

## SODELOVANJE EU-NATO IN SLOVENSKO PRESEDOVANJE SVETU EVROPSKE UNIJE

### EU-NATO COOPERATION AND THE SLOVENIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

**Povzetek** Namen članka je spodbuditi razmislek o tem, ali so ovire za skladno delovanje Evropske unije in Organizacije severnoatlantske pogodbe na področju skupne varnosti in obrambe le tehnične narave ali gre za razlike na nekaterih drugih ravneh v politiki, dvostranskih odnosih in nacionalnih ambicijah nekaterih držav, ki so članice ene ali druge organizacije. V obeh primerih se postavlja vprašanje, ali lahko Slovenija kot država, ki 1. julija 2021 prevzame predsedovanje Svetu Evropske unije, v šestih mesecih predsedovanja prispeva k premostitvi katere izmed teh ovir.

**Ključne besede** *EU, Nato, Slovenija, predsedovanje Svetu EU.*

**Abstract** The aim of this article is to entice the reader to consider whether the obstacles in the way of cohesion between the European Union's common security and defence efforts and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Organization are truly of a technical nature, or whether there are differences on other levels, in the politics, bilateral relations and national ambitions of certain members of the same organization? Whatever the case may be, the question before us is whether Slovenia can contribute to surmounting any of these obstacles during its six-month presidency of the Council of the European Union, starting on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

**Key words** *EU, NATO, Slovenia, Presidency of the Council of the EU.*

## Introduction

The year 2020 will go down in history as a year of unexpected events, challenges and outcomes which have affected the lives of people all around the world. A new European Commission led by Ursula Von Der Leyen, the former German Minister of Defence, started its work at the beginning of the year. Due to complications with the appointment of Commissioners, the Commission formally took up its posts with one month's delay, on 1 December 2019. It was immediately clear that this is a kind of relaunch of the Union, with a more ambitious approach and concrete ideas for the future of Europe. The Commission soon presented the new Green Deal, signed the agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU) and announced, inter alia, a more geopolitical agenda with implications in the field of security and defence. Shortly afterwards the global Covid-19 pandemic broke out and it seemed as if the world stopped for a moment. This was followed by a period of intense competition; first in the purchasing of protective equipment, then in developing a vaccine, and finally, towards the end of the year, we were able to witness an intriguing presidential election in the United States. With the victory of Joe Biden, or rather the departure of Donald Trump, Europe was flooded by a wave of optimism and the hope of rekindling or strengthening the transatlantic relations.

Throughout this period, the NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, consistently repeated the same message: "NATO-EU cooperation has reached unprecedented levels"<sup>1</sup>(Stoltenberg, 2020). At first glance, such a statement is not surprising, as 21 out of the 27 Member States of the EU are also NATO allies. However, the value and effectiveness of such a relationship has often been questioned in recent years. Also, for countries like Slovenia, the concept of a single set of forces<sup>2</sup> (Lampret, Grilj, 2019, p 79) and the principle of non-duplication are of the utmost importance in this respect, as the resources available annually for the equipment, training and capability development of the Slovenian Armed Forces are very limited. A Joint Declaration was signed in the margins of the NATO Warsaw Summit in 2016, followed by an implementation plan of 42 proposals (Council of the EU, 2017) for EU-NATO common actions, and a second Joint Declaration in Brussels in 2018 with a further 32 proposals. The basic idea behind these proposals was to highlight those areas where countries would not have to choose on the basis of the "either/or" principle, but could rather focus on synergies, or the "not only, but also" approach.

The purpose of this article is to encourage reflection on whether the obstacles to coherent actions of the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the area of common security and defence are of a purely technical nature or whether there are differences at certain other levels, in politics, in bilateral relations and in the national ambitions of certain countries, members of either organization. In both cases, the

<sup>1</sup> Secretary General Stoltenberg used the phrase on various occasions throughout the year.

