

**NATO 2022 STRATEGIC CONCEPT –
THE EUROPEAN UNION’S STRATEGIC COMPASS FOR
SECURITY AND DEFENCE.
COMPARING VIEWS AND APPROACHES**

*Major Alina ALEXANDRU, Ph.D Candidate**

***Abstract:** During the past decade, the strategic environment and global security have suffered significant changes. The strategic competition has increasingly accentuated and Europe is witnessing a new war on the continent that generates severe security, humanitarian, and economic consequences. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected public health, global economy and societies, emphasizing vulnerabilities to hybrid threats and the need to enhance resilience. Moreover, developments in the cyber and new technologies domain pose a significant threat to the European Union and the Euro-Atlantic area. Against this background the European Union and NATO set their priorities for the next decade in the EU’ Strategic Compass and NATO 2022 Strategic Concept. We will compare the two documents with the aim at identifying similarities and difference with regard to NATO’s and EU’s views on the strategic environment and their approach in managing challenges and threats to their own security and interests, as well as to their shared goals and interests.*

***Keywords:** European Union, NATO, Strategic Concept, Strategic Compass, strategic environment, strategic competition, Russia, China, rules-based international order, multilateralism, defence, security.*

I. An overview of the European and the Euro-Atlantic context

Developments in recent years, especially in 2022, have severely affected the security, stability and prosperity on the European continent and in the Euro-Atlantic area, as well as the international environment as a whole. The multifaceted effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the public health, global economy, and societies worldwide; the increase of new threats in the cyber, hybrid and new technologies domains; the impact of climate change; and the return of conventional war to Europe have generated multiple severe challenges for the West and called for short to medium and long-term solutions. Moreover, the already shaped strategic

* National Defense University “Carol I”, alinaalexandru0202@gmail.com.

competition has intensified affecting both the European Union and NATO, as well as the strategic stability.

The European Union and NATO are two major representatives, guarantors for their own members and supporters worldwide of the rules-based international order, multilateralism and democratic values and principles that the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the unfair and brutal manifestation of the strategic competition threat to dismantle. Therefore, the cooperation between NATO and the EU in preventing such occurrence is essential.

Moreover, the security and prosperity of European Union and NATO member states reinforce one another while the joint effort against a potential common opponent multiplies chances of success. During the past decades the European Union and NATO have worked together many times for common purposes, namely to stabilize the Western Balkans, to fight against global terrorism and organized crime, to strengthen arms control and nonproliferation and, most recently, to assist Ukraine in defending itself against the Russian military aggression.

On the other hand, there are significant differences between NATO and the European Union in terms of legal status, agenda, responsibilities, members, instruments, as well as related to the ways the current strategic environment affects them.

The European Union successfully passed significant challenges during the past seven years: illegal migration flows, recrudescence of terrorism, Euroscepticism and illiberal trends, Brexit, internal disputes affecting the unity and cohesion of the Union, and Covid-19 pandemic.

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the effects that followed, the European Union was dedicated to consolidate its power and assume the role of an emerging global actor and the most important means to achieve this status was and continues to be the build-up of the European Union's military power.

Acting upon the 2016 Global Strategy of the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy¹, the EU set up the Military Planning and Conduct Capability; European Defence Fund and Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, focused on defence planning, endowment, research and development; and Permanent Structured Cooperation, also known by its acronym PESCO, as the framework for the EU defence operational cooperation. All these defence initiatives are in the process of implementation and have grown since 2016 involving most of the EU member states and, in the case of PESCO projects, several non-EU NATO members as well.

Against this background, the EU Strategic Compass for Security and Defence represents a defence-focused strategic document to guide the medium to long-term efforts of the Union towards consolidating its defence strength in addition to the directions drawn by the EU Global Strategy.

NATO 2022 Strategic Concept follows a series of significant developments within the Allied framework in the political, military and institutional domains, a complex adaptation process started in 2014, after the illegal annexation of the Crimea Peninsula by Russia. At the Wales Summit that year the Allies adopted the Readiness Action Plan that set up the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force and the NATO Force Integration Units in Central and Eastern Europe², thus making the first step towards the consolidation of NATO presence in the East after the end of Cold War.

