THE EU AND ITS DEFENCE DIMENSION

GLOBSEC European Security Initiative

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This project builds on the expertise acquired and momentum of the GLOBSEC NATO Adaptation Initiative (GNAI) **seeking to shape policy debates that decrease the imbalance in transatlantic defence capabilities.**

The primary objective of the GESI Initiative is to **produce innovative and straightforward policy recommendations** that empower Europe's defence capabilities and operational readiness for a wide spectrum of challenges. These include; an assertive Russian foreign policy; the functional nexus of migration, crime and terrorism; hybrid treats; and challenges posed by European defence market consolidation.

GESI mission is not to support the creation of parallel European military-political structures to NATO, but rather **to propose an avenue for a new level of European defence competence.** This, in turn, would be based on an increased and sustained emphasis on equipment build-up as well as training and exercises, through which the existing capability imbalance between both sides of the Atlantic would be continuously shrinking.

Within the framework of this Initiative, the steering committee will address, inter alia, the following topical aspects of the defined challenge:

- ▶ European Strategic Autonomy: What for? By Whom and Against Whom?
- ▶ European Defence Union: From an Idea to Realisation
- ▶ EU–NATO Relations: Towards the Full-Potential of Cooperation
- ▶ Central and Eastern Europe: Stepping Up to the Plate
- ▶ European Defence Policy in Fight Against Terrorism: A Way To Go?
- ▶ Beyond the 2% Paradigm: The Scorecard of European Defence Policy
- ▶ EDA: A Functional Bridge Between 'West' and 'East' European Defence Markets?

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by the GLOBSEC European Security Initiative (GESI) Steering Committee

As 2018 comes to an end EU states face a number of military threats and challenges that will need to be addressed in the coming years. Those threats are tentatively as follows:

1. To the **East,** a resurgent Russia striving for recognition as a superpower and determined to have substantial influence (maybe even veto rights) over what takes place within the EU as well as the Euro-Atlantic Area, particularly NATO.

2. To the **South and Southeast**, a Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in the grip of long-lasting military conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and potentially other places. Moreover, disparities in wealth, lack of freedoms and accountable governments and other distressing situations have led to substantial migration from Africa to Europe, with EU states the destination of choice.

3. To the **North and Northwest**, increasingly open and 'global' Arctic and Atlantic regions that offer new economic opportunities and lines of communication. This has led to growing interest by all great powers (including China), making both areas ripe for political tension and military confrontation.

There are other issues, such as internal tensions within the EU and friction between the United States and its European allies, which cannot be ignored. To complicate matters further, in late 2018 the EU finds itself surrounded by countries consumed by internal political crises, including a Brexit-oriented UK, Turkey and Ukraine.

As is widely known, the EU was not intended to become a military alliance along the lines of NATO. Instead, the EU's military dimension is an **"add-on" capability** of limited scope, with many members seeing their military and security requirements covered by NATO. Key elements of this arrangement include full US participation as well as the standing NATO Command Structure manned by all Allies (except Iceland and Luxembourg).

There also exists a number of agreements that cover military cooperation between the EU and NATO. This primarily gives the EU access to the use of the NATO Command Structure under specific circumstances. **Further, the fact that most EU states are members of NATO means that their respective armed forces often share commonality in doctrine, procedures and standardisation**.

Nonetheless, the nature of the above threats, combined with the role given to NATO by a substantial number of EU states, **limits the scope of what is achievable within the EU without duplication of efforts and further weakening of restrained defence budgets**. It is assessed that the possibilities of strengthening European defence at large without duplication or weakening NATO is possible and would lead to European armed forces being more capable, interoperable and standardised. Or to quote a former US President: "More bang for the buck!"

Achieving "bang" requires a refined analysis of current military threats and challenges.

First, Russia is neighbour to most East European states and, therefore, both **part of and the solution to the threat that it poses**. There is a need to keep up a credible deterrence, which covers all aspects of military power from nuclear weapons to humanitarian operations in case of indirect approach operations (hybrid warfare). **This requires an ability to conduct full spectrum operations, including high intensity operations in close coordination with all other power dimensions of a modern state, as well as Allies**.

Second, Russia is assessed predictable because the tools of power at its disposal are known and can be countered. However, **Russia is also assessed unstable** because of deep corruption, the lack of accountability of its elites and the potential for misinterpreting the resolve of NATO's European members alongside the United States and Canada. This makes NATO the main player and leaves the EU in a supporting role, albeit with substantial political and economic capabilities available. This will require **closely coordinated political action as well as the strengthening of interoperability and standardisation of military capabilities at large**.