<sup>2</sup> The concept implies that countries do not have multiple military or defence capability development budgets and cannot invest in their own armed forces and additionally into NATO or EU capabilities. It is therefore necessary to find solutions with a "single set of forces" to operate successfully across all frameworks.

question arises as to whether Slovenia<sup>3</sup>, as a small country taking over the Presidency of the Council of the EU on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021, can in some way contribute to overcoming any of these obstacles during the six months of its Presidency.

## 1 A JOURNEY OF FIVE KILOMETRES BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP<sup>4</sup>

The signing of the two Joint Declarations resulted in a common set of 74 proposals for activities, focusing on 7 priority areas: countering hybrid threats; operational cooperation (including maritime operations); cyber security and defence; defence capability development; defence industry and research; exercises; and defence and security capacity-building (Council of the EU, 2016). The second Joint Declaration (Council of the EU, 2018) further emphasized the focus on military mobility, the fight against terrorism, resilience related to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear related risks, and the promotion of the role of women in security and peace<sup>5</sup>. The final aspect, monitored by both organizations since 2016, is the level of political dialogue. Although the signature of the first Joint Declaration undoubtedly represented an important step forward, we cannot really say that EU-NATO cooperation has only been going on for the past five years. On the contrary, it could be argued that it has been happening from the very beginning or, in other words, since the creation of the EU and NATO. Opinions are divided, but in Slovenia we often refer to the signature of the “Berlin Plus” agreement in 2002<sup>6</sup> as the start of operational cooperation. Some would argue that the first steps date back to the beginning of the 1990s (Culetto, Himelrajh, 2018, p 15), from the signing of the Maastricht Treaty<sup>7</sup> by the western European countries which were already NATO allies at the time.

Regardless of when this first step took place, it is quite clear that it is already a long-lasting process. Rather than seeking to make major changes through this cooperation, it is important to reach agreements, tangible results and solutions on a regular basis. The ever-changing security environment led to the signing of the Joint Declarations, which means that both NATO and the EU must constantly adapt to new challenges and threats. When these challenges are such that no country, the EU nor NATO can tackle them alone, then cooperation is the only solution. Today’s security threats are characterized by the emergence of new means and areas of application, new actors, or completely new threats developing before they are effectively identified or countered. In reality we are seeking a kind of partnership between two organizations

<sup>3</sup> *Together with Germany and Portugal, Slovenia forms the so-called trio of countries, who prepare their own 18-month programme together, while at the same time ensuring that the Council of the EU continues to work on a common, inherited agenda.*

<sup>4</sup> *Reference to the Chinese proverb “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”*

<sup>5</sup> *Point 6 of the second Joint Declaration, signed by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk; the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker; and the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, on 10 July 2018.*

<sup>6</sup> *16 December 2002 – the signature of the Berlin Plus arrangement allowed the EU to use NATO structures, mechanisms and assets in the conduct of its missions.*

<sup>7</sup> *The Maastricht Treaty was signed in February 1992 and entered into force in November 1993. It was the launch of Europe’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the cornerstone of a political union.*

which both have different tools, advantages and disadvantages. When we talk about EU-NATO cooperation, we must therefore have synergies in mind, or try to achieve a result greater than the simple sum of the contributions from the two sides in this equation. If we stay on mathematical concepts for a moment, a subset of 20 countries<sup>8</sup>, to which Slovenia also belongs, stands out from the wider array of countries which are either members of the EU or NATO allies; these are countries that actively participate in both allied and EU defence initiatives. For this reason, it is important to avoid both duplication and the principle of “either/ or” already mentioned in the introduction. The aerial distance from the headquarters of the EU to the NATO headquarters in Brussels may only be five kilometres, but it is clear that the route towards coordinated joint action is extremely demanding and full of obstacles.

## 1.1 74 small steps

Although most discussions on EU-NATO cooperation inevitably revolve around the signed Joint Declarations and the implementation plan of the 74 proposals for common actions, this is just one side of the story. These are, for the most part, proposals for measures, which can be implemented at the level of officials employed as staff of the two organizations. For example, as many as 20 proposals out of the 74 deal with countering hybrid threats. The first proposal concerns the creation of a European Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats, the second the provision of technical means to exchange information on hybrid threats, and so on (Council of the EU, 2017). The Centre was established in Helsinki, Finland, in 2017. Slovenia officially joined it in 2019 (European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, 2019).

