

# The Limits, Dilemmas and Challenges of European Security in Uncertain Times

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This article assesses the current state of European security, and its future, against the backdrop of several key processes: the rising political and economic power of non-Western actors; economic problems in America and Europe; and the dynamic of changing security environment and threats, especially in Europe's backyard. It also analyses the consequences of the long-term decline in EU members' defence spending, which undermines Europe's military capabilities and makes the continent ever more dependent on the US. The work goes on to ask to what extent the Ukrainian conflict and Russia's involvement in it may change the approach of NATO's European members to collective defence. According to some polls, we can see – despite conclusions reached at NATO's Welsh summit in September 2014 – different levels of support for NATO in member states, which highlight current tensions and suggest possible future difficulties for the coalition. Nevertheless, this work concludes that given the strength of the existing political, economic and security ties between Europe and the United States, including the current prospect of a transatlantic free trade zone, it is very likely that the two partners will increasingly divide security responsibilities. However, this supposed trend toward a conscious complementarity of roles cannot, at present, fully manifest itself, as the conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood (North and sub-Saharan Africa, the Sahel, the Middle East) tend both to flare up suddenly and escalate quickly, forcing both actors to adopt improvised, ad hoc solutions.



Miloš Balabán (2016), 'The Limits, Dilemmas and Challenges of European Security in Uncertain Times,' *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies* 10, no. 1: 88-109.

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*Keywords: EU, NATO, Defence Spending, Budget Cuts, Military, Ukrainian Crisis, Russia, Middle East, Sahel, Escalation of Instability, Islamic State*

## European Security and Defence 25 Years Since the Cold War: A New Strategic Context

*European  
Security in  
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With the approaching end of *Pax-Americana* we are witnessing the end of a centuries-long Anglo-Saxon economic and ideological hegemony. This is characterised by two main factors. The first is the rise of non-Western actors – especially China with its global ambitions – and a host of ever stronger and more emancipated regional actors such as India, Brazil, Russia and Turkey. At the beginning of the new millennium, the Euro-Atlantic democracies, together with Japan, controlled 75% of global wealth. Today it is less than 50%, and the share continues to fall.

The growing economic and political problems of Western democracies represent the second major factor, notwithstanding the West's still-impressive wealth, economic and political clout, cultural influence and, last but not least, military power. The fall of Lehman Brothers in September 2008 marked not just the beginning of the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s, but also put a symbolic end to the unipolar moment—the period in which, following the breakup of the USSR, the United States was the world's only true superpower. The course of us foreign policy is now largely determined by problems at home, described by Miller, as 'the six deadly D's of debt, deficit, dysfunctional politics, dependence on hydrocarbons, a deteriorating educational system and decaying infrastructure.'<sup>1</sup>

The retarding economic and socio-political factors influence both domestic and foreign policy, as the us struggles to reconcile conflicting commitments; trying both to maintain global clout and to reduce the cost of its global alliances and partnerships. In *Strategic Choices and Management Review*, an internal evaluation document of the us Defence Department published by (former) Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel in July 2013, envisaged defence budget cuts totalling \$500 billion USD. Fiscal austerity on this scale could effectively limit the us' ability to engage in military conflicts and exert power overseas.<sup>2</sup>

The global security situation, however, may force the us to reconsider its austerity plans. As new potential conflict areas emerge in both the Middle East (the Islamic State) and in Ukraine, whose attempt

at geopolitical reorientation has provoked a strong Russian reaction – including direct Russian military incursions – the US is forced to respond. Meanwhile, its main geopolitical focus for the coming decades is shifting toward the Asia Pacific, a region characterised by the political, economic and military rise of China—the US’s ever important economic partner,<sup>3</sup> and its principal geopolitical rival. This shift may also necessitate a new emphasis on military containment, with the US deploying more forces (especially naval forces) to the Pacific, Southeast and East Asia.<sup>4</sup>

Europe is focused on internal problems.<sup>5</sup> It has managed to avert the collapse of the euro and maintain the economic stability of the euro zone, but the cost of the necessary interventions has been massive. The eurozone crisis has also laid bare the tensions and differences between member states, and has exposed millions of Europeans to welfare insecurity. Levels of social cohesion are declining. Citizens have less faith in European institutions and the European integration model, while the popularity of populist and extremist movements is on the rise. This trend was in evidence, for example, during the European Parliament elections in May 2014.

Fifteen years since NATO’s first out-of-area operation in former Yugoslavia, the limits of liberal interventionism are becoming apparent: in light of considerable human, but also material, losses, the political and military outcomes of NATO and US interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya cannot be seen as successful.<sup>6</sup> Bilmes carried out a detailed analysis of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, concluding that they will eventually cost the US between \$4 and \$6 trillion USD. The US has already spent \$2 trillion USD; further funds will be needed in the long run for veterans’ care.<sup>7</sup> Paradoxically perhaps, the mission in Afghanistan may have been one of the linchpins that maintained basic cohesion at a time when tensions within NATO – due to the imbalance between the respective US and European contributions – began to grow. Europe’s position was summed up succinctly by the US (former) Secretary Gates, who remarked that the continent was in the process of ‘demilitarisation.’<sup>8</sup>

Gates’ assessment effectively indicates that NATO or, more precisely, the US, regard Europe as a free-rider in defence matters. But despite the host of problems connected with military spending cuts, the state of European security should be viewed in a broader context. Even though

Europe is not a state, its significant economic potential makes it a global power. Thanks to its global clout, it has the potential to carry out well what should be its key defence and security mission: responding more independently to the growing instability in its immediate neighbourhood, as the US gradually abandons its role of a key guarantor of European security. It is therefore crucial not only to analyse the main deficits of European defence and security policy, but also to outline the possible directions of its future development. The simultaneous outbreak of several crises close to European borders shows that Europe's defence capabilities *must* improve and expand, however complicated, both politically and financially, this task may be for Europe's national governments.

