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## **New Horizons in EU Security and Defence Policy**

*MIREES Open lecture*

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On the 12th of April 2017, Professor Ben Tonra of the University College of Dublin delivered a speech on the controversial issue of the Common European Defence Policy, discussed as part of a larger debate in addressing the new security challenges. The professor opened his speech by referring to the question of solidarity and defence, discussing the institutional structure of EU defence and security and the capabilities (tools available) of the EU in forming an effective Common Defence Policy vis-a-vis NATO latest enlargement and the transformation of security threats. The deep foundation of EU in terms of institutional architecture is the regulations and norms shared by the Member-states. However, while supranational institutions of political nature depend on cooperation and collective defence, the reality of the EU institutional structure suggests otherwise.

Taking into consideration the current political situation and cumulative threats, the lack of institutional framework in terms of defence and security is hindering the process of integrating EU security policy, leaving Europe floating in-between the ambition to acquire a global interventionist dimension in the international community and the inability to surpass internal divisions. The fragmented defence and security coordination reveals the deficiencies and weaknesses of the Union in forming a common strategic line that would adapt to the new reality characterized by non-traditional security threats in warfare e.g. cyberattack and terrorism. The objective of a Common European Defence policy originated in the era of post-Cold war period as several shocks transformed the nature of collective defence to collective security. Yet as of 2017, investment and funding in that area is at frustrating low levels, a fact which exposes the European strategic weakness. The discussion included NATO

transformation as well, referring to the current agenda of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization which is marked by the concept of territorial defence, reflecting the return of geopolitics in Europe. Faced with NATO's greater engagement in European affairs, EU is reassessing its military capacity.

The ambition is still there but one could easily observe that the initiatives of Common Security and Defence Policy and the European Defence Action Plan are inadequate to lead to the realization of the EU as a key foreign actor since greater binding commitments are yet to be established. Member-states are reluctant in committing to peacekeeping operations, therefore military and security affairs have no "substantial added-value" considering that the requested provisions for operations are below the expectations of the EU. The perception of the Union in international terms is that of the "international social worker", co-ordinating provisions on sustainable development, labour law and human rights but with a limited ability in any other area apart from the economic one. Adding to that, a EURO crisis revealed the internal existential crisis imposed by member states and their domestic governments. Professor Tonra referred to a "visible progress and clear agenda" on security and defence affairs as the Union is preparing a global European strategy after Brexit. As far as the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence is concerned, the contribution of member-states is again below EU expectations, given the commitment of providing economic aid for military operations. The High Representative Mogherini proposed a measure to overcome this deficiency suggesting a European Defence Fund responsible of funding defence operations instead of Member-states contributions but it is not clear as to who would be behind the central fund or how the reallocation of resources would be coordinated.

The issue of European Military Headquarters and the legal provisions on EU "battlegroups" is of great importance as it illustrates the internal divisions among the EU members when it comes to join defence plans, considering the British veto for civilian or military operations and the debate on the creation of a Common European Army. France and Germany on the other hand, are favouring a "hard-core line" in the area of military defence while other Member-states would prefer a soft-line strategy. In terms of EU-NATO cooperation, the challenge lays in the nature of the Strategic Partnership. The critique of the overall plans of the EU towards a Common European Defence policy raises important questions on the historical moment or necessity for the EU to realize its international role in security and defence affairs, yet EU military future and defence policy depends heavily on the political

will of the Member-states to commit to collective efforts and the willingness to cover the costs of maintaining European military forces. What is at stake are the operations carried outside European territories. If a Common European Army is to be realized, and considering the lack of the proper institutional framework, the issue of who would be in charge in deciding when and how to deploy military forces would always exacerbate internal divisions.

*Written by Kyriaki Kyriakiou, BA  
MIREES' student, University of Bologna, Forlì-Campus*