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**COOPERATION BETWEEN EUROPEAN ARMED  
FORCES: WHAT CONSEQUENCES ON NATIONAL  
SECURITY AND DEFENSE CULTURES?**

**MARCO ROSA**

**(Ph.D Candidate at the University of Coimbra, Portugal)**

**RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN STUDIES  
(RIEAS)**

**# 1, Kalavryton Street, Ano-Kalamaki, Athens, 17456, Greece**

**RIEAS: [www.rieas.gr](http://www.rieas.gr)**

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**Dr. John M. Nomikos**  
**Director**

**RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN STUDIES  
(RIEAS)**

**Postal Address:**

# 1, Kalavryton Street  
Ano-Kalamaki  
Athens, 17456  
Greece

Tel/Fax: + 30 210 9911214

E-mail: [rieas@otenet.gr](mailto:rieas@otenet.gr)

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since the beginning of the 1990's, the European States have been intensifying and diversifying the initiatives on security and defence cooperation. Taking into consideration this issue, the goal of this paper is to explain and to justify the pertinence of an ongoing research on the consequences of military cooperation between European countries upon their security and defence cultures, *i.e.* on the possibility of an Europeanization of national security and defence cultures. More precisely, the paper will explain why the aforementioned research should focus on: (1) the theoretical debate between Neo-realism, Neo-Institutionalism and Constructivism about the meaning, the possibilities and the consequences of security and defence cooperation; (2) the mechanisms of cooperation between the armed forces of a group of member states of ESDP and NATO; and finally (3), the Portuguese and Belgian case studies, since these countries share some features which facilitate the construction of a comparative model of analysis. Lastly, the final section of this paper will present a methodology to operationalize the core concepts.

## General Context

The Armed Forces (AF) are usually perceived as a symbol of sovereignty and an instrument for the survival and the statement of the nation-state in the international system. As such, according to the vestefalian precepts, its core mission is to assure the territorial defence *vis-à-vis* external threats. However, in the last two decades, besides the accomplishment of this classical nationalist and territorialized mission, some European countries (*i.e.* member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization / NATO and the European Security and Defence Policy / ESDP) have witnessed an unprecedented growth and diversification of international defence cooperation mechanisms<sup>1</sup>. These mechanisms can adopt an institutionalized or a non-institutionalized character, *i.e.* if the cooperation initiatives are carried out under the scope of NATO and ESPD or not<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, it is also possible to identify different domains of cooperative interaction (*e.g.* operational, doctrinarian, technical and scientific) which include initiatives regarding international crisis management (*e.g.* peace-keeping missions, the creation of multinational non-standing forces such as the European Operational Reaction Force /EUROFOR and the European Maritime Force / EUROMARFOR), the control of external frontiers (*e.g.* Guanarteme Operation), multinational joint and combined exercises (*e.g.* Steadfast Jaguar 2006), training of personnel (*e.g.* NATO Defence College) or the development of common military structures (NATO Joint Headquarters).

Frequently, the official discourse justifies the growing number of international initiatives *vis-à-vis* the classical mission of the armed forces through the following arguments: (1) it is imperative to unite and coordinate efforts at the international level in order to face new threats and new risks with transnational effects; (2) international cooperation is also beneficial for achieving foreign policy goals. Nonetheless, these official justifications do not explain eventual consequences on the national security and defence cultures (*i.e.* on norms, rules, behaviours, perceptions and interests regarding security and defence cooperation issues). At stake is the fact that, in Europe, cooperative interaction involves the development of common political and military structures, common norms and rules, common doctrines and languages, which in turn may lead to the development of high levels of interdependence and to changes in perceptions and interests of social agents. Therefore, it seems necessary to identify the appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches for today's intense cooperative interaction between the armed forces of some European states.

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars state that this phenomenon entails an internationalization of the armed forces (Moskos et al, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Without discarding the important debate around the concept of international institution (see Young, 1989:32; Simmons and Martins, 2002: 194; Keohane, 1989: 3-4; Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), for sake of simplicity and convenience, in this study, institutionalized cooperation will be referred as to cooperation taken under the scope of international organizations.