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### European Defence Deficits

The long-term decline of defence spending in European countries is evident in the statistics. According to data published by the European Defence Agency, EU member states have, between 2006 and 2011, lowered their military budgets by an average of 10%, and in 2012-2017 by a further 3%.<sup>9</sup> The problem is that the comparison is being made with the pre-crisis period, which was itself marked by a significant lowering of military budgets and the drawing of the peace dividend. This reaction to the end of the Cold War and the subsequent security realities shows clearly in the time period encompassing the 1990s and more than one decade of this century. In 1990-1994, the average ratio of defence spending to GDP among NATO's European members was 2.7 per cent. In 2013 it was just 1.6 per cent. The disparity between Europe and the United States is also clear: US military spending in 2013 was at 4.3 per cent GDP.<sup>10</sup> Europe has thus been scaling down its military capabilities for more than two decades. The pre-crisis attempts at reform and modernization of European armies have been effectively nullified by defence spending cuts, which were, moreover, largely uncoordinated and implemented on a purely national basis. True, there have been talks over national military budgets in the framework of NATO's Defence Planning Process. DPP requires that member states report all cuts in a Defence Planning Questionnaire, and these are subsequently subject to discussion before the approval of the respective national chapter. However, no national chapter has ever been denied endorsement

because of budget reductions. The member states have thus shown remarkable “solidarity,” each of them well aware that budget cuts may be needed in the future.

Another sore point is the actual breakdown of the “slimmed-down” military budgets. In his “Report on the impact of the financial crisis on the defence sector in the EU Member States,” European MP Krzysztof Lisek points to the fact that merely 1 per cent of the aggregate EU defence expenditure is allocated to R&T, while 50 per cent goes to cover personnel costs.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in many European countries, the latter percentage is even significantly higher. NATO also requires its members’ armies to earmark 20 per cent of the military budget for new weapons and technology. However, only four members (France, the United States, Turkey and the United Kingdom) complied with this requirement in 2013.<sup>12</sup>

After analysing the development trajectories of EU military budgets, Claudia Major and Christian Mölling of Berlin’s SWP think-tank conclude that the total sum allocated for EU-28 defence – now almost 200 billion EUR – may fall as low as 147 billion EUR by 2020. The two researchers remark that if this trend continues, Europe may easily end up with “bonsai armies,” nice to look at on a national day parade, but otherwise of little use.<sup>13</sup>

For fiscal reasons, European governments are less and less willing to deploy European troops in international operations. According to EDA data, the number of troops deployed in NATO, EU, UN and national operations in 2012 was 49,550 (of the total of 1,453,000, i.e. 3.4 per cent), while four years earlier, in 2008, it was 80,177 (of the total of 1,808,707, i.e. 4.5 per cent).<sup>14</sup> As the ISAF mission in Afghanistan is drawing to a close these numbers are likely to fall still further.

Of all European countries, only France and the United Kingdom do not shy away from a more massive deployment of troops in international operations, with possible support from a handful of other allies. This was evident, for example, during the 2011 operation against the Gaddafi regime in Libya: Apart from the two aforementioned leaders, only four European NATO members — Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain — participated, together with Sweden. Germany refused to take part, having previously abstained during the Security Council vote on the UN resolution authorizing the use of military force (the other two abstaining countries were Russia and China).

But the outcomes of the Libyan operation have not been persuasive: After the toppling of Gaddafi, Libya has effectively become a failed state. This may have contributed to the major political defeat of Prime Minister David Cameron in August 2013, when he lost the Commons vote on taking action against Syria, after its government used chemical weapons against insurgents.

The sending of European troops on international missions is sometimes also torpedoed by political indecision and a lack of coordination between the Union's own institutions and member states. EU Battle-groups (EU BG) are the most visible example. In 2003, France led the first EU military intervention – Operation Artemis in DRC – which provided inspiration for EU BG. However, since their formation, EU BG have never been deployed, although an opportunity arose with the military intervention in Mali in January 2013. The current situation regarding EU BG has been summed up very frankly by the Czech Army's Chief of Staff, Gen. Petr Pavel. At a Prague conference held on 28 April 2014 ("The European Union, the Czech Republic and Slovakia: a common security future"), he said that the Visegrad Four BG, which is currently being formed and should be deployable in 2016, will cost several million Czech crowns without the slightest military effect.<sup>15</sup>

In such a "strategic cacophony" it is naturally difficult to succeed with proposals for integration and rationalization of EU members' defence resources and capabilities. These proposals are based specifically on the "pooling and sharing" concept, which includes, for example, joint purchases and operation of military technology, joint logistic support during operations, etc.<sup>16</sup>

But there are a number of obstacles that make pooling and sharing difficult to implement. The concept may be advantageous for smaller countries or countries badly hit by the economic crisis. On the other hand, the same may not be true for large member states with higher defence budgets. Larger states might perceive the concept as circumscribing their own military capability. However, differences may arise even among large states, a recent case in point being the UK's 2012 cancellation of a plan to adapt its aircraft carrier for landings by French planes after such adjustment proved too costly.

Another obstacle is the tendency of European countries to protect their own national defence industries, which makes them reluctant to create a joint platform for armaments cooperation and necessary

standardization. For example, Germany, for its own financial reasons, refused to support the merger of two European arms giants, BAE and EADS. There is also no single consolidated competitive defence market in Europe. National protectionism thus contributes to the pitiful state of Europe's defence capabilities.