The EU Hybrid Fusion Cell, which is part of the Single Intelligence Analysis Capability (SIAC) of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and the NATO Hybrid Operations Analysis Unit have been using BICES since 2018 (Council of the EU, 2018). This is a system for the exchange of classified intelligence information which was originally developed to retrieve data from battlefields in NATO ally or partner countries. Without going into details about the other priority areas here, the review of the annual progress reports could suggest that the list of 74 proposals has been almost exhausted; most of the joint activities have already been completed or are at least ongoing. After all, a large number of the activities in the implementation plan were planned for 2017, and if no progress had been made up to now, then the level of relations between the two organizations could indeed be questioned. So why is this progress not visible externally? Where are the obstacles and the real problems of the cooperation, if the proposed measures are being implemented so well? The fact is that the implementation of these proposals mainly addresses the administrative, bureaucratic or technical challenges faced by the staff of the two organizations in Brussels. Each small step can be of great importance to their daily

<sup>8</sup> Denmark is an ally and a member of the EU, but does not participate in the EU's defence initiatives.

work, but the measures will not solve some of the major issues that regularly arise when EU-NATO cooperation is mentioned.

## 1.2 36 countries and many problems

The first steps taken by Joe Biden as President of the United States of America hinted that the biggest problem for successful EU-NATO cooperation had been solved by the result of the US elections. Under Donald Trump the US withdrew from international agreements, cut its own budgets and threatened to reduce contributions or withdraw armed forces from certain areas of strategic importance. The perception that NATO equals the US led to a serious lack of confidence in transatlantic relations over the four years of the Trump administration. This in turn led, among other things, to a rather surprising statement by the French President Emmanuel Macron. During an interview for the renowned magazine *The Economist*, he announced that we are witnessing NATO's 'brain death' (*The Economist*, 9.11.2019, p 9). Taken out of the context in which it was used, the statement raised a lot of eyebrows and spread rapidly through global and online media. Many perceived it as France acting on its own or, at the very least, as a reckless move by its President.

In reality, Macron was speaking about European solidarity, which must emerge before the US turns its back on us. He also mentioned the unexpected withdrawal of US forces from Syria, which allowed renewed clashes between members of the Turkish Armed Forces and the Kurds. As a result, the relationship between Turkey and the European allies, who advocated a longer-lasting ceasefire, also deteriorated. It was Macron's response to Trump's constant complaints about the costs incurred by the US for NATO (Trump, 2018) and his statements about NATO being outdated. If transatlantic relations were to deteriorate any further, Europe would be left to itself, sooner or later. In a somewhat inappropriate manner, Emmanuel Macron merely stressed what was already stated in the Global Strategy<sup>9</sup> for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy: »European security and defence efforts should enable the EU to act autonomously while also contributing to and undertaking actions in cooperation with NATO. A more credible European defence is essential also for the sake of a healthy transatlantic partnership with the United States« (Global strategy, 2016). In other words, the strengthening of the EU in the field of defence also strengthens NATO. If we can now add better, enhanced transatlantic relations with the new President of the US in office, then EU-NATO cooperation should also gain further momentum.

Unfortunately, the EU now faces a new challenge concerning its relationship with the UK, which has now officially left the EU<sup>10</sup>. While the British remain NATO allies, defence initiatives in the EU can no longer count on their assets, capabilities

<sup>9</sup> On 14 November 2016 the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence, setting out the level of ambition and concrete actions. The strategy was prepared by the European Commission of that time, led by Jean-Claude Juncker and Federica Mogherini.

<sup>10</sup> The so-called 'BREXIT' was the result of a referendum in the United Kingdom in which, on 23 June 2016, just under 2 % more voters voted to leave the European Union.

or the presence of members of the British Armed Forces in missions and operations. Depending on their own interests, they are likely to engage in certain initiatives as a third country over time, but until then EU-NATO cooperation remains a key element, and offers opportunities to continue the dialogue with the UK on specific defence topics, such as military mobility. It is very likely that the UK will always be welcomed by the EU with open arms in any type of cooperation.