## Theoretical Framework

“(...) security affairs is the arena in which international institutions have been expected, on theoretical ground, to be least consequential. “ (Duffield 2006: 63)

The constant developments in the field of International Relations Theory have produced an important debate about the meaning, the possibilities and the consequences of security and defence cooperation<sup>3</sup>, in which Neo-Realism, Neo-Institutionalism and Constructivism schools assume a particularly vital role (Müller, 2002; Snyder: 1999).

According to Neo-Realism, the Alliance (*i.e.* military alliance) is the only possible security cooperation arrangement in an anarchical international system. Alliances are usually unstable and temporary, since they depend on changes in the balance-of-power which regulates the international system. Additionally, given that International Relations, and particularly issues related to the security and defence sphere, are affected by self-interest and by the twofold imperative uncertainty/survival, when necessary, states must put aside loyalty towards their allies (Waltz 1979; Grieco 1988 and 1990; Mearsheimer, 1990 and 1994). In this situation cooperation comes to an end and new alliances are created

As regards to Neo-Institutionalism (Keohane 1984; Oye, 1996) the development of security cooperation initiatives is explained by self-interest and rational choice. Thus for Neo-institutionalists, cooperation is the best way to maximize self-interest and to overcome the uncertainties and risks generated by anarchy. Consequently, neo-institutionalism conceives a more complex and stable idea of security cooperation. Contrarily to Neo-Realism, according to Neo-institutionalism self-interest is not necessarily equal to survival, which means that deeper international cooperation is not just possible but also a desirable instrument for the achievement of foreign policy goals.

Despite the differences, both Neo-Realists and Neo-institutionalists share some methodological and theoretical flaws which limit the understanding of security and defence cooperation. These regard an overstated focus on a certain level of analysis and a pre-determination of the conditions which explain state behaviour. While Neo-Realism emphasizes the anarchical character of the international system, (*i.e.* systemic level) and the respective ever present possibility of war of all against all to explain selfish state behaviour, Neo-Institutionalism assumes that in every situation states (*i.e.* state level), independently of whatever conditions,

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<sup>3</sup> In reality, the debate refers only to security cooperation or security culture, but since the security concept underwent an enlargement and a deepening of its meaning (*i.e.* it includes now environmental security and human security), and the research is centred on defence issues (*i.e.* cooperation between the armed forces), it seems more appropriate to use the terms security and defence cooperation or national security and defence cultures.

will always seek to maximize their gains, preferably through cooperation, because it is the most rational thing to do. As a result, both schools underestimate levels of analysis other than the international system or the state, and posit that the identities and the interests of nation-states are pre-determined, fixed and always oriented by a utilitarian rationality (Ruggie, 1998: 9-10).

How can this be problematic? It must be taken into consideration the fact that security and defence cooperation is different from other areas of cooperation, *i.e.* it requires high levels of mutual trust so that social agents feel safe to share the information and the resources which guarantee the last resort instrument for the survival and the statement of the nation-state. Consequently, the aforementioned lens of utilitarianism and pre-determination are defective theoretical and methodological instruments to explain the growing interaction between European states armed forces, and the eventual consequences on national security and defence cultures.