In 2016, NATO made the next step at the Summit in Warsaw when the Allied leaders established the enhanced Forward Presence of the Alliance in Poland and the Baltic states and the tailored Forward Presence of NATO in Romania and the Black Sea region.³

¹ EU, *Global Strategy for European Union's Foreign and Security Policy – Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf, accessed 8 December 2022.

² NATO, *Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales*, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm, accessed 8 December 2022.

³ NATO, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016*, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm, accessed 8 December 2022.

During the past six years, NATO leaders have gathered at least once every year, for a Summit or a high-level meeting, except for 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All these events delivered new measures designed to consolidate NATO's deterrence and defence posture in general and on the Eastern Flank in particular, as a response to the Russian military build-up and its increased assertiveness in the region. Consequently, NATO established new structures in the Central and Eastern Europe, military exercises have grown in number and amplitude and Allies increased their defence spending towards and in some cases above the target of 2% of GDP assumed by the Defence Investment Pledge in 2014.

In 2021, the Allies adopted NATO 2030 agenda with the aim at strengthening the Alliance by implementing the following priorities: • increase coordination and dialog within NATO; • strengthen NATO's deterrence and defence posture; • improve resilience; • maintain technological superiority; • sustain the rules-based international order; • increase training and capacity building; • address climate change; • develop a new Strategic Concept; • ensure the necessary investments.⁴

In February 2022, in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, NATO activated for the first time the defence plans and deployed elements of NATO Response Force to the Eastern Flank of the Alliance. Moreover, in March 2022 the Allied leaders decided to establish four new battle groups in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, in addition to those already operational in Poland and the Baltic states.

II. Comparing views on the security environment of the European Union' Strategic Compass and NATO Strategic Concept

The process of drafting NATO 2022 Strategic Concept and EU' Strategic Compass for Security and Defence took place mostly simultaneously in 2021 and the first part of 2022. The EU issued the Strategic Compass on 21st of March 2022 and NATO Strategic Concept

⁴ NATO, *NATO 2030*, Factsheet, June 2021, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/6/pdf/2106-factsheet-nato2030-en.pdf, accessed 8 December 2022.

became public at the NATO Summit in Madrid, during 29 – 30 of June 2022.

The European Union' Strategic Compass is the first document entirely dedicated to security and defence with a precise timetable offering “*an ambitious plan of action for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy by 2030*”⁵. This proves once more the determination of the European Union to act upon its political will to develop the European defence and become a significant global actor. Having its roots in the EU Common Security and Defence Policy, the EU Foreign and Security Policy and the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, the Strategic Compass brings a more practical approach to achieve EU' strategic objectives in the security and defence domain.

The 2022 NATO Strategic Concept is the eight such a document since the Alliance's foundation in 1949. Without having a precise timetable to renew its strategic concepts, after the end of Cold War it became common for NATO to issue a new Strategic Concept every approximately 10 years.

NATO issued the previous Strategic Concept in 2010 at the Summit in Lisbon. The Concept reflects mainly the specific security challenges of that period, namely terrorism, and the proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.⁶ Security developments and changes in the international environment during the past decade called for a new Strategic Concept adapted to the current and future challenges, threats and risks to the Euro-Atlantic area.

Both the EU Strategic Compass and NATO Strategic Concept were in the process of drafting at the time of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, therefore that was not the trigger, but most likely, it would have been if the process had not already started a year before. However, due to the significant and multifaceted impact on Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has a major influence on the view and the approach of the EU and NATO for the decade to come.

⁵ European Council, Council of the European Union, *A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade*, available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade/>, accessed 10 December 2022.

⁶ NATO, *Strategic Concepts*, available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_56626.htm, accessed 10 December 2022.