Still, there has been a step forward in the sharing of defence capabilities among NATO's European members, namely the Framework Nations concept, introduced by Germany in September 2013. Its aim is to make better use of the potential of both large and small European countries through coordinating the implementation of defence planning goals, and to create several formations with a balanced, well-coordinated array of capabilities. Framework Nations may thus prove to be one of the tools that will help Europe remain a relevant military partner to the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Achieving this goal, however, depends on Europe's ability to cover its due share of NATO's total armaments expenditures. The statistics do not present Europe in a favourable light: In 2011 the United States earmarked 731 billion for defence — a share of 75 per cent and a 15 per cent increase compared to 1990. European politicians, diplomats and soldiers acknowledge that the imbalance between us and European expenditure is unsustainable in the long run, but even if Europe were just to return to its 1990 defence spending levels, European NATO members would have to raise their defence budgets by approximately 150 billion USD. To what extent such a plan is viable, both politically and economically, remains to be seen.

### Will the Recent Strategic Shock Galvanise Europe?

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict that has suddenly escalated close to NATO and EU borders may, however, prove to be the game changer that will persuade European politicians to alter their attitude to defence funding. The two countries and their governments have fundamentally different visions of Ukraine's geopolitical orientation, and Russia has clearly opted for a hard-line policy, even resorting to threats of military intervention to defend its geopolitical interests in the post-Soviet space.

Russia's reaction to political changes in Ukraine therefore came as something of a strategic shock, which revealed the military vulnerability of NATO's European members. As the Polish ex-minister of foreign

affairs, Radoslaw Sikorski, has aptly said, “[t]he first thing we should do is to take stock of where we are in terms of security in Europe and abandon post-modernist illusions that conflict is unthinkable”.<sup>18</sup>

In the last two decades, the European members of NATO have engaged mostly in out-of-area operations: not traditional large-scale wars, but limited conflicts in which NATO was clearly dominant and effectively dictated development. Territorial defence has been neglected and the result is the current state of NATO’s European wing: a fragmented array of uncoordinated forces, and inflexible decision-making.

As it reacts to the Ukrainian conflict and Russian policy, the Alliance will face three urgent tasks: 1) It must halt the decline in defence spending in its European member states and launch a reverse trend; 2) It must convince the United States that NATO structures – and the European space – are still relevant to American interests; 3) It must show the “new” NATO members (i.e. those who joined after 1999) that it still represents a real guarantee of their security. Since the NATO summit in Wales in early September 2014, the Alliance has clearly been refocusing its original basic aim: the provision of collective security.

One of the principal aims declared by NATO’s Welsh summit was to ensure a continual increase in defence spending. The summit adopted a binding position on this subject that has been incorporated in the Wales Declaration on the Transatlantic Bond. Defence spending at 2 per cent GDP has been confirmed as the primary prerequisite for the continuing military viability of the Alliance. However, reaching this spending target does not automatically guarantee deployability, sustainability and interoperability of the NATO forces, which are the key criteria for effectiveness. Still, the declaration clearly defined three steps toward achieving the required spending level: The states with defence spending below the binding target must halt any further decline, must increase defence spending in real terms as GDP grows and must reach the required 2 per cent level within one decade. Attached to this is a further requirement, namely to increase investments in new equipment to 20 or more per cent of the total defence budget within the same time frame.<sup>19</sup>

The deployability of forces is the main focus of the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), which is based on three interlocking components: 1) Strengthening NATO’s rapid reaction potential, i.e. forces capable of being deployed within days; 2) Setting up an allied command focused exclusively on the collective defence of NATO eastern territory;

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3) Maintaining NATO presence in its eastern front on a rotational basis, with the aim of organizing joint exercises and creating conditions for a rapid transfer of reinforcements if necessary.<sup>20</sup>

The first component includes enhancing the responsiveness of the NATO Response Force (NRF) by developing force packages capable of rapid deployment. This should include a Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), able to deploy within a few days, particularly to respond to challenges that arise at the periphery of NATO's territory (Wales Summit Declaration, 2014).<sup>21</sup>

The third component, in its final form, is the result of a compromise. Poland and the Baltic states in particular have demanded the establishment of permanent military bases; these suggestions, however, have been rejected by Germany, Italy and France. For example, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said during her Latvian visit on 18 August 2014 that the Baltic states must, first of all, build an effective system of defence infrastructure that will permit them to respond immediately to any Russian military activity. Germany considers this a better solution than having long-term preventive military presence in the region.

Particularly in the case of Germany, this reserved stance — maintained in spite of Russia's increased military activity to the north and northwest — is motivated by fear that permanent NATO bases on the territory of the Alliance's eastern members might be considered a breach of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation. In this 1997 document, NATO declared that 'in the current and foreseeable security environment' it will carry out its mission without resorting to "additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces."<sup>22</sup>

NATO, especially its European members, will also have to respond to the new method of warfare used by Russia in the Ukrainian conflict, both in the Crimea and in eastern and southeastern Ukraine. This method, based on asymmetrical tactics difficult to foresee, has become known as hybrid warfare.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that this style of warfare will also be used by other "anti-west" actors in the future.

Despite negative changes in the Eastern European security environment, it is still possible that many European NATO members will remain unwilling to take on greater collective security commitments. After the protracted economic crisis, Europe is now experiencing stagnation rather than dynamic growth, and economic realities indicate

that some countries will be hard-pressed — or altogether unable — to meet the two-per-cent target in defence spending, even within a decade.

The willingness to increase defence spending is a function of geographical proximity to Russia. Countries such as Poland and the Baltic states feel immediately threatened, and are therefore more willing to raise their budgets. For south-European EU members, the Russian threat is not imminent and any increase in defence spending is very difficult, given their major fiscal problems. However, even with the rest of NATO's European members, including the largest such as France, the United Kingdom and Germany, the readiness to upgrade defence may be dampened by other concerns, chiefly the need to maintain welfare standards and to increase social security expenditure due to an aging population.