Alternatively, Constructivism (Wendt, 1992, 1994; Katzenstein 1996) posits that the constant interaction between agent and structure results in a reciprocal influence between both. As such, this school discards the pre-determination of identities, interests or behaviours by the anarchical structure of the international system or by individual agent's rational choice. The Constructivist approach considers that changes in the international security environment raise new problems which in turn may require new behaviours, new rules, new norms or new institutions to face them. Eventually these gradual changes may pave the way for changes of agents perceptions and interests towards themselves and their partners, and lastly to changes in security cultures (*i.e.* security and defence cooperation becomes not just a strategic adaptation, but also a change in agent's self-image of what to be and what to do). Thus, as regards to the study of security and defence cooperation phenomena, Constructivism seems more suited to understand its consequences and its meaning. On the one hand, it does not take for granted the interests and the perceptions of social agents, nor reduces behaviour, norms or institutions to means to maximize gains in an international relations game where the rules are immutable. On the other hand, in order to comprehend how far the consequences of security cooperation go, several level of analysis may be articulated (*i.e.* from the individual to the system level and vice-versa). Finally, through its open approach to agent's behaviour, Constructivism may outrun Neo-Realist and Neo-Institutionalist limitations and, at same time, come to the same utilitarian conclusions of those two schools, *i.e.* the intense cooperative interaction between European states represents only a strategic adaptation to particular security environment, without any deeper consequence on national security and defence cultures.

## **Justifications and Clarifications of Research Options**

### **1. Importance of Cooperation between Armed Forces**

Usually the odds in favour of strong interdependence in the security and defence sphere are scarce. Historically, the security and defence cooperation has always faced strong obstacles to its development. This collaboration entails sharing the information and the resources (human and material) which, symbolically or in practice, are expected to assure the survival of the nation-state in an anarchical international environment, where the friends of today can become the enemies of tomorrow. Exceptionally, particularly in war periods, when national security is clearly under threat, the need for survival may involve the establishment or the activation of military cooperation with strong levels of interdependence.

With regard to theoretical perspectives on national security, it is hard to coadunate the dependence on the resources and the good intentions of others with the dominant self-help<sup>4</sup> understanding of international relations (Müller, 2002:379), which is vehiculated by Neo-Realists and Neo-Institutionalists. There are even scholars proponents of a “nonoffensive defence” (NOD) posture, *i.e.* every country should, ideally, be able to defend itself against any other with the implication that none should be able to defeat any other through aggression. Accordingly, this would make war less likely and arms races unlikely (Møller 1991; 1992; 1995; Wiseman 2002).

Finally, it must be referred that the cooperative interaction between armed forces entails levels of transparency, integration and interdependence much higher than other forms of security cooperation such as arms control agreements.

Considering the aforementioned description, the intense cooperation between European armed forces is an anomalous phenomenon which assumes exceptional relevance as a subject of study in terms of the political context, given that it takes place and it becomes more intense in the absence of objective threats to national security / national survival; in theoretical terms, since it defies the presumptions of mainstream approaches to security cooperation; and also by itself as phenomenon with particular specificities and implications.

### **2. Importance of Present Day Political and Security Context**

Besides its importance as a particular subject of study, the question of the impact of military cooperation upon national security and defence cultures is also significant because the political and security context in which takes place contributes to assure the continuity or even the deepening of the military interdependence.

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<sup>4</sup> Self-help signifies that states cannot rely upon a common power for the preservation of their security. That is, in a “self-help” environment security is ultimately derived from, and guaranteed by, the capabilities of states themselves.

With respect to today's international situation, it is possible to identify three principal intertwined impulses that contribute to the development of the military cooperative interaction (Rosa, 2006: 4-6). Firstly, the affirmation of the illegal nature of the use of violence in international relations, consecrated in the United Nations Charter (UNC), made the unilateral use of force, although possible, a remote possibility. Secondly, the awareness that the effects of today's threats to peace do not respect borders has served as a justification for the search of collective military responses, especially at the regional level, to deal with international crisis situations. Accordingly, and lastly, since the military participation in peace missions imposes a very high level of demand in terms of financial, operational, means, personnel and command requisites, the eventual limitations that might affect an isolated State can be compensated by the previous adaptation of the capacities of the various regional partners, through the creation of a pre-established co-operation model<sup>5</sup>; To sum up, strong restraints to the unilateral use of force in international relations, a new perception of international (in) security, as well as a new orientation for the completion of international missions represent a determinant stimulus for the international co-operation between the Armed Forces.