The first remark of the European Union on the international security environment is that the Russian aggression against Ukraine has marked the return to power politics threatening the security of Europe, the rules-based international order and multilateralism that the Union strongly supports.⁷

In a similar manner, NATO emphasizes Russia's violation of international law that severely affects the European security making the Alliance to take into consideration the possibility of an act of aggression against Allies.⁸

Both NATO and the EU regard the strategic competition as a phenomenon that challenges their core interests related to global security and stability and international rules-based order. However, the EU relates this reality to the questioned multi-polarity in the international system, while NATO only acknowledges the competitors and their challenging behavior against the democratic values and interests without defining the international system.

NATO and the European Union evaluate the strategic environment as characterized by instability and tension, while challenges, threats and risks are interconnected and elevate each other varying from conventional to cyber and hybrid domains. Malicious use new technologies, disinformation campaigns, the abusive use of economy, energy, and migration as a weapon put a significant pressure on Europe and the Euro-Atlantic area, testing the resilience of the West and the strength of the democratic way of living.

The Strategic Compass acknowledges the general instability around the European Union, starting with the Western Balkans, where the security situation is still fragile and vulnerable to foreign interference affecting the tempo of Bosnia and Herzegovina approach towards the EU as well as significant progress in Pristina-Belgrade dialog. Moreover, the Eastern neighborhood of the EU witnesses the military aggression of Ukraine by

⁷ EU, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, Introduction*, page 14, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf, accessed 10 December 2022

⁸ NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Strategic Environment*, page. 3, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf, accessed 10 December 2022

Russia that also severely affects the neighboring countries Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, as well as countries in the South Caucasus region. Overall, EU assesses that the entire wider Black Sea area is facing security, economic, and energy consequences of the war in Ukraine. At the same time, the Southern neighborhood of the EU continues to be tense because of the perpetuation of conflicts in Syria and Libya triggering security threats for the EU related to terrorism and organized crime, while sporadic tensions between state actors in the Eastern Mediterranean may intensify at any time putting the EU in a difficult position.

The European Union regards all these developments as threats and challenges to the security of the European citizens, to the European critical infrastructure and to the integrity of the EU's borders.⁹

Secondly, the Strategic Compass notes that Africa, which is of strategic importance to the European Union, and Middle East and Gulf region face numerous security and economic challenges that fuel regional instability and have the potential to affect European security and interests.

Thirdly, the European Union acknowledges that the developments related to the strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific area tend to affect its economic interests and threaten the rules-based international order.

Finally, yet importantly, the European Union is concerned with the security threats originating from Asia, specifically Afghanistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as well as with the instability and fragility of Venezuela and Colombia in the Latin America.

It is noteworthy that the European Union considers China “an economic competitor and a systemic rival”¹⁰, while remaining “a partner for cooperation”¹¹.

Against this background the EU Strategic Compass names as significant threats to EU security the following: terrorism and violent extremism; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; cyber and hybrid hostile acts and misuse of new technologies; manifestation of

⁹ EU, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, Our strategic environment*, page 18-19, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf, accessed 10 December 2022.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, page 18.

¹¹ *Idem*.

competition in outer space; threats to maritime and air security; and climate change.¹²

NATO's first concern related to the security environment is the authoritarian actors that challenge democracy, and develop conventional and nuclear capabilities, disregarding the international norms and treaties. In the Alliance's view, this type of behavior aims at testing the resilience of the West by combining new technologies, cyber activities and hybrid campaigns, as well as the use of energy, economy and migration as a weapon against Allies and NATO's partners.

NATO assesses Russia as “*the most significant and direct threat to Allies' security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area*”¹³ due to its use of conventional, cyber and hybrid tactics against the Allies. Moreover, the Allies consider that Russia's military build-up near NATO's borders in the North, East and South and its aggressive behavior towards the Alliance and against its partners undermines the rules-based international order.

The Alliance also considers terrorism continues to pose a threat to the Allies' security as well as the global peace by terrorist groups extending networks, improving capabilities and exploring fragile states to gain local and regional influence.

Closely related to terrorism, NATO's security is affected by the perpetuation of security, economic and political challenges in the South, namely in the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions, a concern that is amplified by the potential use of these vulnerable area by strategic competitors.