The attitude of the three above-mentioned countries is indeed crucial, as Europe can hardly become a stronger military actor without their full commitment to the task. Until now, there has been a division of roles: Germany has been the Union's "economic driver," while France and the United Kingdom have acted as military leaders. This model is now becoming untenable. Europe's military future may be influenced by the Ukrainian conflict, but also by other factors. Both military leaders are currently somewhat preoccupied: France is waging two wars in Africa, while the UK has its hands tied by national debates over its future EU status (or even its EU membership as such). This should give more scope to Germany, which is currently, both politically and economically, the strongest European country.

Some signs of such a shift may be found in a speech given by German President Joachim Gauck at the Munich Security Conference in February 2014: "We need NATO. And it is precisely at times when the United States cannot keep on providing more and more that Germany and its European partners must assume greater responsibility for their own security," said Gauck.<sup>24</sup> These words are certainly true for Germany, considering that its 2013 defence spending was at 1.3 per cent GDP, while France's was at 1.9 per cent and United Kingdom's at 2.3 per cent.

However, a greater security engagement of Germany at the European and global level may be difficult to achieve, not least due to the ambivalent attitude of both the German public and a significant portion of the political elite. The tragic experience of two world wars, both

of which were instigated by Germany and both of which proved catastrophic for the country, inclines most of its elite toward pacifism and makes them oppose greater German engagement in armed conflicts worldwide.

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But reluctance to engage in armed conflicts is becoming visible even in the United States. In January 2014, in a House of Commons lecture for the Henry Jackson Society, Professor Charles Kupchan of Georgetown University said that, in the eyes of most Americans, America had expended too much blood and too many resources in Afghanistan and Iraq and it had all been a big waste of time. Kupchan, who is a leading US foreign policy expert and a former member of President Clinton's National Security Council, added that in times of economic downturn, Americans see military expenditure as coming at the expense of their livelihood.<sup>25</sup>

However, these attitudes may change when US citizens are confronted with threats substantially compromising their security. According to a February 2015 Gallup poll, for the past decade Americans have been more likely to say the US Government spends too much on defence rather than too little, but today, a slim margin separates these views. While the 32 per cent of Americans saying the country is spending too much is about average for recent years, the 34 per cent saying "too little" is the highest since 2001.<sup>26</sup>

On a positive note, NATO members overall have a favourable view of the alliance. According to Pew Research Centre polling in NATO countries (April/May 2015) a median of 62% per cent express a positive perception of the organisation. But this generally upbeat attitude masks national differences that highlight current tensions and possible future difficulties for the coalition. For example, the greatest change in support for NATO has been in Germany, where favourability of the alliance has fallen 18 points since 2009, from 73 per cent to 55 per cent. On the other hand, 74 per cent of Poles hold a favourable opinion of NATO and the security reassurance that membership in it provides. Polish support for the alliance is up 10 percentage points from 2013. Six-in-ten or more French (64 per cent), Italians (64 per cent) and British (60 per cent) also hold a favourable view of NATO. However, roughly a third of the French (34 per cent) and about a quarter of Italians (26 per cent) express an unfavourable attitude toward NATO. NATO has a perception problem in the US, as well: Only 49% of Americans express a favourable opinion of the security organisation. This is unchanged from 2013, but down from 54 per cent in 2010 and 2011. Meanwhile, the proportion of

Americans who say they have an unfavourable view of NATO has grown from 21% in 2010 to 31% in 2015.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, the transatlantic security cooperation remains a firm basis for facing all future threats or conflicts jointly.

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### Potential Division of Roles in the Transatlantic Partnership

The United States still regards Europe as its closest ally and the same is true vice versa. The alliance is cemented by shared values, by historical and security ties between the two sides of the Atlantic and, most importantly, by strong economic ties. The data speak clearly: Bilateral EU-US trade reached 515,568 billion EUR in 2014. The US and EU together represent 60 per cent of global GDP, 33 per cent of world trade in goods and 42 per cent of world trade in services. Moreover, negotiations are under way to strengthen these economic ties still further. An EU-US free trade zone, one of the envisaged components of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), would create a trade bloc representing almost half of the global economic output and remove the existing trade barriers between the two transatlantic actors. The strategic importance of TTIP can be inferred by its nickname, “economic NATO.”<sup>28</sup> TTIP is not universally welcomed in Europe and some point to the political, economic and welfare risks associated with its prospective creation<sup>29</sup>. However, it may provide the necessary impetus for a closer political alliance between Europe and the US that would transcend economic cooperation and create opportunities for greater transatlantic strategic convergence.

The crucial question is what form this strategic convergence may take in the security realm. The security analyst Daniel Keohane envisages a mutually advantageous transatlantic cooperation on three levels: 1) NATO should continue to guarantee territorial defence; 2) the EU should take the lead in operations in its neighbourhood where the US has no interest; and 3) NATO would only act outside Europe if the United States wished to be involved. This suggests that the EU could consider stepping up its involvement in three areas: 1) protecting trade routes and access to resources; 2) responding to crises in its neighbourhood; and 3) focusing on external aspects of internal security, such as organized crime and terrorism.<sup>30</sup>

Implementing this vision, however, is difficult at present. Although the conflicts in Europe's neighbourhood stem from long-term social, economic and ethno-religious problems, they tend to flare up sud-

denly and escalate quickly, forcing both actors to adopt improvised, ad hoc solutions.

One such reaction was seen in 2013 in Mali, where the danger of a radical Islamist takeover prompted French intervention and the subsequent deployment of the European Training Mission in Mali (EUTM). The chief task of the EUTM is to provide aid in the training and modernization of the country's army, which is important for maintaining its territorial integrity.

