capability to combine and tailor different foreign policy instruments but also not being perceived as an international organisation. This has given the EU extra possibilities even though they are not yet exploited enough by the member states.

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## ANNEX I

### **European Political Co-operation (EPC) 1980**



**Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) 2003**



**ANNEX II**

**EU Operations Since 2003**