### 3. Why Europe Instead of another Region?

In Europe, for more than five decades, EU and NATO contributed to a progressive political-economic and defence integration, respectively. In turn, these developments generated the proper conditions for unparalleled levels of security and defence cooperation. In other continents, the aforementioned collaboration initiatives are just in an initial phase, and many lack effective implementation (see tables 1, 2 and 3).

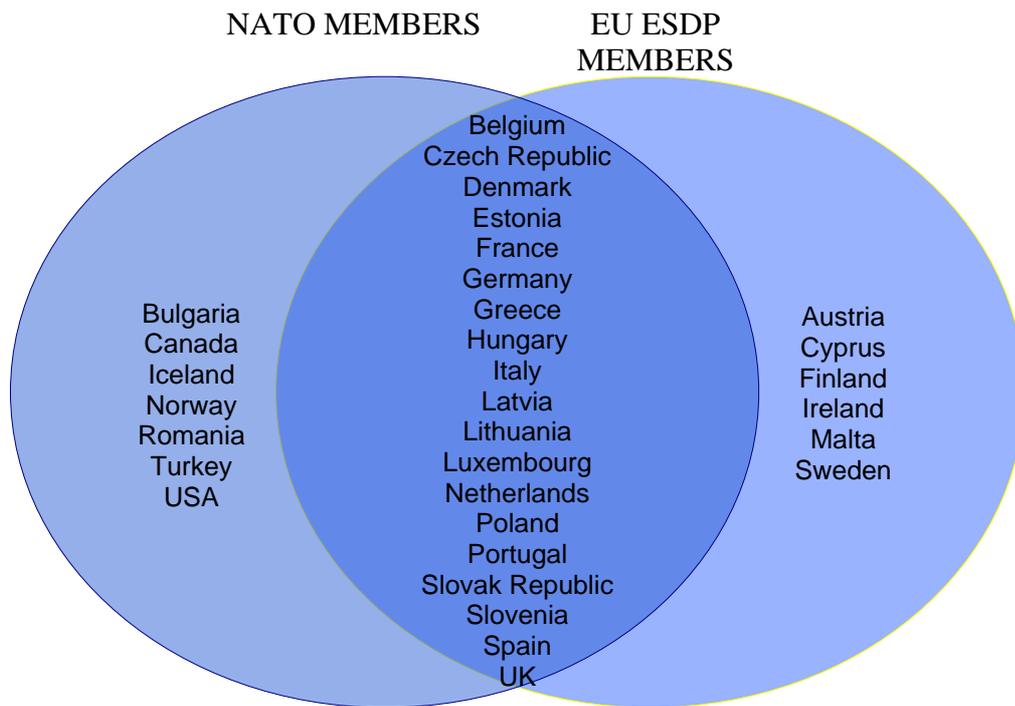
More specifically, the cooperation initiatives in Europe can be defined as extraordinary and regular. For instance, the more evident and extraordinary activities concern the participation in international peace operations (*e.g.* NATO International Security Operation Force / ISAF in Afghanistan, EU operation ARTEMIS in Congo, NATO and EU operations in ex-Yugoslavia); or the constitution of rapid reaction forces (*e.g.* EU Battle Groups, EU Rapid Reaction Force, NATO's Response Force). As to regular activities, these comprehend joint and combined military exercises, technical, operational and doctrinarian training, technical, operational, weaponry, and doctrinarian standardisation, exchange of information, bilateral and multilateral meetings between chiefs of staff, etc. In turn both extraordinary and regular cooperative interaction activities are supported by an institutional framework that is much denser in

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<sup>5</sup> In Europe, besides the Cold War focus on territorial defence and today's focus on international crisis management, the regional collaboration is also being directed towards the control of EU external frontiers, through the creation of an European Agency (FRONTEX) to coordinate several activities, including vigilance and control operations. The armed forces, especially the navy and the air force, make a significant contribution to these operations.

NATO's case (see table 1) <sup>6</sup> than in EU's <sup>7</sup> case (see table 2). In short, by comparing the tables illustrated on the pages below, it is possible to confirm the huge gap between Europe and the other regions of the world.