The opposite is true for Turkey, which would sooner be described by certain EU Member States as a threat rather than as an ally or partner third country. The negative impact of this on EU-NATO cooperation is perhaps most evident in the failure to exchange any sensitive or classified information. This is not so much a technical problem of how to share that information safely, but rather a question of trust, or lack thereof. Cyprus or Greece are unlikely to talk about their defence capabilities and plans in the presence of Turkey. On the other hand, even when negotiating with the EU as a whole, Turkey reiterates its refusal to recognize Cyprus as an independent state. As long as it still owns at least a part of the territory of Cyprus, Turkey is also claiming an additional part of the Mediterranean Sea. However, from the point of view of maritime security, this is a problem for another EU Member State – Greece.

Twenty-one ministers, leaders or representatives of EU Member States must listen to their colleagues from Cyprus, Malta, Ireland, Sweden, Finland and Austria, each with their own problems and interests within the Union. The very next day those same 21 representatives can be present at a NATO meeting, where Turkey expresses its gratitude to the US for the withdrawal of armed forces from Syria. At another time, at a meeting of the Council of the EU or the European Parliament, they might confirm the budget assigned to the European Defence Fund (EDF), and immediately hear US criticism about how EU defence initiatives, such as PESCO<sup>11</sup> and the EDF, are nothing more than duplication and decoupling from NATO. The same US, which in the morning requests from its European allies to increase their defence spending and to bear their share of the burden within NATO, is offended in the afternoon (Cooper, 2019), when those same European countries actually decide to spend billions of euros on defence. Even when we are not talking about any financial aspects, the US should really support all efforts and defence projects undertaken jointly by European countries. The fact is, if certain Member States cannot agree on something within the EU, they will certainly not agree to it within NATO. However, if a consensus is reached within the EU, the job is already half-done for NATO. Therefore, in order for all of the 36 countries which form this colourful mix of NATO allies and members of the EU to completely agree, something truly exceptional must happen. A major disaster, a complex crisis, a threat must appear that no one can face alone.

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<sup>11</sup> “*Permanent Structured Cooperation*”



## 2 AND THEN 2020 HAPPENED

It could be said that only a few days after Croatia took over the Presidency of the Council of the EU all the EU's pre-established priorities were swept off the table by the Covid-19 pandemic. Following the first case of infection recorded in France on 24 January 2020, the virus spread rapidly across Europe, severely hit Italy and triggered the closure of borders between Member States. Meetings in Brussels moved from secure rooms and large halls to online platforms. As a result, in particular on security and defence issues, any exchange of intelligence reports or classified information was automatically excluded from the agenda of all meetings. Given the changed way of working in both the EU and NATO, exchanges between the two organizations in the same way as before were no longer feasible. The pandemic has highlighted many areas which have proved to be ineffective and problematic in the context of a complex crisis, such as a global pandemic of a highly contagious virus. One area from the context of operational military action is, for example, the evacuation of personnel from missions and operations abroad. Despite the existence of protocols and solutions for MEDEVAC and STRATEVAC on paper, Slovenia had to find a solution for the evacuation of an infected member of the armed forces from EUTM<sup>12</sup> Mali alone (Kremžar Kovač, 2020, p 50). We eventually received assistance from a civil company, the French commercial airline VallJet (Ministry of Defence, 2020). On the other hand, members of the armed forces soon became part of national plans to limit the spread of infections, and assisted the civilian services in managing the crisis. They were involved in the transport of protective equipment, the transport of infected people and other logistical activities; in some cases they took over the protection of certain buildings or deployed temporary medical facilities (Kremžar Kovač, 2020, p 45). It has therefore become clear that one of the modern challenges posed by such global crises is achieving effective cooperation between the military and civilian services.

