New security context in Europe

The 2003 EU Security strategy meeting opened with the statement: *"Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure or so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history"*[1]. Yet, today's reality comprising recent events such as the 2008 financial crisis, the Arab spring, military interventions in Eastern conflicts and terrorist attacks, bring us to re-evaluate such statement and destabilise the European society environment. Today, the EU is facing the worst array of domestic and external security threats since the Cold War order collapsed a generation ago[2]. With the end of the Second World War, and establishment of the NATO, security and defence passed into the hands of multinational alliances. What first appeared to be a responsibility exclusive to states came to include a series of international actors implementing exceptional foreign policies. Nation-states do not appear to be the main actors in the global political picture any longer; therefore a multi-scale and multilateral approach must be adopted when analysing world politics and international security.

The aftermath of the Cold War resulted in the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the emergence of a bilateral political sphere between Europe and the US. The complex and fragile relations between the two super-powers play a fundamental role in the future of international security as well as representing the pillars of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO remains the principal security instrument of the transatlantic community and expression of its common democratic values. It is the practical means through which the security of North America and Europe are permanently tied together as its fundamental goal is to safeguard the Allies' freedom and security by political and military means[3]. The transatlantic link and relation is of fundamental importance to European security and it is crucial to encourage transparency in the fields of safety and defence in order to maintain stability. History plays a major role in

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[1] "European Issues and Interviews." *For a European White Paper on Security and Defence*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

[2] "„Europe Has Never Been so Prosperous, so Secure nor so Free. The Violence of the First Half of the 20th Century Has given Way to a Period of Peace and Stability Unprecedented in European History.„." *Germia Hill Conference*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

[3] "NATO." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State, n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

understanding the security environment in European countries, as its historical relations with overseas countries still affects today's political decision-making regarding defence and military intervention. Deep entrenched relations, such as the historical alliance between the US and Britain or the military tension between Russia and the US, still play a major role when deciding on strategic interventions.

The reduction of European countries' relative power compared to the rest of the world, especially to BRIC countries, has been accentuated by the constant reduction of their defence spending over the last 20 years. Such implementation leaves the EU with barely no prospect of being able to conduct coercive measures alone[4], leading EU countries to be unable to provide aid and support in operations lead by others. Single states in the EU are loosing media and public support in engaging with high risk operations, and are increasingly reliable on external assistance as shown in the recent interventions in Libya and Mali clearly portraying a strong need for external help. A coordinated defence spending could possibly increase capability for Europe to exercise a strong power, notwithstanding this does not appear in the member states agenda.

The new security context in Europe is deeply affected by the current refugee crisis seeing millions of people entering European borders in search for political asylum. Europe is experiencing one of the most significant influxes of migrants and refugees in its history. Pushed by civil war and terror and pulled by the promise of a better life, huge numbers of people have fled the Middle East and Africa, risking their lives along the way[5]. Such mass movement lead to tightening of border control, partially due to security threats, such as terrorism. However, in today's globalized and interconnected world, it is hard find a solution in which we can remove borders without reducing security. The EU's attempt to implement strategies, such as Friday's agreement to return migrants from Greece to Turkey in exchange for aid and political concessions, has although been criticized and condemned. Amnesty International, has accused the EU of "turning its back on a global refugee crisis, and wilfully ignoring its international obligations"[6]. Despite this kind of criticisms, it is clear that the crisis must be dealt with at European level and not a national one. To progress toward a possible solution there is need to creating trust and condemning prejudices by increasing

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[4] "European Issues and Interviews." *For a European White Paper on Security and Defence*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

[5] "Why Is EU Struggling with Migrants and Asylum?" *BBC News*. BBC, 03 Mar. 2016. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

[6] "Migrant Crisis: Turkey and EU Reach Deal on Returns." *BBC News*. BBC, 18 Mar. 2016. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

public awareness around any intended European ethical value: 'Mare Nostrum' cannot become a 'Mare Mortum'.

International and European security threats are deeply rooted in the relation between the refugee crisis and 'War on Terror'. Uncontrolled migration and human trafficking is often portrayed as consequence of the aftermath of civil wars and national instability in the countries where religious fundamentalism prevailed. The recent attacks in Paris, Copenhagen and Tunisia have highlighted the growing threat from the Islamic jihadist terrorist groups, but also how vulnerable Western societies are. Threat has now shifted from structured militia and networks to smaller local groups and individual 'actors', able to conduct successful attacks despite widespread law enforcement and intelligence measures [7] [8]. Likewise, Russia's return to belligerence, to a backdrop of armed confrontation in Ukraine, has similarly shown that the resurgence of armed conflict in Europe is no longer an improbable hypothesis, but demands a reassessment of the defence system of the countries of Europe[9].

The changing nature of the security context in Europe has given space to recent advances in technology and modern warfare with the aim to prevent terrorist attack and increase security measures. However, the use of drones and modern warfare to target specific civilians has raised high levels of opposition for the high number of causalities they caused.
Today, issues on defence and security must remain a priority in the agenda of national and European leaders. Prevention is the key to guarantee the necessary security levels in the European territory, and this can be carried out by providing aid and support to those countries. We must analyse whether the EU requires military capabilities and for what purpose, and start to seriously envisage peace restoration operations and contingency planning.

There is an obvious complementarity between Europeans issues, particularly in terms of defence. Instead of opposing individual interests, that see South-European countries concerned about the Mediterranean and the Eastern European ones concerned about Russia, Europe should seek an

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[7] "Where Fukushima Meets Stuxnet: The Growing Threat of Cyber War."*Foreign Policy Where Fukushima Meets Stuxnet The Growing Threat of Cyber War Comments*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.
[8] *Actor Terrorists Journal of Forensic Sciences* 59.2 (2014): 425-35. Web.
[9] "European Issues and Interviews." *For a European White Paper on Security and Defence*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

overall vision for the security of the European continent[10] by advancing the concept of 'unity' in the union. A strategic plan should be developed to establish a set of priorities to guide EU actions, with a strong focus on responding to developments in the immediate neighbourhood[11]. To conclude, the new security challenges in Europe, such as those of terrorism and migration, can only be overcome through cooperation and a delineated approach to splinter resilience in the European countries but also in the populations. The current situation is close to a 'perfect storm' that Europe can only avoid if it will be able to withstand the full range of changes and implement a strong, united and strategic plan over the long term.

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[10] "European Issues and Interviews." *For a European White Paper on Security and Defence*. N.p., n.d. Web. 19 Mar. 2016.

[11] Anthony, Ian, Camille Grand, and Patricia Lewis. *Towards a New European Security Strategy?: Assessing the Impact of Changes in the Global Security Environment*. Luxembourg: Publications Office, 2015. Web.

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