Figure 1 – Participation of European Countries in Military Cooperation Frameworks



<sup>6</sup> The levels of NATO's military integration are so breathtaking that cannot be properly described in this table. For a precise idea on NATO's military and civilian structure see NATO Handbook.

<sup>7</sup> For an overview on EU ESDP military and civilian structure see:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showPage.asp?id=279&lang=en&mode=g](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showPage.asp?id=279&lang=en&mode=g)

#### 4. What is Meant by European States?

Except for former Eastern Bloc members, in this study European states are identified as the member states of NATO and ESDP (see figure 1). On the one hand, the cooperative interaction within this core group of countries is much more intense than within other partner countries also involved in processes of cooperation such as USA, Canada or Turkey. On the other hand, relatively to Eastern Bloc countries, despite the political changes promoted by the EU and NATO and the active participation in today's cooperation defence initiatives, questions like the recent adhesion to western European institutions and the heritage of half a century under the control of Moscow point towards a smaller impact of multilateral cooperation on security and defence cultures. For instance, in the case of Estonia (Kuus 2005: 297-317), the adhesion to European institutions appears to constitute mainly a strategic adaptation to a new international environment.

*“ (...) inasmuch as international integration is perceived as intensifying foreign pressure to implement cooperative measures with regard to Russia and Estonia's Russian-speaking residents, it is framed domestically as a potential threat to the Estonian nation and state.”*  
(Kuus, 2002: 298).

As such, for these countries, it seems too early to raise the question of an eventual Europeanization of national security and defence cultures.

In sum, while in the cases of countries like Portugal and Belgium the absence of evident threats to national security and a history of consolidated political and military cooperation with European partners allow to foresee a voluntary commitment towards a growing deepening of cooperation mechanisms, in Estonian or Polish cases it seems like the cooperative option, more than anything, still represents a temporary instrument to reinforce recent processes of national statement with regard to the pervasive shadow of Moscow's influence.<sup>8</sup>

#### 5. The Case Studies of Belgium and Portugal

As mentioned before, the two countries share some features which facilitate the construction of a comparative model of analysis. Both states are small powers and have an equivalent military dimension, both are founding members of NATO and ESDP and, up to present day, have a record of active engagement in western European military cooperation. Finally, even if providing a residual territorial defence function, Portuguese and Belgian armed forces are specially committed to provide a significant contribution to international peacekeeping, sponsored by NATO, EU (*i.e* ESDP) or the UN (Forster, 2006: 41-73). However,

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<sup>8</sup> Indeed, contrarily to Portuguese and Belgium's case, Polish and Estonian armed forces are still mainly oriented towards territorial defence (Forster, 2006: 45, 53).

these two countries demonstrate in their defence policy documents different points of view of today's cooperative interaction and their role in it.<sup>9</sup>

In sum, the methodological aim is to compare what is comparable. At stake is the fact that “most similar case studies method” allows to verify the impact of cooperation upon security and defence cultures in a more controlled way, since it helps to isolate the factors which can determine the how's and why's of variations, and, consequently, to overcome some International Relations easy tendencies towards fatalism or predetermination (*e.g.* states behave differently or the same according to their power dimension or their uniqueness).

## **Methodology**

The previous sections of this paper were useful to justify the theoretical and the thematic questions which help to elucidate the importance of the subject of research. In turn, the present section will briefly describe the methodological options useful to operationalize the core concepts. Accordingly, in order to determine if, since the end of the Cold War, the cooperative interaction is leading to changes in national security and defence cultures of European states, and in what circumstances it occurs, two types of indicators were defined: quantitative and qualitative.<sup>10</sup>

Quantitative Indicators:

- 1) Degree of formal commitment – Analysis of the level of adhesion to an increasingly number of agreements and official commitments to implement cooperation initiatives.
- 2) Degree of real commitment – Evaluation of the actual degree of commitment to the aforementioned agreements. This means it must taken into consideration if defence cooperation agreements are being effectively implemented, *i.e.* the amount of human, material and financial resources that are being allocated for European military cooperation, as well as the measures taken to adequate the national Armed Forces to the international processes of cooperative interaction.

