

THE EUROPEAN ISSUE BEHIND THE "SMART DEFENCE" INITIATIVE

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In 2012, a new initiative in defence planning caught the attention of the entire Euro-Atlantic community, i.e., "smart defence" and its European corollary, "pooling and sharing". Basically, the two concepts define a new manner to make defence investments more efficient in the context created by the world economic and financial crisis. But, in our opinion, this initiative also has deeper significances at the strategic level and its implementation presupposes serious challenges. The present paper analyses the "smart defence" implications not only for the European security, but also for EU and NATO's future roles on the international arena.

Keywords: "smart defence"; "pooling and sharing"; world economic and financial crisis; challenges; defence planning; defence investment.

Introduction

The nowadays' European security environment seems to be defined by multiple challenges, represented by social upheavals, political dissensions, severe economic turbulences, and, last but not least, a legitimacy crisis identifiable at the level of Brussels authorities. The fact that all this was caused and amplified by the economic and financial crisis is no news, as well as the fact that Europe was not the only region severely affected by this global phenomenon, the US and NATO being other relevant examples in this respect.

The military has not been spared of these trends. Military budgets decreased all over the world, and neither the EU, nor NATO, nor the US are exceptions to this tendency. At the same time, at present, security and defence concerns are as necessary as they have always been, while security risks and threats are still a current reality. International terrorism, the proliferation of weapons

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of mass destruction, organized crime, inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts are still topical. Therefore, reducing the budgets allocated to security and defence constitute, in this context, only an increase of vulnerabilities, creating a propitious field for all these security risks and threats to increase and to threaten even more international actors' security or to contribute to the augmentation of the world's conflictual nature. At the basis of our assertion lies the fact that one could easily notice that the international actors' view of world affairs and their behavior on the international arena gain an increasingly Realistic nature; by this we understand a shading of the Idealistic¹ rhetoric about peace and prosperity achieved through international cooperation and regional integration, and the coming to the fore of national interests. This is especially visible in the relation between the EU Member States.

This is the general context in which new initiatives in security and defence matters have emerged both at EU and NATO's level, namely "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence".

1. The significance of defence planning

In essence, "pooling and sharing" is translated into practice by the decision of various states to contribute materially and financially to the construction or procurement of certain military equipment (*pooling*) which, afterwards, is to be used in common by more states (*sharing*). The idea presupposes a cooperation and harmonization effort regarding the security and defence industry. In fact, it is an economic solution to manage the impact of the economic and financial crisis on military budgets and, even if it is not a genuinely new idea, the amplitude and importance attached to it are.

At NATO level, the smart defence concept is defined as a "new way of thinking about generating the modern defence capabilities the Alliance needs for the coming decade and beyond"². Smart defence implies the idea that the Alliance's Member States will not be able any more to rely preponderantly on the US contribution regarding the advanced and expensive capabilities, the proof of this being the intervention of the international community in Libya. Subsequently, smart defence is very similar to the pooling and sharing concept, but there is not a full equivalence between the two ideas as NATO implements a more developed, refined version of the concept which took birth at EU's level. In this respect, even the definition given to the smart defence concept is illustrative – "pooling and sharing

¹ Within the present paper, when mentioning Realistic and Idealistic views, we refer to International Relations' studies paradigms, namely Realism and Idealism.

² *Smart Defence*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_84268.htm?, accessed on 5th September 2012.

capabilities, setting priorities and coordinating efforts better"³, pooling and sharing constituting only a part of the definition given by NATO to smart defence.

The mention regarding setting priorities is very relevant from our perspective as, at NATO level, the areas in which smart defence will be implemented are clearly defined, namely those capabilities which have a critical importance for NATO and which were established during the Lisbon Summit (2010), i.e., ballistic missile defence, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, maintenance of readiness, training and force preparation, effective engagement and force protection.

2. Strategic significance

"Pooling and sharing" and "smart defence" are, firstly, a defence planning innovation, but, behind them, there is a deeper significance revealing key aspects about geostrategy, geopolitics and international affairs. But, in order to discover these concerns, it is necessary to consider the international context in which the "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence" initiatives have been promoted.

The first factor one should take into account is the world economic and financial crisis with considerable impact on military budgets and, subsequently, on the NATO and EU capacity to guarantee the accomplishment of their commitments. Secondly, the power configuration on the international arena is also purposeful. The world economic and financial crisis made it possible for other centers of power to become more important on the international stage, meaning that the age of unipolarity, with the US playing the role of the world's sole super-power, seems to come close to an end as emerging powers such as China, Russia, India, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa are playing an increasingly important role in international affairs. Therefore, the US strategic interest seems to have slid towards the Asia-Pacific area⁴. Consequently, in the context of troop reductions, of Asia becoming a priority for the American national security planning, it was necessary to give incentives to the Europeans to assume the leadership of their own security. The solution was found in the idea of making defence investment more efficient, an idea which is not essentially new as "burden sharing" has constantly characterized the defence planning within NATO⁵. Of recent date is only the attention it is paid, which has been made possible by the current international context.

³ Idem.

