Part 3: Security Challenges

Chapter Seven

The Future of European Security and Defence: Keeping the Americans in?

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Abstract

Through his remarks deriding the contribution of European states towards their individual and collective defence, President Donald Trump has sown seeds of doubt into the prospects for the transatlantic relationship. Yet a wider review of this relationship, and security and defence efforts within the EU, shows less cause for alarm. The EU's development of its own security and defence identity and strategic autonomy independent of the United States is being pursued. It may be argued that developing and strengthening its political and strategic identity within a European and world order in flux may allow it to maintain a more cohesive political union, and strengthen its value as a strategic partner within the transatlantic alliance. Security has always been at the heart of European Integration. Identifying and formulating a common European strategy has been a challenge, yet considerable progress has been made in cultivating a common European strategic outlook. Moreover, the current international milieu provides the EU, and its member states, with the opportunity to focus on building its strategic autonomy and common outlook, and in the process seek to cultivate a common strategic culture that may generate greater cohesion. Furthermore, cooperation with the United States and NATO will remain at the heart of Europe's strategic activity, and ultimately, EU strategic culture for the foreseeable future. Moreover, the ability to rely on NATO's (and the U.S.) hard power will allow the EU to focus more effectively on civilian security capabilities and its soft power as a global actor.

Introduction

Both during his campaign and since his election, U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly bemoaned the discrepancies that exist in defence spending within the Transatlantic Alliance and called for European States to share a greater part of the burden. Whilst such sentiments within U.S. policy are by no means new, the tone of President Trump's remarks within the broader context of his domestic and foreign policy have triggered debate on the future course of U.S. foreign policy and the implications for the transatlantic alliance and European Security and Defence.

There have been many efforts – and difficulties – in defining a common European Strategic Culture, but at the core of a common European strategic outlook is the partnership with the United States. Thus, a common reality, if not so far as a culture, is the reliance on the transatlantic relationship and its extended deterrence. On the other hand, its extended deterrent role and commitment to the transatlantic partnership is inherent within U.S. Strategic Culture.

This is not to say that reluctance within different subcultures does not exist on either side of the Atlantic. The Jacksonian tradition in the United States retains a central role in offering the possibility of an inward-looking foreign policy that prioritises domestic considerations over international needs. Likewise, European States such as France often favour the aspiration towards a more independent foreign policy that is less reliant on the United States.

The policies of the current U.S. president and the challenges faced within the present international order provide an opportunity for Europe to build both a strategic culture and outlook and common strategic identity that will strengthen Europe's role on the world stage, and prove itself a continuing worthy partner to the United States within the transatlantic relationship.

The real benefit in these initiatives will be in strengthening the capability of European States within the alliances they form part of, and in maintaining on the agenda the efforts to move closer towards a common European outlook, if not a European strategic culture.

This chapter explores the impact of current U.S. posturing on the prospects for security and defence developments in the European Union. I will begin by presenting an overview of the international context within which European security developments must be considered, together with the historical developments and policy trends that have shaped the trajectory of European security and defence integration thus far. Within this context, policy implications and options may be measured.

Thus, the main question is, will the EU develop its own security and defence identity and strategic autonomy independent of the United States? It could, but should not necessarily want to. Yet developing and strengthening its political and strategic identity within a European and world order in flux may allow it to maintain a more cohesive political union, and strengthen its value as a strategic partner within the transatlantic alliance.

The world Europe lives in

To begin any discussion of European Security and Transatlantic relations by citing Lord Ismay's conceptualisation of intending to keep the Americans in, the Soviets out and the German's down has become cliché. To also talk of Europe as an economic giant yet a military dwarf is also overly reiterated.

Yet such tropes persist despite the radical changes and shifts that have taken place within the international system and across the European continent.

Lord Ismay's sentiments capture concerns that prevailed for many of the key players and participants. Would the Soviet Union pursue expansionist tendencies into the West of the European Continent, or would the Atlantic Alliance succeed in containing its influence? Would Germany be contained in its ability to rebuild itself and expand its influence across the continent, or would it be successfully integrated with its European neighbours and allies?

And would the United States maintain its international focus and sustain its conviction to engage within the international community and extend its deterrent role and capabilities?

Seventy years after the foundation of NATO, and over sixty years since the Treaties of Rome, current debates are dominated by concerns that have evolved according to the changing international milieu, but are not too far removed from those that troubled the founders. European security remains overshadowed by the possibility of a Russian revival, questions over the extent of American commitment, and whether European partners are able to commit sufficiently to collective security.

Moreover, the debate over the current status quo in European Security has largely been overshadowed by events that have disrupted, so to speak, the peaceful progression of European political and security developments and integration, including the election of Donald Trump, and Brexit. Furthermore, the EU remains surrounded by unstable regions, including the Mediterranean and the Middle East, by challenges posed by migration, a more confident Russia, and the lingering threat of terrorism.