But in the context of the whole Sahel region, comprising nine North African states,<sup>31</sup> Mali is just the tip of an iceberg of problems. According to a 2013 report by the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the French Senate, the Sahel currently has a population of 81 million, and this number is projected to grow to 120 million in just 13 years. This naturally generates, and will continue to generate, enormous welfare, healthcare, public health, nutritional and educational challenges that make the whole area a breeding ground of Islamic terrorist groups, infiltrating into the everyday life of local societies. The report calls the situation a potential direct security threat on Europe's doorstep.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, if there is a sudden, dramatic deterioration of the security situation, the EU may be forced to consider another intervention.

One of the most serious threats is illegal migration, which directly affects the security of several southern EU countries, Greece and Italy in particular. The migration waves hitting Europe, especially in 2015, originate mostly in armed conflict zones in Northern Africa, the Middle East and Afghanistan. According to Frontex Agency, more than 540 000 migrants arrived on the Greek islands in the first ten months of 2015, 13 times (!) more than in the same period of 2014. Syrians continued to account for the largest number of arrivals, although the share of Afghan nationals has risen significantly. Despite the worsening weather conditions in October, more than 150, 000 people made the journey from Turkey to Greece last month compared to fewer than 8,500 in October 2014. As a direct knock-on effect, in the January-October period some 500,000 illegal border crossings were detected on the EU's external borders in the Western Balkans, mainly on Hungary's and Croatia's borders with Serbia. Most of the migrants detected in the region had arrived earlier on one of the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea and then left the EU to travel through the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia. After Hungary constructed a fence

on its border with Serbia and tightened border controls in September, the migrants have begun crossing Croatia's border with Serbia in record numbers. In contrast to the record numbers in Greece and the Western Balkans, the Central Mediterranean route saw the number of people crossing from Libya to Italy drop by half in October, to 8,500, compared to the same month of 2014. This was in large part due to a shortage of boats available to smugglers, bringing the figure for the first ten months down to 140,000 versus nearly 155,000 in the same period of 2014.

Overall, the number of detections of illegal border crossings at the EU's external borders between January and October 2015 stood at an unprecedented 1.2 million, four times (!) the 282,000 recorded in all of last year.<sup>33</sup>

On 15 December 2015, under pressure of the migration crisis, the European Commission presented proposals to create a new European security structure: a permanent 1,500-person European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG). The EC's ambitious proposals stem from the fact that the excessive migration pressures have meant that some states such as Greece have not been able to effectively control their borders, constituting in this case the southern, external border of Schengen.<sup>34</sup>

The rise in illegal migration from the armed conflict zones is also due to the ill-chosen strategic approaches of the US, NATO and the EU, especially in Syria and Iraq. In Syria, the West was unable to provide sufficient support to moderate Syrian oppositionists in the early months of the civil war, despite warnings that the vacuum would foster extremist movements – the jihadists' so-called Islamic State (IS). At the same time, in Iraq, Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki's Shi'a-dominated government (supported by the US) alienated Sunnis and heightened sectarian tensions, generating sympathy for IS narrative.<sup>35</sup> The IS has since occupied parts of the Syrian and Iraqi territory, instituted a rigid Islamic regime and is now engaged in an armed conflict with the forces of the Iraqi army and the Kurdish Peshmerga. However, the US-trained and US-armed Iraqi army has crumbled under jihadist attacks, which make the Kurdish fighters the only fully combat-ready component of the anti-IS resistance.

The fight against the Islamic State is led by the "coalition of the willing" including, apart from the US, several NATO members and the Arab countries of the Gulf. A new actor in the conflict is Russia, since late September 2015, following a formal request by Assad's Syrian gov-

ernment asking for military help against rebel and jihadist groups (not only IS, but also the groups al Nusra Front and Army of Conquest). However, the coalition and Russia are only containing the IS with air strikes. Ground operation is not on the West's agenda, no doubt due to the meagre public support it would likely get after the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan. Still, the conflict with the Islamic State may contribute to a disintegration of the political and territorial status quo in the Middle East, which could ultimately threaten European interests.

Even now, however, the escalation of instability in the Middle East is becoming a serious threat to EU internal security. Radical Islamists from Europe are becoming involved in the Iraqi and Syrian conflicts, and are not only becoming more radicalised in the process, but also gaining new combat experience, which they can put to use in planning terrorist acts at home, as evidenced by the terrorist attacks in Paris in January and November 2015 and in Brussels in March 2016. The extent of the problem is best illustrated by figures: Some 5,000 combatants of the Islamic State are from Western Europe, e.g. around 760 from the UK and Germany and 1,700 from France.<sup>36</sup> Eliminating such a threat requires truly efficient work and cooperation of the intelligence services and the police.

The Syrian and Iraqi experience has led some to question the quality and competence of political decision-making in matters of military engagement. In a lecture on the Iraqi and Afghan wars given in London's Royal United Services Institute, Admiral Mike Mullen, the former Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, defined war as a continuation of politics and stressed politicians' responsibility for it, while acknowledging that their decisions on Iraq and Afghanistan have often been disastrous. There are several lessons to be learned. Firstly, when the decision to enter a war is taken, the mission should have limited objectives. There should also be a clear understanding of what the ending should look like, what is to be achieved (i.e. at least an outline of a strategy) and what role the military should play in the process. At the start, a military operation must always have a clear time frame: an idea of how long the deployment should last, not in terms of years, but in months. Understanding local culture and traditions is also crucial. How little the West knows about the countries in which it intervenes usually only becomes apparent when the fighting is in full swing – which can be a fatal mistake. Last but not least, western

countries should not be too cavalier with other nations' sovereignty, as this is a very sensitive subject, especially in Muslim countries. In this context, Admiral Mullen was very critical about drone attacks in Pakistan. Technologies for targeted killing at a distance have desensitized us to the use of force. This, in turn, leads to the killing of innocent civilians along with terrorists, a serious mistake through which the West makes new enemies. The situation in the combat zone must always be assessed by those who have "boots on the ground".<sup>37</sup>