⁴ Hillary Clinton, *Secolul Pacific al Americii*, in Foreign Policy Romania, no. 25, November/ December 2011, p. 27.

⁵ For more details on the traditional and innovational dimensions of smart defence, see: Cristina Bogzeanu, *The NATO-EU Relation from the Perspective of the Implications of "Smart Defence" and "Pooling and Sharing" Concepts*, in Strategic Impact, no. 3 [44]/2012, pp. 33-40.

Smart defence is about making the NATO Member States' defence investments more equitable, meaning that there is a need for the US to cease being the main financial contributor to NATO and to increase the European financial inputs. Therefore smart defence is about reaching an equitable balance in this respect: not about the Europeans been left alone, but about the Americans trying to limit their NATO membership only to complying with Article 5 provisions⁶, meaning collective security, which is different from playing the role of the main security guarantor. Also, the correspondent of smart defence at European level, pooling and sharing, may be also viewed as the result of the same idea, as a token that the European states make efforts to increase their military capabilities so as to not be dependent anymore on the US security guarantees under NATO.

The rationale at the basis of our statement can be found in the reaction of the US, the European states, of NATO and EU to the escalation of the crisis in Libya (2011). Northern Africa comes under the area of interest not only of the EU (as this region is included in the European Neighborhood Policy), but also of some of its Member States (France, for instance)⁷. Naturally, the military coalition that intervened in Libya was led, in the first instance, by European states and not by the US, under NATO's aegis, the US intervention being subsequent to this first stage. This situation may be interpreted as a US withdrawal from the foreground of the management of those international crises occurring at a large distance from their national borders, causing the Europeans' efforts to increase their capacity of defence within EU's framework. At the same time, the Libyan experience also revealed the shortcomings in European defence capabilities which had to be eventually provided by the US.

Both "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence" also represent a wake-up call for the Europeans, in the sense that it is high time they changed their *modus operandi* in defence matters, meaning that they should "recalibrate"⁸ the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and leave behind the 'Venusian' perspective on defence issues. In the volume entitled „Of Paradise and Power. America and Europe in the New World Order" (2003), Robert Kagan exposed a theory according

⁶ Stephen M. Walt, *A New Kind of NATO*, in *Foreign Policy*, 11 January 2012, accessed on-line at http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/11/a_new_kind_of_nato, 15 November 2012.

⁷ For details, see Mihai-Ştefan Dinu, *Evoluţii geopolitice actuale – consolidări şi aspiraţii, în Echilibrul de putere şi mediul de securitate*, The 11th International Scientific Session with the topic "The Balance of Power and the Security Environment", 17th – 18th November 2011, Vol. I, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011, pp. 84-87.

⁸ Jolyon Howorth, *The European Defence Policy Needs Recalibration*, in *Foreign Policy*, accessed on-line at http://walt.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/06/29/european_defense_post_libya_towards_the_rubicon, at 16 November 2012.

to which, given its position on the international arena, America developed a Hobbesian vision of the world seen as a space of risks, which made it more willing to use force. On the other hand, Europe seeks to promote peace by laws and diplomacy, creating in this area a space of Kantian peace. Partially due to the security guarantees offered by America, the Europeans created a political order in which power is subdued and the use of force is banned⁹. In other words, the Europeans will have to increase their military involvement on the international arena and that the initial European project of managing the dangers and instability related to power politics will need to be doubled by a real, assumed and responsible development of the European military dimension. Actually, in our opinion, it is necessary for the Europeans to adapt to the international reality and to attach higher importance to the Hobbesian – type vision of the world, of inter-state relations, but not in the way in which they did before and during the two world wars, but together, under EU and NATO aegis, also having the necessary instruments (military, in the present case) to pursue their common interests.

In fact, one can consider the "smart defence" and "pooling and sharing" initiatives as a landmark in the EU defence dimension development, which could be easily compared to the impact at this level of the wars which determined Yugoslavia's disintegration, especially the one occurring in Kosovo in 1999, which triggered changes in the way of approaching security and defence not only at EU's level, but also at NATO's one. Thus, the 1999 events demonstrated EU's incapacity to act opportunely and efficiently in the management of a crisis happening at its borders, representing equally a threat of itself. During the wars in Former Yugoslavia, at EU's level, the European states' efforts to crystallize and develop the security and defence dimension gained new impetus.

3. Future challenges

Even though "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence" are defined as innovative solutions for maintaining the EU and NATO's capacity to act in order to be able to fulfill their commitments, this does not mean that their implementation is free of challenges. In this respect, one should firstly consider the fact that the European space was strongly impacted by the economic and financial crisis, with effects on the social and political dimensions. The notorious European solidarity is nowadays' much questionable, given, on the one hand, the EU Member States' reluctance to help each other in overcoming the difficulties caused by the economic

⁹ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power. America and Europe in the New World Order*, UK, Vintage Publishing House, 2007.

and financial crisis and, on the other, their vision on the advantages provided by EU membership. Moreover, as far as the economic and financial crisis' sequels are concerned, the European states are even more affected as not only do they have to improve their investments in defence capabilities, but they are also under the necessity to do this under the circumstances in which most of them also have to pay their loans from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the Central European Bank, etc. Thus, the pressure put on the Europeans from this perspective is even higher.