Through these two indicators, it will be possible to quantify the degree of involvement in the cooperative interaction processes. However, this data, by itself, is not enough to reveal a change in security and defence cultures. As such, it is essential to take into account how these practices and behaviours are interpreted and accepted: as a temporary phenomenon (*i.e.* strategic

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<sup>9</sup> For Portugal, see Conceito Estratégico de Defesa Nacional 2003 (National Defence Strategic Concept 2003); for Belgium, see The Modernisation Plan 2000 – 2015 of the Belgium Armed Forces.

<sup>10</sup> With regard to the use of quantitative and qualitative data in social sciences, Kehohane, King e Verba (1995: 475) state that “[...] much of the best social science research can combine quantitative and qualitative data, precisely because there is no contradiction between the fundamental processes of inference involved in it”.

adaptation) or as a process which should be sustained and deepened in the long run (change in the security and defence culture).

Qualitative Indicators:

1) Official Discourse – through this indicator it will be possible to verify if the high level of involvement in the cooperation processes corresponds to a likewise official discourse, i.e. if governmental and military leaders discourse is favourable to the interdependence and integration. It may also occur that this discourse leans towards the integration, without a practical meaning (see quantitative indicators above).

2) Society's position on the Official Discourse and on the Cooperative Practices - This indicator will rely on European and national public opinion surveys, and on the analysis of the official position of the political parties represented in national assemblies. In this way, it will be possible to verify if practices, behaviours, norms and official discourses are more or less supported by national societies<sup>11</sup>.

In case of a positive match between these four indicators (*i.e.* high level of formal and effective commitment, a favourable discourse on the military cooperation at the European Level and a Societal strong support), it can be considered the possibility of a change in national security and defence cultures towards its Europeanization. Likewise, in case of different results, it will be possible discover that the cooperative interaction entails lower degrees of change in security and defence cultures, or even just a merely strategic adaptation to a new international security-environment.

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<sup>11</sup> The integration of political parties official position in this item is due to the need to overcome some public opinion surveys flaws and was made on the assumption that the political parties do represent and influence public opinion. On the one hand, *Eurobarometer* surveys have some shortcomings and methodological problems, notably difficulties with the wording of the questionnaire in different languages and the fact that some of the questions were readjusted over the years. On the other hand, Europeans generally show a lack of interest and also a lack of knowledge in defence and security matters (Kernic, Callaghan and Manigart, 2002).

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EU ESDP Website –

[www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3\\_fo/showpage.asp?lang=en&id=261&mode=name=](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/showpage.asp?lang=en&id=261&mode=name=)

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**Table 1 - Brief Overview of NATO Structure**

Civilian Structure	Military Structure	Organisations and Agencies
NATO Headquarters	Military Committee	Organisations and agencies established to undertake more specific tasks. Located within the NATO Headquarters in Brussels or in different member countries of the Alliance, they form an integral part of the overall NATO structure. They provide a focus for specialised research and advice, for the implementation of Alliance decisions, for the management and operation of cooperative programmes and systems, and for education and training in the following areas:
Political headquarters of the Alliance and permanent home of the North Atlantic Council, NATO's senior political decision-making body	Responsible for recommending to NATO's political authorities measures necessary for the common defence of the NATO area. Its principal role is to provide direction and advice on military policy and strategy. It provides guidance on military matters to the NATO Strategic Commanders and is responsible for the overall conduct of the military affairs of the Alliance under the	