While for the European Union China represents an important component of the strategic environment requiring appropriate attention in the overall assessment in the Strategic Compass and in relation to the EU,

¹² EU, A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, Our strategic environment, page 20-21, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic-compass_en3_web.pdf, accessed 10 December 2022

¹³ NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Strategic Environment*, page.4, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf, accessed 10 December 2022.

NATO clearly defines China as a challenger to its interests, security and values. The Alliance is deeply concerned with China's use of the political, economic, military and new technology elements of power to increase its influence worldwide, as well as with its subversive behavior, including in outer space, cyber and maritime domains, and its cooperation with Russia that threaten the rules-based international order and weaken multilateralism.¹⁴

Cyber and emerging and disruptive technologies developments are of particular concern for NATO as both sectors represent main areas of global competition due to their capacity to affect the freedom of movement and action, the safety of critical infrastructure and the effectiveness of military operations, generating significant security risks.

NATO also observes the deterioration of arms control, disarmament and nonproliferation that affects the strategic stability, naming Russia's breaches and selective compliance with the commitments assumed by Moscow. At the same time, NATO continues to take into consideration a possible hostile act against the Alliance involving Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear materials, mentioning Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear ambitions as well as Syria's and Russia's previous use of chemical weapons. It also signals concern regarding China's behavior with regard to the development of nuclear arsenal without communicating appropriately its actions and intentions.¹⁵

The Alliance also assesses climate change challenges as a "*threat multiplier*"¹⁶ that affects the effectiveness of NATO troops, capabilities and operations.

III. Comparing approaches of NATO Strategic Concept and European Union' Strategic Compass

The essential component of NATO Strategic Concepts is the definition of the Alliance's main responsibilities, named NATO's core tasks, as well as the intentions and the means stated to achieve them, considering the overall security environment and the specific challenges, threats and risks to NATO and the Euro-Atlantic area.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, page 5.

¹⁵ *Idem*.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, page 6.

Compared with the previous Strategic Concept (2010) that stated collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security as the main tasks of the Alliance¹⁷, the 2022 Strategic Concept operates slight differences naming deterrence and defence, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security as the core tasks of NATO¹⁸. We can notice that the difference consists in emphasizing the preventive dimension of Alliance – deter opponents and competitors so that defence would not be necessary and prevent crisis so that their management would not be necessary. It is most likely that this slight difference of approach highlighting prevention is justified by the increased volatile international security environment and the weakened strategic stability calling for responsible and restrained behavior of the major actors.

However, the current approach of NATO does not diminish the relevance of NATO's commitment to defend the Allies, on the contrary, the Concept states clearly that collective defence remains the essential aim of NATO, and the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty is more valid than ever.

Deterrence and defence covers the most extended part of NATO's core tasks in the Strategic Concept, both in textual and operational terms. NATO's deterrence and defence posture integrates the entire spectrum of preventive and defensive measures that the Alliance takes to protect and to ensure safety and security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Concept affirms that NATO is determined to significantly strengthen its deterrence and defence posture in the long term in all operational domains, i.e., land, air, maritime, cyber and space in order to “*deter, defend, contest and deny across all domains and directions*”¹⁹,

¹⁷ NATO, *NATO Strategic Concept 2010, Core Tasks and Principles*, available at <https://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>, accessed 11 December 2022.

¹⁸ NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, Strategic Environment*, available at: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.-pdf, accessed 11 December 2022.

¹⁹ NATO, *NATO Strategic Concept 2010, Core Tasks and Principles*, page 6, available at <https://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>, accessed 11 December 2022.

against any potential enemy, based on the Allied mix of nuclear, conventional, space and cyber capabilities. In conventional terms, NATO is determined enhance the command and force structures of the Alliance and to ensure the necessary forces, capabilities, ammunition and equipment to defend forward. This means that NATO will continue to increase its presence especially on the Eastern Flank to ensure both the capacity to deter Russia and to defend the Allies, according to Article 5, if necessary.

Moreover, increasing NATO's awareness capacity, as well as improving the interoperability and readiness of the Allied forces and their ability to move, integrate and operate represent important directions of effort for the next ten years.