## 3 BLURRED LINES BETWEEN CIVIL AND MILITARY

A comparison between the engagement of members of the armed forces with civil society in times of crisis and the cooperation between NATO and the EU may now seem logical. Even looking at the areas addressed by the proposed set of actions in the context of the two Joint Declarations, it could be concluded that civil-military cooperation is the silver lining linking these two organizations together. Unfortunately, the case is not so simple. NATO is often seen as a military organization; however, its most prominent representatives, the Secretary-General, ambassadors, Foreign Affairs Ministers, and Heads of State meeting in the North Atlantic Council are, as a rule, all civilian officials. Prior to being in charge of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg was the Norwegian Prime Minister. The second, more widely known Secretary-General, Javier Solana, acted as a Minister for Culture, Education and Science and Minister

<sup>12</sup> "EU Training Mission", a European Union military mission to contribute to the training of the Malian Armed Forces.

of Foreign Affairs in Spain. After four years as head of NATO, he became the first High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. NATO is therefore also a political organization (Stoltenberg, 2020), and this is the role that should be strengthened through the NATO 2030 reflection process and integrated in the preparation of a new strategic concept.

On the other side of the coin lies the EU, a political organization and an economic union of 27 countries which share the single European market through a common legal system. Given that not all EU Member States are also allies in NATO, the EU has long been working on issues and shortcomings affecting its own security and defence. Following the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001, the application of<sup>13</sup> Article 5 of the NATO Washington Treaty and the resulting 'war on terror' (Matyók, Zajc, 2020, p 38), in 2003 the European Council adopted the European Security Strategy<sup>14</sup> for a "Safe Europe in a Better World" (European Council, 2003). While some of the ideas presented at that time for a holistic approach and for Europe's common external action are still very much valid, after a decade the underlying idea of this strategy has proved to be somewhat naïve. Humanitarian aid to neighbouring and partner countries, a form of promotion of European values in remote regions, where very different beliefs, traditions and religions often prevail, has not proven to be a solution to the threats that Europe wanted to avoid at that time. Terrorist attacks in Madrid and Paris took place, relations in the Western Balkans worsened with Kosovo's declaration of independence<sup>15</sup>, and a civil war in Syria began. The final wake-up call was the Russian so-called 'annexation' of the Ukrainian Crimea peninsula, where neighbouring countries were only able to observe the surgical precision (Tomšič, 2018) of the hybrid actions carried out by Russia in virtually all areas of society, ending with the arrival of armed soldiers wearing uniforms without markings, without flags and without demonstrating membership of a particular country<sup>16</sup>.

This was an event which, in some ways, challenged the theory that European countries could leave their security and defence entirely up to the Alliance. Even if NATO capabilities would be ready to respond quickly to the arrival of such unmarked forces in the territory of one of the allies, the Ukrainian case showed that such a response would in fact be too late. Countering hybrid threats and hybrid warfare is nothing new; countries can be prepared, build resilience, or be able to sustain a potential attack, adapt and quickly recover from it. However, this is not an acceptable solution for the EU, which needs a way to detect, prevent or deter hybrid action even below the level

<sup>13</sup> Article of the NATO founding treaty, which states that in the event of an armed attack on one ally country the allies will respond as if they had all been attacked.

<sup>14</sup> The "European Security Strategy" was prepared under the leadership of Javier Solana in 2003. The document was endorsed by the European Council in December 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Despite Serbia's opposition, Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008. Kosovo is still not recognised by Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, which makes the possibility of full EU membership even more questionable for Kosovo.

<sup>16</sup> These unidentified units have been labelled as 'Little Green Men', describing their green military uniforms without any special marking or flag indicating their affiliation.



of armed conflict. It is not that the military is weak in dealing with present and future threats; rather, the threats are too complex for command directed responses, and the military alone cannot provide appropriate, holistic responses. What is required is a coordinated interaction between militaries, civil stakeholders, government agencies. To be resilient, nations, states, and the whole of society must be smart in adapting to the ‘reality on the ground’, since reality does not easily adjust itself to our theories (Matyók, Zajc, 2020, p 29).