	<p>authority of the Council, as well as for the efficient operation of Military Committee agencies.</p> <p><u>International Military staff</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive agency of the Military Committee</li> <li>- Provides staff support to the Military Committee</li> <li>- Responsible for the preparation of assessments, studies and other papers on NATO military matters.</li> <li>- Ensures implementation of decisions and policies on military matters by the appropriate NATO military bodies.</li> <li>- Essential link between the political decision-making bodies of the Alliance and the NATO Strategic Military Commanders</li> <li>- Composed by approximately 380 military personnel of member states</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Logistics</li> <li>- Production Logistics</li> <li>- Standardisation</li> <li>- Civil Emergency Planning</li> <li>- Air Traffic</li> <li>- Management / Defence</li> <li>- Communication and - - Defence Systems</li> <li>- Electronic Warfare</li> <li>- Meteorology</li> <li>- Oceanography</li> <li>- Research and Technology</li> <li>- Education and Training</li> </ul>
<p>Permanent Representatives and National Delegations</p> <hr/> <p>Member States delegations at NATO Headquarters, which have a status similar to an embassy and are headed by an Ambassador or Permanent</p>	<p>Allied Command Operations</p> <hr/> <p>Composed by two Strategic NATO Commands: Allied Command Transformation (ACT), responsible for transformation and training of NATO forces, and Allied</p>	

Representative	Command Operations, responsible for NATO operations world wide. The latter coordinates the several operational military regional and sub-regional commands, which in turn are responsible for several standing and rapid deployable military forces.	
International Staff		
Advisory and administrative body of 1200 civilians that supports the work of the national delegations at different committee levels and assists in implementing their decisions.		

**Table 2 - Brief Overview of ESDP Structure**

Civilian Structure	Military Structure	Other Structures
Political and Security Committee (PSC)	European Union Military Committee (EUMC)	<u>European Defence Agency (EDA)</u>
The PSC meets at the ambassadorial level as a preparatory body for the Council of the EU.  Main functions: - Keeping track of the	The EUMC is the highest military body set up within the Council. It is composed of the Chiefs of Defence of the Member States, who are regularly represented by their permanent military	EDA'S general goal is to support the Member States in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the ESDP as it stands now

<p>international situation, and helping to define policies within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) including the ESDP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exercising political control and strategic direction on international crisis</li> </ul>	<p>representatives.</p> <p>Main Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing the PSC with advice and recommendations on all military matters within the EU</li> </ul>	<p>and develops in the future.</p> <p>Main Functions related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defence capabilities development;</li> <li>- Armaments co-operation;</li> <li>- European defence technological and industrial base and defence equipment market;</li> <li>- Research and technology</li> </ul>
	<p>The European Union Military Staff</p> <hr/> <p>The EUMS is a General Directorate within the Council General Secretariat composed by several thematic divisions and offices. It is the only permanent integrated military structure of the European Union. The EU Military Staff receives taskings from the EU Military Committee (which represents the Chiefs of Defence of all the Member States).</p> <p>Main Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing in-house military expertise for the Secretary-General/High Representative (SG/HR).</li> <li>- Operational Functions:</li> </ul>	<p>EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)</p> <hr/> <p>Autonomous Body which does not represent or defend any particular national interest. Its aim is to help to create a common European security culture, to enrich the strategic debate, and systematically to promote the interests of the Union.</p> <p>Main Functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- research and debate on the major security and defence issues that are of relevance to the EU;</li> <li>- forward-looking analysis for the Union's Council and High Representative;</li> <li>- Development of a transatlantic dialogue on</li> </ul>

	early warning, situation assessment, and strategic planning.	all security issues with the countries of Europe, Canada and the United States.
	EU Operations Centre	EU Satellite Centre
	<p>Sector within the EU Military Staff, which uses some EUMS core staff, as well as some extra “double-hatted” EUMS officers and so-called “augmentees”.</p> <p>Main Function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commanding, from Brussels, missions and operations of limited size, that is like that of a battlegroup (<i>i.e.</i> some 2,000 troops).</li> </ul>	<p>Agency of the Council of the European Union dedicated to the exploitation and production of information derived primarily from the analysis of earth observation space imagery in support of Union decision-making in the field of "second pillar", the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).</p>

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:**

**Marco Rosa is a Ph.D Candidate at the University of Coimbra in Portugal. He specializes on NATO and European Security studies.**

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