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Admiral Mullen's conclusions represent an important template for political and military decision-making when it comes to potential future military/humanitarian operations in the unstable regions of Europe's neighbourhood, especially in Africa and the Middle East. It is important that politicians make maximum use of diplomatic and intelligence services, consult with domestic experts on the political, social and economic evolution of the relevant countries or regions, and check the quality and reliability of the information they receive. It is also becoming clear that countries that lie in a conflict-ridden zone, are suffering from instability, or have already become failed states, require an integrated approach combining several tools. Only such a combination – including (but not limited to) diplomacy, development cooperation, and deployment of military and police forces — allows for a more comprehensive treatment of problems with corresponding multiplication effects.

A partly integrated approach is being successfully implemented by EU-NAVFOR Operation Atalanta, whose primary aim is to eliminate piracy off the Somali coast. According to Rear Admiral Bob Tarrant, Commander of Operation Atalanta, the anti-piracy activities of the international community in the region of the Horn of Africa have reduced piracy by 90 to 95 per cent over five years. But there is also another aspect. The operation demonstrates Europe's ability to act on its geopolitical priorities in the Suez-Shanghai zone, an area that contains the main European maritime communication line to the Middle East, South and East Asia, and that represents a meeting point of the world's pre-eminent powers: China, the EU, India, Japan, South Korea and the US.<sup>38</sup> Europe thus shows its potential to participate in the division of security roles according to Keohane's concept, and to act, to some extent, as a global security player. In the current situation of security uncertainty, this is not so small an achievement. Still, it is only one, (albeit



important) step towards strengthening Europe's security role in the transatlantic framework.



CEJISS  
1/2016

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*This article is the outcome of the research, development and innovation project entitled 'Adaptation of the Security System of the Czech Republic to Changing Economic, Social, Demographic, and Geopolitical Realities' (VG20132015112).*

## Notes

- 1 Quoted from a speech made at the 4<sup>th</sup> round of informal talks on Middle East issues ("Czech It Out"), held by the Czech Embassy in the United States on 1 April 2014.
- 2 According to Andrew Krepinevich, head of the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments and a leading US expert on defence budgets and military strategy, the cuts will inevitably curtail investment in some capabilities whose insufficient supply may hamper US military efforts in the future. Krepinevich believes that while the United States will still be able to take part in peace operations, wars like those in Afghanistan and Iraq will be beyond its capacity, and if future conflicts require new weapons to facilitate enemy elimination, the United States might not be capable of engagement.
- 3 Sino-American relations have become the world's most important bilateral relationship. Economic data speaks for itself. Annual bilateral trade exceeds 600 billion USD (2014: 590 billion USD). The United States is China's second largest trading partner (the first being the EU), while China is the third largest trading partner of the US, after Canada and the EU. China is the largest exporter into the US (466 billion USD) and also America's largest creditor: Its holdings of US government bonds are worth 1.2 trillion USD. In addition, 60 per cent of Chinese foreign currency reserves, whose total worth is 3.8 trillion USD (estimate) are held in US dollars (which means that US prosperity — especially the stability of the dollar — is in China's best interest; conversely, it is crucial for the US that China maintain its trust in this stability).
- 4 M. Balabán (2014), 'The New Age of the US-EU-Chinese Relations and Dilemmas'. *Central European Journal of International Security Studies* 3/2014. Available at <<http://static.cejiss.org/data/uploaded/1421787746161647/Article%2001.pdf>> (accessed 15 December 2015).

- 5 According to Timothy Garton Ash, “Europe” may refer to five different things: a historical concept, a continent with unclear boundaries, European states acting through their national institutions, the European Union, and the vision that the EU is supposed to fulfil. In this text, “Europe” is used in the last-mentioned sense.
- 6 Characteristic in this respect is the assessment of the Afghan mission by Lieutenant-General James Everard, Deputy Chief of UK Defence Staff (2014). Everard predicts that after 2016 the situation in the country will deteriorate, though with varying speed and seriousness in its different regions. Kabul and provincial capitals will, according to Everard, remain under government control, but the rest will be controlled by Taliban and warlord militias. The troops of the Afghan National Army will, for the most part, stay put at their bases. Afghanistan may thus become what we might call Yaghestan — a country of rebels, lawless and without proper government.
- 7 J.L. Bilmes (2013), ‘The Financial Legacy of Iraq and Afghanistan: How Wartime Spending Decisions Will Constrain Future National Security Budgets.’ HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series rwp13-006, March. Available at <file:///C:/Users/TEMP/Downloads/RWP13-006\_Bilmes%20(1).pdf > (accessed 16 July 2013).
- 8 R. M. Gates (2010), ‘NATO Strategic Concept Seminar (Future of NATO): Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, National Defense University, Washington, D.C., Tuesday, February 23, 2010.’ *Secretary of Defense Speech*. U.S. Department of Defense. Available at < http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1423 > (accessed 15 December 2015). This trend contrasts sharply with the rising military power of Asian nations, whose military spending in 2012, for the first time in history, overtook that of Europe. It is also projected that, by 2020, China’s military budget will be larger than the combined military budgets of NATO’s European members.
- 9 EDA (2012), ‘Defence Data 2012’. *European Defence Agency*. Available at <http://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-publications/defence-data-booklet-2012-web> (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 10 NATO (2014) ‘Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence’. *NATO*. Available at <http://www.nato.int/nato\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\_topics/20140224\_140224-PR2014-028-Defence-exp.pdf > (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 11 K. Lisek (2011), ‘Report on the impact of the financial crisis on the defence sector in the EU Member States’. *European Parliament*. Available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A7-2011-0428+0+DOC+PDF+Vo//EN> (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 12 NATO (2014), ‘Financial and Economic Data Relating to NATO Defence’. *NATO*. Available at <http://www.nato.int/nato\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\_topics/20140224\_140224-PR2014-028-Defence-exp.pdf > (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 13 C. Major, Ch. Mölling (2013), ‘The Dependent State(s) of Europe: European Defence in Year Five of Austerity’. In *The State of Defence in Europe: State*