This reality was deepened by the migrant crisis<sup>17</sup> in 2015, which called into question the humanitarian actions and solidarity of the EU and the utility of its alliance with NATO (Matyók, Zajc, 2020, p 34). As a result, in 2016 the European Commission presented the aforementioned new Global Strategy<sup>18</sup> for Foreign and Security Policy for a “Stronger Europe”. It includes initiatives in the areas of defence, capability planning and development, and cross-border research cooperation, among others. Acronyms such as CARD<sup>19</sup>, PESCO, EDF<sup>20</sup> and EPF<sup>21</sup> have become part of our vocabulary, and Member States have embarked on projects and plans to turn this strategy into actions, outputs, and externally visible results. However, given that it is only for the past few years that the EU has been working together on defence within the Union, and no longer only on external action, these efforts appear to be too scattered and uncoordinated, and therefore quite ineffective for the time being.

#### 4 STRATEGIC COMPASS AND NATO 2030

It could perhaps be said that the EU has got lost in its own defence initiatives and therefore needs a Strategic Compass<sup>22</sup> to set the direction of all these initiatives and bring them together as a meaningful whole. The political dialogue currently taking place between EU Member States aims to ensure that all countries contribute to shaping the content of the Strategic Compass in relation to its four pillars, the four focus areas of crisis management, resilience, capability development and partnerships. A document is expected to be drafted under the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU, and finally adopted by March 2022 at the latest (Kolenc, 2020, p 12). It is intended to link the strategic level the EU has been actively discussing since 2016

<sup>17</sup> *More than one million migrants from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and various African countries attempted to enter Europe in 2015. Individuals from Kosovo, Albania and other countries joined them on this route towards the west, some fleeing war, and others just looking for a better life in the European Union.*

<sup>18</sup> *The title of the document is »Shared Vision, Common Action. A Stronger Europe: a Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy.»*

<sup>19</sup> *Coordinated Annual Review on Defence – CARD*

<sup>20</sup> *‘European Defence Fund’ – part of a common budget dedicated to promoting defence industrial research and cooperation and capability development between EU Member States.*

<sup>21</sup> *European Peace Facility – Peace Facility, an extra-budgetary financial mechanism for missions, operations and support measures*

<sup>22</sup> *The process began in 2020 under the German Presidency of the Council of the EU and will conclude after the Slovenian Presidency, possibly with the adoption of the Strategy Paper in March 2022, under the French Presidency.*

with practical, operational guidelines to achieve the level of ambition and a “strong Europe”.

Although the themes of the four pillars are intertwined and have an impact on each other, it is clear that in the context of partnerships EU-NATO cooperation will be at the forefront. As a basis for the Strategic Compass, a joint analysis of threats and challenges, based on inputs from intelligence services, was prepared in the second half of 2020. It is a confidential document without any additional validation or adaptation of the text, which serves as a factual overview of all the challenges faced by the Member States of the EU. A similar review was carried out for NATO by a panel of independent experts and published as the “NATO 2030” report<sup>23</sup> however, this one is publicly accessible. Given the confidential nature of the EU’s analysis its content will not be discussed in this article, but it is important to note that there are clear parallels between the two documents. Whether an EU Member State or NATO ally, no single country can defend itself against the effects of Russia, China, hybrid actors, cyber-attacks, climate change, the development of disruptive technologies, and so on. NATO cannot set the strategy (Biscop, 2020), legislation, policy or action of civil society in a particular country. On the other hand, the EU alone cannot respond effectively to possible military attacks, should they occur. Only when we realize that we all face the same threats, which go beyond our own capabilities, does it become clear that the key to security and effective defence lies in cooperation. During the very short period of the Croatian Presidency of the Council of the EU before the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020, Slovenia co-signed, with Germany, Portugal and with the support of Croatia, a food-for-thought paper<sup>24</sup> on EU-NATO cooperation. In the text we advocated building trust and closer links between the two organizations. We proposed improvements to the exchange of information, including through more institutionalized solutions, such as the establishment of a joint working group on military mobility. We supported continued cooperation on topics including cybersecurity, hybrid threats and parallel and coordinated exercises<sup>25</sup>. However, we also highlighted the need for joint, coordinated action in new areas such as the impact of climate change on defence. All of these proposals are still valid, with both the pandemic and the two strategic processes now showing that we were already thinking in the right direction at that time.