To the developments in the cyber and new technologies' domain NATO will respond by strengthening cyber defence and continuous adaptation to maintain the Allied superiority and capacity to react, while abiding the international law and norms, as well the democratic values and principles.

The Strategic Concept states that strengthening resilience, both individually and by collective effort, is one of NATO priorities. In the face of increased cyber and hybrid threats, NATO is determined to improve its ability to resist, counter and respond to military and non-military threats and challenges. To this aim the Alliance as a whole and the Allies, individually and collectively, will focus on mitigating vulnerabilities and dependencies, protecting critical infrastructure and chains of supply, and ensuring the fundamental requirements of resilience.

With reference to the nuclear capabilities, the Strategic Concept reaffirms their main aim of maintaining peace and deterring aggression, as well as the fact that NATO will remain a nuclear Alliance, even though the circumstances of engaging such capabilities are far-off. At the same time, NATO remains fully committed to complying with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Yet importantly, as part of the deterrence and defence task, NATO will continue to strengthen defence against Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear and to counter terrorism, based on the 360 degrees approach of the Alliance.

The second core task of NATO stipulated by the Strategic Concept is crisis prevention and management, a role that the Alliance will uphold as a

distinct contribution to stability and security. As noted, the Strategic Concept emphasizes the preventive approach of NATO in this domain, a fact that is also reflected by the Alliance' stated focus on anticipation and prevention. Moreover, NATO affirms the intention to increase support for partners to develop their own capacity to mitigate security threats and prevent destabilization. At the same time, NATO will ensure the capabilities needed to sustain crisis management, including at long distances and in close coordination with international partners, especially the European Union and the United Nations.

The third core task of NATO is cooperative security, a field of particular interest and attention for the Alliance over the years. In the current international context, NATO assesses the cooperation with partners worldwide as more important than ever in protecting shared interests and maintaining rules-based international order, an additional reason to restate the European Union' status of an “*unique and essential*”²⁰ partner of the Alliance, as the two organizations mutually strengthen each other while fulfilling their complementarity roles.

The Concept reaffirms NATO's commitment to the Open Door policy and the decisions adopted at the Summit in Bucharest in 2008, including those with reference to Ukraine and Georgia affirming the intention to consolidate cooperation with aspiring countries.

Moreover, the Alliance names the Western Balkans and the Black Sea region of strategic importance for NATO for the first time. Furthermore, NATO will continue to assist its traditional partners in Middle East, North Africa and Sahel regions and commits to enhance dialog and coordination with those in the Indo-Pacific region.

We can conclude that 2022 NATO Strategic Concept reaffirms in strong terms its commitment to collective defence and pledges to enhance the Alliance's posture of deterrence and defence in all operational domains, while adapting to the developments in cyber, hybrid and new technologies fields.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, page 10.

Secondary, NATO maintains its engagement in management crisis at a lesser degree, emphasizing the preventive dimension of the Alliance, including by continuing to assist its partners. At the same time, the Alliance increases its attention towards consolidating dialog and coordination with like-minded partners world-wide, in particular with the European Union, based on common interests, especially that of maintaining the rule-based international order.

On the other hand, surrounded by instability and witnessing the return of war to Europe, the European Union' Strategic Compass sets out clearly the imperative need to improve its approach and the effectiveness of its way of action to generate significant tangible operational results in the process of consolidating the European Union's defence. Moreover, the Strategic Compass aims at making the EU stronger and a capable security provider able to assume operational responsibilities to defend its self and to protect the European citizens. At the same time, the European Union stands firm in its commitment to enhance its strategic autonomy with the aim at increasing the EU's relevance worldwide and protecting its interests.

By far, the Strategic Compass draws attention by the practical approach of the European Union to achieve its objectives and to respond to the strategic environment while managing the challenges and threats to its own security.

In actionable terms, the European Union' Strategic Compass follows four main directions: act; secure; invest; and collaborate. From the actionable perspective, there are numerous similarities in the European approach and that of NATO during the past years in terms of approach and operational measures.