Third, the situation in Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is very different. The region is ravaged by wars, suffers from a destabilising discrepancy in wealth that causes hopelessness for many millions, and plays witness to the use of religion as a tool of oppression and acquiring political power. Few governments are in any way accountable to their electorate and corruption is the order of the day. The Middle East is also witnessing the growing influence of Russia at the expense of declining Western involvement in the region. Stability is achieved by oppression and almost limitless violence. This has a profound impact on terrorism, the energy supplies of many industrialised states as well as the ability to develop sustainable democratic and accountable political institutions. Turkey is both the buffer and bridge between Europe and the Middle East. Not being part of the EU while being a member of NATO gives the country a key player position in the region. **MENA is thus both unpredictable and unstable and European states must be able to conduct full spectrum military operations as required, eventually in the shape of intervention. Contrary to the eastern threat, MENA requires a much broader approach for dealing with the threat in its various guises, migration being a case in point.**

Fourth, as things stand, the North and Northwest is a low conflict area. That said, the **potential for both regions to become high conflict areas should not be downplayed.** The increasing importance of the High North is closely linked to climatic changes, the accessibility of raw materials and the opening of shipping routes through the Northeast and Northwest passages. Russia has by far the longest coastline in the Arctic area, stretching from Murmansk to the Bering Strait. It is potentially the major player in the region and outstanding differences with other Arctic states regarding zones of economic interest. The North Atlantic is the fundamental link between North America and Europe and thus a vital area for both geographical entities. Thanks to its geographical location, small population and lack of military forces, Iceland - a member of NATO but not the EU – is a key state. **The North and Northwest are thus predictable and stable. However, this posture might change in the near future. Ongoing and**

future military operations are taking place under extreme climatic conditions and will require special capabilities the further North one goes.

If NATO assumes full responsibility for the abovementioned security threats and challenges, then the scope of possibilities for the EU in the military field will be limited. However, **there is substantial possibility to deliver a stronger European pillar by bringing in to a higher degree EU states that are not members of the Alliance**.

The GLOBSEC European Security Initiative (GESI) Steering Committee assesses that a two phased approach should be adapted to further strengthen this European pillar. **Phase one** should focus on:

1. **Standardising European military equipment** thus making it either cheaper to acquire or easier to open up for larger acquisition. This will require strong political leadership to minimise the tendency to sub-optimise systems to national requirements at the expense of the common good or spreading production to a number of states.

2. **Developing universal training procedures and maintenance standards** for European-produced military equipment. This may lead to the use of the "Lead Nation" principle with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities in relation to smaller/other states linked to a ''Lead Nation''. A cluster of states is also a possible approach for the same results.

3. **Organising the common storage of critical munitions, spare parts and other components**, thereby lowering prices and creating sufficient "masse critique".

4. **Improving the use of the NATO Command Structure with an "opt out" possibility for non-EU allies as well as a funding mechanism from the EU side**. This would lead to a strengthened ability to conduct military operations, particularly out of area.

5. **Keeping the UK** – one of Europe's most powerful and nuclear-armed states - **onboard as a full partner in all security matters.**

Phase two would see the development of a vaster political programme based on the Saint-Malo Declaration. I**t would comprise a core group of possibly four Lead Nations – France and the UK (signatories of the Declaration) joined by Germany and eventually Italy - which would develop and offer a "plug-in system" for other potential signatories**. Command and control of this new arrangement should rest in the hands of the already existing national staffs, so that phase two renders the threat of any force duplication obsolete. With this arrangement developed, it should then be offered as a tool to both NATO and the EU and, possibly further down the line, the United Nations. The focus of this phase should be practical and not rhetorical, with time devoted to an increase in armed forces' interoperability and the development of capabilities to fight full spectrum operations under a single command.

Some of the above proposals, especially from phase one, are not new and already exist to a certain extent. They have often been left to themselves, as often happens in international organisations, and without real political impetus as to what to achieve and when. The bureaucracy then becomes the driver and is without real influence on the purpose of the organisation. In other words, strong political will combined with clear and well-defined objectives are required. To this is to be added accountability to the contributing states.

GLOBSEC European Security Initiative High-Level Steering Committee Members

Gen. Knud Bartels (Ret.) - Danish Chief of Defence, Staff 2009-2011, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee 2011-2015

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