## 5 COOPERATE WHEREVER POSSIBLE; ACT WHENEVER NECESSARY

The EU is founded on a common market, on the free movement of people and resources, and on cooperation between the Member States. It continues to work in an integrated, partnership-based way externally, trying to cooperate wherever

<sup>23</sup> *Practically in parallel with the Strategic Compass, the “NATO 2030” process is underway and is expected to result in a new strategic concept for NATO, which will be politically active, forward-looking and better prepared for the challenges posed by outer space, technology development, and climate change.*

<sup>24</sup> *“Towards a Common Space of Trust – Priorities for EU-NATO Cooperation” a food for thought non-paper, not published publicly.*

<sup>25</sup> *PACE Exercise Concept – “Parallel and Coordinated Exercise” to be continued in 2022.*

possible. It should also, alone or in cooperation with NATO, take action whenever necessary. Whether it is a covert operation below the threshold of armed conflict, or a direct threat requiring a military response, synergies between the two organizations allow Member States to act in virtually all domains. A major step in the EU-NATO cooperation framework would be to change the current way of solving controversial situations by finding the lowest common denominator<sup>26</sup>. Moving away from this “unanimity” decision-making model would mean that the interests of a single state can no longer prevail over the common objectives of the EU or of NATO. At the moment, Turkey seems to be the main culprit. Both the EU and NATO act in a way that protects and respects human rights according to United Nations conventions<sup>27</sup>. Ironically, Turkey has recently announced its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention<sup>28</sup> on preventing violence against women and domestic violence. Previously, Turkey had already gambled away the trust of many European countries through extortion or the “weaponization” (Jennequin, 2020) of migration – using migrants as bargaining leverage against the EU. Similarly, the purchase of Russian S-400 rocket systems<sup>29</sup> was not in line with its role as an ally in NATO. In addition to enhanced transatlantic ties, new strategic guidelines and additional areas for seeking synergies and mutual cooperation, sooner or later both the EU and NATO will have to act, as productive cooperation with Turkey seems less and less possible. Not only NATO, but also the EU is repeatedly cornered by Turkey’s actions, hampering the progress in cooperation between the two organizations along the way. Over the past year, so many things have been brought to our attention, from our shared shortcomings to threats and major challenges, bringing us to a point where we can no longer afford to limit 35 countries to administrative cooperation at the staff to staff level only because one country refuses to cooperate. Unfortunately, it is too early to guess whether the new NATO Strategic Concept or the EU’s Strategic Compass will bring about any solutions to this problem. We just have to wait and see.

## 6 WHAT CAN SLOVENIA DO IN THE MEANTIME?

During its six-month Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Republic of Slovenia will certainly stress the importance of EU-NATO cooperation as the best tool, the most integrated approach, and a way to involve the whole of society, both civil and military, in security and defence issues. We also need to highlight the Western Balkans region<sup>30</sup>, which has historically served as the scene for EU-NATO cooperation on

<sup>26</sup> Where countries do not agree on a particular point, the most basic, broadest possible definition is sought in order to reach a compromise that can be supported by all. It also loses the potential for concrete actions, the way forward, and the more visible results of the initiatives that face this obstacle.

<sup>27</sup> For example, the mutual defence clause, 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union, applies in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. The same applies to NATO Article 5.

<sup>28</sup> The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence was presented for signature on 11.5.2011 in Istanbul, Turkey.

<sup>29</sup> Russia’s ground-to-air rocket system with a range of up to 400 km and the ability to operate against both large planes and targets as small as drones.