First, in order to be able to act, both individually and in cooperation with partners, the European Union assumes to build its defence operational capability by setting up a rapid deployable force named EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, totaling up to 5,000 troops, similar to NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. According to the Strategic Compass, this European force will dispose of the strategic enablers needed to operate in early stabilization operations, will have an efficient command and will train in various real conditions exercises. In addition to this rapid reaction force, the UE intends to provide 200 experts ready to deploy at all times in crisis or conflict area. A particular aim of the EU is to develop the capacity to

conduct non-combat air security operations making use of the European air infrastructure.²¹

At the same time, the EU intends to enhance European command and control structures, to consolidate Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations, and to improve the decisions-making process to increase its operational effectiveness.²²

Secondly, in order to ensure security, the European Union will direct its efforts towards improving Intelligence analysis, developing hybrid tools and hybrid response teams so that it can be able to cover a large spectrum of hybrid threats' manifestations, developing the EU Cyber Defence Policy and renewing the EU Space Strategy. All four measures are also similar to NATO's previous engagements and policies – increase awareness; enlarge counter hybrid threats' toolbox and Comprehensive Cyber Defence Policy and Overarching Space Policy.

Thirdly, based on the already assumed commitment of the EU member states to increase defence spending to reduce gaps and consolidate European industrial establishment, the European Union intends to promote national efforts of improved defence spending that would be adjusted to the European defence needs.

On the other hand, the European Union will continue its policy of promoting and stimulating cooperation, coordination and common investments by EU member states in acquisition, research and development and strategic facilities and capabilities.

The European Union will pay a particular attention to stimulating defence technological innovation in order to cover gaps and reduce dependencies. Thus, the European Defence initiatives Permanent Structured Cooperation and European Defence Fund will enable the investments in

²¹ EU, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, Act*, page 25-28, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf, accessed 11 December 2022

²² Idem.

defence innovation with the perspective of creating a new Defence Innovation Hub within the European Defence Agency²³.

Once again, the EU approach is similar to that of NATO: EU's increased defence spending – NATO's burden sharing; national targets - 2 % GDP and over 20% of it for acquisition; EU's Defence Innovation Hub – NATO Innovation Fund and The Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic.

Finally, yet importantly, the European Union commits to strengthen its partnerships worldwide at three levels. The first priority is to consolidate cooperation with NATO and the United Nations. The second priority is to increase cooperation with regional partners, namely Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The third priority is to develop bilateral partnerships in the Western Balkans, the Eastern and Southern neighborhoods, as well as in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Moreover, due to the extended network of partnerships worldwide, the European Union intends to create the EU Security and Defence Partnership Forum²⁴, a framework designed to facilitate dialog and cooperation in support of addressing the common challenges.

Assessment and conclusions

The European Union and NATO are facing the severe and multifaceted consequences generated by the changes in the strategic environment, the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic. Against this background, both organizations relate mostly to the same challenges and threats, even though their impact may be slightly different in some cases.

At the same time, the strategic competition influences both the European Union in its endeavor to become a significant global actor and NATO as the Alliance has to manage an increasingly tense international

²³ EU, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, Invest*, page 47, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf, accessed 11 December 2022

²⁴ EU, *A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, Our strategic environment*, page 55, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/strategic_compass_en3_web.pdf, accessed 12 December 2022.

security environment by ensuring the protection of the Euro-Atlantic area and preventing escalation at the same time. Moreover, as exponents of the rules-based international order, the European Union and NATO share the responsibility to protect the international system that the strategic rivals threaten and undermined more and more.

Against this background both organizations issued in 2022 their corresponding strategic documents, namely EU' Strategic Compass and NATO Strategic Concept, that guide their efforts for the next 10 years. The new Strategic Concept represents a common practice of renewed political commitment every approximately 10 years for NATO, while the Strategic Compass is the first such document dedicated to boosting the European endeavor in the security and defence domain.