- of Emergency*, edited by Biscop, Sven, and Daniel Fiott. Brussels - Gent: Egmont - The Royal Institute for International Relations - Academia Press, 2013, p.13-18. Available at <<http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ep62.pdf>> (accessed 15 December 2015).
- 14 EDA (2012), 'Defence Data 2012'. *European Defence Agency*. Available at <<http://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-publications/defence-data-booklet-2012-web>> (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 15 General Pavel literally said: "We lie to ourselves about the European Union and its defence dimension when we assure each other that our highest ambition within European Defence Policy is the system of EU Battlegroups. Our politicians like to show their faces at various VIP events where we certify and possibly later confirm the operational readiness of these battle groups, although we know there is no point in having them, because they have never been used and it has not even been said there is enough political will to use them. Which means that here we are, expressing support for the ostentatious building of a V4 Battle Group whose only result will be a quadruple big zero, because we all know beforehand that we will spend hundreds of millions of crowns on it and will never ever use it." (Conference "European Union, the Czech Republic and Slovakia: a common security future", 28 April 2014, audio recording available at <http://sbp.fsv.cuni.cz/SBP-249.html> ).
- 16 At the beginning of the new millennium, the integration and rationalization of defence capabilities was on the agenda at the Czech Defence Ministry, then headed by Jaroslav Tvrdík (2001-2003). The country accepted the principle of specialization discussed within the Alliance: basically an extension of the key maxim of collective defence, i.e. that an armed attack against one member of the Alliance is to be considered an attack against the Alliance as a whole. The small states were thus freed from the necessity of developing, maintaining and using the full range of military capabilities, a task that had been seriously taxing their financial and human resources. The specialized capabilities were made available for NATO Operations Planning to which the individual members contributed their respective shares as determined and coordinated by the NATO Defence Planning Process. The required structure and scope of capabilities was to be achieved only jointly. The Czech Republic was to specialize in passive surveillance systems, CBRN defence capabilities and military healthcare facilities. However, soon enough it became apparent that the system would not be viable, due to a number of practical financial and legal problems and also due to a lack of political will, especially on the part of the larger NATO states, which wanted to keep the whole range of military capabilities.
- 17 F. D. Kramer (2014), 'NATO's Framework Nations: Capabilities for an Unpredictable World'. *Atlantic Council*. Available at <[http://www.atlantic-council.org/images/publications/NATOS\\_Framework\\_Nations.pdf](http://www.atlantic-council.org/images/publications/NATOS_Framework_Nations.pdf)> (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 18 R. Sikorski (2014), 'Talking with Poland's foreign minister about the Ukraine crisis and Russia's next moves'. *Washington Post*. Available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/talking-with-polands-foreign-minister->

- about-the-ukraine-crisis-and-russias-next-moves/2014/04/17/f1811e84-c5ad-11e3-bf7a-be01a9b69cf1\_story.htm> (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 19 'Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales' (2014). Available at <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en)> (accessed 12 September 2014).
  - 20 'Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales' (2014). Available at <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en)> (accessed 12 September 2014).
  - 21 'Wales Summit Declaration. Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales' (2014). Available at <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm?selectedLocale=en)> (accessed 12 September 2014).
  - 22 'Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation' (1997). Available at <[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_25468.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_25468.htm)> (accessed 11 October 2014).
  - 23 The term "hybrid warfare" has been used by Frank G. Hoffman of the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. In his crucial work *Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, p. 8, available at [http://www.potomacinstitute.org/publications/Potomac\\_HybridWar\\_0108.pdf](http://www.potomacinstitute.org/publications/Potomac_HybridWar_0108.pdf)), he does not speak primarily of hybrid wars but of hybrid threats. By his definition, hybrid threats incorporate a full range of modes of warfare: conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts that include indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder. Hybrid wars are wars conducted by both state and non-state actors that use the modes of warfare identified above as hybrid threats. These state and non-state actors can be represented by separate units, which are generally operationally and tactically directed and coordinated within the main battlespace to achieve synergistic effects. The significance of hybrid warfare for the military activities of the Russian Federation has been acknowledged by the country's Chief of General Staff, Gen. Valery Gerasimov, in his speech entitled "On the state of the armed forces of the Russian Federation and measures to increase their combat-readiness" (14 February 2013). While Gen. Gerasimov did not use the term "hybrid warfare," he did state that "the importance of non-military methods for achieving politico-military and strategic goals has increased and, in many cases, these methods have proved significantly more effective than military instruments. These methods are supplemented the clandestine use of force, e.g. by informational confrontation, activities of special operations forces and exploiting the population's protest potential." There is no doubt that these methods have been used in Ukraine (available at <http://arsenal-otechestva.ru/gerasimov-o-sostoyanii-vooruzhennyx-sil-rf.html>).
  - 24 J. Gauck (2014), 'Germany's role in the world: Reflections on responsibility, norms and alliances'. Speech by Federal President Joachim Gauck at the opening of the Munich Security Conference on 31 January 2014. *Bundespräsidialamt*.