<sup>30</sup> The Western Balkans region consists of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania.

the ground. It is still an area heavily influenced by various foreign actors, hybrid activities, historical tensions and unresolved conflicts. In the area of capability development, the two organizations are increasingly highlighting innovation and disruptive technologies. Whereas NATO has a well-established defence planning process and fora to stimulate allied industrial relations, the EU's toolbox includes legislation, a political framework called PESCO, a coordinated annual review (CARD), and the European Defence Fund (EDF), which will support defence research and capability development (Fiott, 2019). The EDF, in particular, aims to stimulate the cross-border participation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in consortia and co-funded projects. Slovenian SMEs are very active, innovative and sometimes world leaders in their field of work. The involvement of Norway, Canada and the US in the PESCO military mobility project is another important milestone in the area of military mobility, often considered as one of the most successful products of EU-NATO cooperation. Slovenia is also developing specific innovations in mobility and energy efficiency. The Directorate for Logistics at the Ministry of Defence is leading the RES-HUB project<sup>31</sup>, developing renewable energy harvesting and hydrogen energy storage capabilities (Šipec, 2021) aimed at facilitating cross-Europe military mobility with lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and contributing to energy sustainability in the EU's defence and security sectors. So, not only are we aware of the importance of climate change for the defence system, but we are already actively working on, exploring and developing solutions. All of these topics can be placed on the agendas of Council meetings and formal and informal events which will take place between 1 July and 31 December 2021.

## Conclusion

As a NATO ally and an EU Member State, we will be actively involved in the drafting of both the new NATO Strategic Concept and the EU Strategic Compass in the months to come. But it is also important to give visibility to issues related to resilience, security and defence during our Presidency of the Council of the EU. Slovenia can certainly do that, even if the main role of the Presidency is mediating and brokering compromises between the EU Member States and EU institutions such as the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. To do this, the Presidency must act as an honest and neutral broker (General Secretariat of the Council, 2021). At the same time, it must respect the 18-month plan of the trio, which, in the case of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia, includes strengthening EU-NATO cooperation as one of its priorities.

Effective solutions in the area of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy and synergies with NATO are of the utmost importance for countries such as Slovenia. According to Article 37 of the Defence Act<sup>32</sup>, one of the functions of the Slovenian Armed Forces is to carry out obligations assumed by the state in international organizations and through international treaties. We do this mainly

<sup>31</sup> The project "Defence Resilience Hub Network in Europe" aims to create a network of energy self-sufficient hubs in Slovenia and the European Union.

<sup>32</sup> Defence Act published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, #82/1994

through our participation in missions and operations of the EU, NATO, the UN and other organizations. Currently, we have soldiers deployed in 12 different missions and operations (Ministry of Defence, 2021) around the world, representing around 5% of our armed forces. This percentage means that the primary functions of the Slovenian Armed Forces are those which it performs on domestic soil. Another way of fulfilling commitments towards international organizations, often publicly criticized in the media, would be by raising our defence spending up to or above 2% of the annual gross domestic product (Defence White Paper of the Republic of Slovenia, 2020, page 11). This does not mean that we should pay someone for protection, or buy a membership in one of the organizations, as is often mistakenly believed, mainly by sceptics or those who oppose any kind of investment in military capabilities on principle. In practice, we should just invest more in our own army, their preparedness, capacities and the tasks that 95% of them carry out every day in Slovenia (since only 5% are deployed abroad). By doing this, we would not only make good on our commitments to NATO, but also to the EU and our PESCO partners (Culetto, Himelrajh, 2018, p 19), while at the same time improving the resilience of our own country. There is therefore no need to choose whether we will invest in capabilities suitable for operating either in Slovenia, or in NATO, or even in EU's defence initiatives. In most cases, we can make progress in all of the above through a single solution. This is why it is important that we are present, involved and actively participating in these organizations, their strategies and plans for the future. In reality, duplication occurs only rarely, but even then, as a Member State and as an ally, we have the opportunity to draw attention to this issue and propose different solutions together with other countries at the table. Our voice is heard, our vote counts and our point of view matters. Not only that, for the next six months we are the ones writing the agendas of the EU's meetings and organizing its events. And since, for the time being at least, there is no compass to show the way for the EU's Member States, they will rely on our Presidency to steer them in the right direction.

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