Comparing views on the security environment, we noted that the European Union and NATO share similar perspectives regarding the strategic instability and interconnected challenges that elevate each other. Overall, the EU and NATO assess cyber, hybrid and new technologies as of utmost importance due to their capacity to explore the vulnerabilities of the West and test the resilience of the democratic world.

With reference to the specific challenges and threats, we can observe a difference of perception between the two documents.

On one hand, the European Union faces the return of war to Europe and an overall instability around the EU realm, both inside and outside the European continent. The Eastern neighborhood – Ukraine, Georgia, states in South Caucasus – is severely affected by the Russian aggression and assertive behavior, while conflicts, terrorism and organized crime in the Southern vicinity – Middle East and North Africa – continue to affect the European Union' security.

At the same time, inside the European Union cyber, hybrid and new technologies challenges and threats test the EU's resilience, critical infrastructure and the safety of EU's borders.

This general unfriendly security environment puts a significant pressure on the European Union as it finds the Union unprepared from the defence perspective to manage properly any possible security occurrence. That is an important reason for the EU's change of approach towards a more

practical and effective advance on the European defence build-up. We can affirm that the Russian military aggression against Ukraine represents a wake-up call for the European Union.

On the other hand, NATO acknowledges Russia as the most significant and direct threat and continues to build on its previous defensive measures adopted after 2014, significantly consolidating the Allied deterrence and defence posture, especially along the Eastern Flank.

We can notice that the core tasks of NATO are slightly modified, pointing to an increased preventive approach of the Alliance: deterrence and defence; crisis prevention and management; and cooperative security due to the need to show responsibility in a tense strategic environment such as the current one. At the same time, NATO reaffirms clearly its ironclad commitment to the Article 5 of the Washington Treaty as well as the essential role of the collective defence in the Alliance's overall responsibilities.

Deterrence and defence cover the most extended and substantial part of NATO's core tasks emphasizing the Alliance's determination to strengthen its posture in all operational domains during the next decade, while capitalizing on its mix of nuclear, conventional, space and cyber capabilities to deter and defend, if necessary, against any potential rival.

To respond to challenges and threats originating from authoritarian regimes, NATO also sets as priorities to strengthen its cyber defence and resilience, while maintaining the technological edge by focusing attention and investments on innovation.

Yet importantly, cooperative security continues to be a proficient means for NATO to gather international like-minded partners' support in safeguarding common interests, especially the rules-based international order. Moreover, the Open Door policy and the assistance for NATO's partners remain important for promoting and sustaining security and stability in the Alliance's vicinity and worldwide.

The European Union sets an ambitious defence agenda for the next ten years, focused on practical and operational measures, closely related to NATO's approach of the security environment. Defining as the main priorities to act, secure, invest and cooperate, the European Union assumes to build the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity of up 5,000 troops, similar to NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, and to upgrade its

command and control structures, as well as the Common Security and Defence policy missions and operations.

Deriving from the aim at growing strategic autonomy, the general objective of EU defence efforts is to build an operational and effective European defence construct able to conduct stand-alone missions and operations while substantially contributing to security and stability at the global level along with like-minded partners.

Also similar to NATO's approach, in order to improve security, the European Union will put significant effort and investments into Intelligence capabilities, hybrid tools and response, as well as new technologies, research and development, and innovation.

In terms of cooperation, the European Union will focus on NATO and the United Nations with high priority, but also on regional partners, as well as partners worldwide.

We can conclude that NATO and the European Union share a general common view on the strategic environment and global security and their approaches in managing security and defence challenges and threats are similar and may complement and reinforce each other within the process of implementation for the mutual benefit of NATO and the European Union.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- European Union, *Global Strategy for European Union's Foreign and Security Policy – Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf;
- European Union, *A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade*, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade/>;
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Wales Summit Declaration Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the*

- meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm;
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Warsaw Summit Communiqué Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Warsaw 8-9 July 2016*, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm;
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO 2030*, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2021/6/pdf/2106-factsheet-nato2030-en.pdf;
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *NATO Strategic Concept 2010*, <https://www.nato.int/lisbon2010/strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf>

Electronic sources

www.europa.eu

www.nato.int