Meanwhile, the international liberal order that the Europeans and Americans spent the past decades designing and constructing appears to be gradually unravelling. Niblett has described a situation of "Liberalism in Retreat", citing stumbling blocks in the progress and expansion of liberalist principles at an international level, but perhaps more importantly challenges posed by internal threats to the liberal order stemming from "domestic political and economic uncertainty" (Niblett, 2017). The 2018 IISS Strategic Survey also warned that "statecraft is back", arguing that "States that are unhappy with the international order, or wish to create their own, are finding weaker resistance to their efforts to change things in their favour" (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2018). Kagan has famously warned that the international liberal order designed and carefully preserved by the United States and its allies is under threat, resulting in the proverbial geopolitical "jungle" growing back (Kagan, 2018). Yet, Mead has long argued that "westerners should never have expected old-fashioned geopolitics to go away" (Mead, 2014). In assessing the viability of the international liberal order, Nye has reinforced this argument by stating that "Governments will continue to possess power and resources, but the stage on which they play will become ever more crowded, and they will have less ability to direct the action" (Nye, 2017). Ikenberry has maintaind that "The future of this liberal order hinges on the ability of the United States and Europe – and increasingly a wider array of liberal democracies – to lead and support it" (Ikenberry, 2018).

Thus, the world in which Europe is living is currently in flux, both internally and externally.

Within this context, President Donald Trump has repeatedly derided his European counterparts for their apparent woeful contributions to defence spending and burden sharing within NATO, resulting in questions over the certainty of the United States' commitment to European Security (Howorth, 2018). Whilst progress within security and defence integration in the European Union has increased over the past two decades, European Security has largely remained the domain of the Transatlantic Alliance. Yet in the current context it appears that the stars may be aligning to provide an impetus for a more entrenched European Security Identity (see Riddervold & Newsome, 2018; Leonard & Shapiro, 2019; Witney, 2019).

Whilst the process of European integration was one that was always intended to be ongoing, both in terms of geographic breadth and political scope, the current international milieu has provided the EU with the opportunity to demonstrate its benefit in providing a steady global political hand.

Security & Defence – Present at Europe's Creation

The recent efforts at strengthening the EU's "security and defence" dimension are by no means new. The very essence of European integration is in itself security, in that it sought to banish the possibility of conflict between European states.

France's then Foreign Minister, Robert Schuman, famously declared on 9th May 1950 that Europe would not be built "all at once, or according to a single plan." He called for institutionalising cooperation that would make "any war between France and Germany… not merely unthinkable, but materially impossible" (Schuman, 1950). The founders also acknowledged the security objectives of integration within the Preamble to the 1951 Treaty of Paris establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, expressing their resolve to "substitute for age-old rivalries the merging of their essential interests" (Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, 1951).

Simultaneous proposals for a European Defence Community (EDC) were also championed. In recounting the foundation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Sloan details the concurrent talks over the establishment of the EDC (Sloan, 2016). During the discussions on the establishment of a European Defence framework, Sloan highlights the key concerns that prevailed, including U.S. worries regarding "European shortfalls" in contributions, as well as the duplication of efforts, French fears about German rearmament, and the possibility that the United States and Britain would retreat, leaving France to 'balance' or contain Germany alone. Eisenhower summed up French perceptions when he said that "the French have an almost hysterical fear that we and the British will one day pull out of Western Europe and leave them to face a superior German armed force" (Sloan, 2016, p. 39).

Despite the failure of the European Defence Community, the European States went on to pursue alternative paths of integration, by signing the Rome Treaty establishing the European Economic Community in 1957, and pledging to "lay the foundations of an ever-closer union" (Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community, 1957).

Thus, European security and defence integration progressed under the banner of NATO. Even during the Cold War, when the United States' extended deterrent role was at its height, concerns were also raised about the disparity in burden sharing. NATO's 1967 Harmel Report explored the "Future Tasks of the Alliance". The report approved on 18 December 1967 states that "the exercise has shown that the Alliance is a dynamic and vigorous organisation which is constantly adapting itself to changing conditions." It pointed out that "Although the disparity between the power of the United States and that of the European states remains, Europe has recovered and is on its way towards unity" (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 1967).

Since the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the bipolar divide allowed the European Community to step up the pace of its quest for ever closer union, transforming itself into the European Union, and widening the scope of its collaboration as well as its membership. Thus began its endeavours in building a Common Foreign and Security Policy through the Maastricht Treaty, and eventually establishing a European External Action Service (EEAS) and Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) through the Lisbon Treaty.

American multilateralism and extended deterrence

Inextricably linked to the development of European security has been the role of the United States as an integral player through the provision of its security umbrella to the continent, which has been a consistent feature of the U.S.' strategic outlook and defence policy over the decades.

Yet the past years have seen developments that rattled the assumptions regarding European Security and the frameworks within which it may rest.