On the other hand, there is also the European states' style to approach international relations and, especially, the relations between them. The inter-governmental character of the Common Security and Defence Policy, the slow progress generally registered under the influence of an external stimulus are clear indications that the European states have maintained a Westphalian style of regarding international security, being strongly attached to the sovereignty idea¹⁰. Actually, as far as the EU is concerned, the defence domain has never benefited a high degree of support and trust on behalf of its Member States, as they usually preferred to act inside NATO, a framework within which most of the financial contribution was provided by the US and where membership has always presupposed a lower impact on national sovereignty. Overcoming this "historical inheritance" of the European states which would allow them to develop an increased mutual trust and the certainty that they can rely on each other in guaranteeing their security represents one of the challenges of "smart defence", no matter if we consider NATO or the EU.

Additionally, there also are the challenges related to the "pooling and sharing" and, especially, to the "smart defence" concepts; in NATO's approach, this initiative presupposes three main components – *prioritization* (ranging up national capability priorities with NATO's ones), *specialization* (concentrating investments only in certain areas of the defence industry, being expected that the possibly necessary, but inexistent capabilities will be provided by the states specialized in the respective area) and *cooperation*. All these components could turn into genuine challenges, each implying specific difficulties, but specialization defines itself by far as the most demanding aspect of smart defence due to the fact that its impact on defence planning is maximal. Actually, specialization presupposes that states will

¹⁰ For details, see Petre Duțu, Cristina Bogzeanu, *EU Institutional Reform from the Perspective of the Common Security and Defence Policy*, "Carol I" National Defence University Publishinghouse, Bucharest, 2011, pp. 36-42.

cease to invest in certain areas of the defence industry so as to be able to concentrate on other ones, where there is more expertise or which are more necessary to guarantee national security. Thus, a state whose border is represented mostly by the ocean shore will focus mainly on the navy industry, for instance, leaving the construction of aircraft under other states' responsibility. This presupposes not only that the organization of the force structure at national level will be modified, but also possible negative effects on the economic plan, by the disappearance of certain branches of the defence industry. Also, it is necessary to take into account the fact that international or regional organizations with competencies in security and defence matters have to maintain their capacity to act, to respect the commitments made by their fundamental treaties. Intelligent investments should be made and coordinated so that the Member States will be able to provide together the necessary capabilities for the respective organization, irrespective of its composition, to achieve its objectives. Consequently, cooperation and coordination of the projects carried out by NATO and EU must consider the fact that each of them has to remain capable of acting independently from the other.

Moreover, even if there is a strong cooperation relation between NATO and the EU developed during various missions where they acted complementarily and which is also visible in their complementary visions on security, in the present context cooperation becomes another challenge as smart defence and pooling and sharing are similar concepts, implying the financial participation and the input of resources of Member States in order to obtain military capabilities. Cooperation and coordination are even more important to be achieved as the two organizations have 21 common Member States, thus there being an increased risk for the resources to be cast away.

Cooperation becomes even more challenging under these circumstances as, in order for "smart defence" to be successfully implemented, it has to take place at multiple levels. Firstly, between the EU and NATO Member states, between the EU and NATO as independent non-state international actors, as well as between the government and defence industry companies, which also represent key entities in putting smart defence into practice.

Conclusions

At first sight, "pooling and sharing" and "smart defence" are innovative solutions for improving defence investment at EU and NATO levels, under the circumstances created by the world economic and financial crisis. But, beyond this

definition there lies a set of deep significances which may give us a glimpse on the future development of the international and European security environment. They are both a response to the changes occurring at international level and a token of its future physiognomy.

At second glance, we may easily note that the idea of making smarter, more efficient investments in defence mainly regards the solution to a European problem, namely the gap between the European states' investments in defence and the US input. This significance becomes even more obvious as we take into account the mutations happening at the level of the strategic interests of the actors involved in the creation and implementation of these concepts. Also, the most difficult challenges in this respect seem to belong with the European states.

"Smart defence" is indeed a landmark in the European defence history, a genuine Rubicon¹¹, marking a turning point in post-Cold War era as it is the first time the US attention has shifted mostly towards another area of interest. What one should recall is the fact that this does not equal a whole US withdrawal from the responsibilities related to the collective security principle embraced through the Washington Treaty, but a mere transition to another stage in their historical evolution imprinted by the need to make the Europeans equal partners, who are also expected to become able to act independently, while getting the chance to concentrate more resources to their new area of interest.

Nevertheless, the thorough understanding of this significance by the Europeans, their full dedication to fully implement the smart defence initiative represent the pre-requisite for the success of the initiative and for getting the expected results. In Europe, one cannot afford only to find the main problem to be solved, but also the main solution to it.

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¹¹ Jolyon Howorth, *European Defence Policy Needs Recalibration*, in Foreign Policy, accessed on-line at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/06/29/european_defense_post_libya_towards_the_rubicon, at 16 November 2012.

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