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- Available at <[http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2014/01/140131-Muenchner-Sicherheitskonferenz-Englisch.pdf;jsessionid=BB584174470A7A7EDD98A180E6450971.2\\_cid379?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](http://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2014/01/140131-Muenchner-Sicherheitskonferenz-Englisch.pdf;jsessionid=BB584174470A7A7EDD98A180E6450971.2_cid379?__blob=publicationFile)> (accessed 12 June 2014).
- 25 Ch. Kupchan (2014), 'Without a Captain at the Helm: Statecraft in a Multipolar World'. *The Henry Jackson Society*. Available at <<http://henry-jacksonsociety.org/2014/01/23/20808>> (accessed 12 June 2014).
  - 26 'Americans Split on Defense Spending' (2015). *GALLUP*. Available at <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/181628/americans-split-defense-spending.aspx>> (accessed 22 September 2015).
  - 27 'NATO Publics Blame Russia for Ukrainian Crisis, but Reluctant to Provide Military Aid' (2015). *PewResearchCenter*. Available at <<http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-Russia-Ukraine-Report-FINAL-June-10-2015.pdf>> (accessed 22. September 2015).
  - 28 B. C. Gray (2013), 'An Economic NATO: A New Alliance for a New Global Order' *Atlantic Council*. Available at <[http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/files/publication\\_pdfs/403/tar130221economicnato.pdf](http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/images/files/publication_pdfs/403/tar130221economicnato.pdf)> (accessed 12 June 2014).
  - 29 Especially left-wing politicians, experts and trade unions are concerned that TTIP may strengthen the economic power of transnational corporations at the expense of governments, and undermine European welfare and consumer protection standards.
  - 30 D. Keohane (2013), 'European less able, Americans less willing?' In *Transatlantic Cooperation in Times of Crisis: The Economy -Security Nexus*. Paris: The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2013. Available at <<http://www.gmfus.org/publications>> (accessed 31 August 2014).
  - 31 Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia.
  - 32 J.P. Chevènement, G. Larcher (2013), 'Sahel: Pour une approche globale'. *Rapport D'Information Fait au nom de la commission des affaires étrangères, de la défense et des forces armées (1) par le groupe de travail « Sahel »*. Available at <<http://www.senat.fr/rap/r12-720/r12-7201.pdf>> (accessed 11 October 2014).
  - 33 Frontex (2015), '540 000 migrants arrived on Greek islands in the first 10 months of 2015'. *Frontex*. Available at <<http://frontex.europa.eu/news/540-000-migrants-arrived-on-greek-islands-in-the-first-10-months-of-2015-4uH4FJ>> (accessed 28 December 2015).
  - 34 According to an EC proposal, the new European Border and Coast Guard will have (besides other things): *A rapid reserve pool of border guards and technical equipment*: The Agency will be able to draw on at least 1,500 experts that can be deployed in under 3 days. For the first time, the Agency will be able to acquire equipment itself and to draw on a pool of technical equipment provided by the Member States. There will no longer be shortages of staff or equipment for European border operations. The new Agency's human resources will more than double that of Frontex, to reach 1,000 permanent staff, including field operatives, by 2020. *A monitoring and supervisory role*: A monitoring and risk analysis centre will be established to

monitor migratory flows towards and within the European Union and to carry out risk analysis and mandatory vulnerability assessments to identify and address weak spots. Liaison officers will be seconded to Member States to ensure presence on the ground where the borders are at risk. The Agency will be able to assess the operational capacity, technical equipment and resources of Member States to face challenges at their external borders and will require Member States to take measures to address the situation within a set time-limit, in case of vulnerabilities. *The right to intervene*: Member States can request joint operations and rapid border interventions, and deployment of the European Border and Coast Guard Teams to support these. Where deficiencies persist, or where a Member State is under significant migratory pressure — putting in peril the Schengen area — and national action is not forthcoming or not enough, the Commission will be able to adopt an implementing decision determining that the situation at a particular section of the external borders requires urgent action at the European level. This will allow the Agency to step in and deploy European Border and Coast Guard Teams to ensure that action is taken on the ground, even when a Member State is unable or unwilling to take the necessary measures. *Coast Guard surveillance*: National coastguards will be part of the European Border and Coast Guard to the extent that they carry out border control tasks. The mandates of the European Fisheries Control Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency will be aligned with the new European Border and Coast Guard. The three Agencies will be able to launch joint surveillance operations, for instance by jointly operating Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (drones) in the Mediterranean Sea. *A mandate to work in third countries*: The Agency will have a new mandate to send liaison officers to and launch joint operations with neighbouring third countries, including operating on their territory.

- 35 E. Pearce (2014), 'ISIS and the Politics of Radicalization'. *Brookings. Markaz Middle East Politics & Policy*. Available at <<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2014/09/03-pearce-isis-and-the-politics-of-radicalization>> (accessed 22 September 2015).
- 36 The Soufan Group (2015), Foreign Fighters. An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq. *The Soufan Group*. December 2015. Available at <[http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG\\_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf](http://soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/TSG_ForeignFightersUpdate3.pdf)> (accessed 28 December 2015).
- 37 M. Mullen (2014), 'Gallipoli Memorial Lecture - Afghanistan and Iraq: Understanding and Incorporating Lessons' 4 June 2014. *RUSI - Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies* (own record from RUSI facebook).
- 38 J. Rogers (2013), 'Why do Europeans need Armed Forces?' *FRIDE*. Available at <[http://www.fride.org/download/PB\\_168\\_Why\\_do\\_Europeans\\_need\\_armed\\_forces.pdf](http://www.fride.org/download/PB_168_Why_do_Europeans_need_armed_forces.pdf)> (accessed 12 June 2014).