In his analysis of "the transatlantic bargain" and its "defence of the west", Sloan recalls George Washington's advice during his farewell address in 1796 regarding the avoidance of permanent alliance – advice heeded to until the signing of the NATO treaty (Sloan, 2016). Yet the temptation to look towards a future disentangled from such permanent alliances remains one that is at times considered within U.S. Political and Strategic establishments. The Jacksonian tradition, if you will, has never been altogether ruled out (Mead, 2002).

Under the current Trump administration, the desire to "Make America great again" has also been accompanied by unfiltered and undiplomatic complaints about the imbalance in contributions towards European security. Yet such statements are not new. Successive Presidents and Administrations have long maintained that defence budget concerns needed to be addressed, culminating in the 2014 defence budget agreement reached at the NATO summit in Wales (Kaufman, 2017). Since 2014, NATO allies have reportedly made progress in increasing their defence spending, and have reported national plans to reach the goal of 2% of their respective GDP by 2024 (see North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 2019). In spite of this, American former diplomats and analysts such as Lute and Burns continue to argue that "President Trump has been right to push allies to spend more on defense. He has the support of the U.S. Congress and many Americans in doing so" (Lute & Burns, 2019, p. 3). They maintain that it is unfair that only five NATO allies currently spend at least 2% of their GDP, whilst the United States spends 3.5%.

The importance of multilateralism and in particular, transatlantic multilateralism is embedded within the very fabric of the United States' strategic culture and outlook. Indeed, European political and security developments began and remained a reference point in the geopolitical outlook of the United States; initially due to the American rejection of European politics; out of a sense of exceptionalism with which the United States viewed itself and its role in the world (Mahnken, 2009).

With the end of the Second World War, the U.S. acknowledged that its exceptionalism and primacy within the international community needed to be translated into an engaged leadership role, both in the wake of the war and the construction of a liberal world order, but also within the context of the Cold War that emerged. Thus, whilst the U.S. pushed for the emergence of the United Nations, it also pursued multilateral frameworks and a system of alliances that would uphold the international order that U.S. primacy both favoured and required. However, reservations over the indefinite role that the U.S. would be expected to provide as guarantor of the international security order have always persisted.

The concerns surrounding multilateralism and international engagement often espoused today were indeed present within early Cold War strategy documents, such as the 1953 NSC162/2. Such documents underlined the necessity of a strong military posture, which should be complemented by multilateralism and alliances. It was also acknowledged that the U.S. did not want to indefinitely serve as the West's sole security guarantor (U.S. National Security Council, 1953).

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of the U.S. as the sole remaining superpower, within a "new world order" within which it sought to replace the bipolar divide with liberal multilateralism (Bush, 1990). Yet concerns regarding over-stretched engagements and guarantees continued to resonate.

Successive post-Cold War strategy documents affirmed that "the American commitment to an alliance strategy" was not only based on shared interests and common threats, but on shared values (The White House, 1990). They also acknowledge that "while the United States cannot become the world's policeman and assume responsibility for solving every international security problem, neither can we allow our critical interests to depend solely on international mechanisms that can be blocked by countries whose interests may be very different from our own" (U.S. Department of Defense, 1993).

Multilateralism and engagement remained central to U.S. Strategy under the Clinton administration, and the indivisibility of Transatlantic security continued to be emphasised (The White House, 1995; U.S. Department of Defense, 2000). Yet the Clinton administration also encouraged Europeans to assume greater responsibility in Europe. However, with the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia and the conflict that ensued, European inaction showed that American intervention became inevitable and remained necessary.

The George W. Bush Administration was often criticised for adopting a unilateral approach and appearing to disregard multilateral efforts. However, multilateral concerns continued to play a key role. Even within a changing security context, the quest for a collaborative security strategy remained a starting point (U.S. Department of Defense, 2001). In this respect, the Administration valued both established multilateral frameworks, as well as ad hoc security arrangements designed to suit specific needs (U.S. Department of Defense, 2001; and The White House, 2002).

The Obama Administration sought to restore the role and perception of U.S. multilateralism, yet expressed concern over the demands being placed on the United States (U.S. Department of Defense, 2010). The 2010 NSS states that "the burdens of a young century cannot fall on American shoulders alone – indeed, our adversaries would like to see America sap our strength by overextending our power" (The White House, 2010). There continues to be an emphasis placed on a wider distribution of effort and burden sharing: "This modernization of institutions, strengthening of international norms, and enforcement of international law is not a task for the United States alone—but together with like-minded nations, it is a task we can lead" (The White House, 2010). Whilst multilateralism and engagement were prioritised, the Obama administration, like previous ones, reserved the right to 'go it alone' (The White House, 2010; The White House, 2015; U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (2015).

The December 2017 National Security Strategy published by the Trump Administration acknowledges the post-war international liberal order that was built in collaboration with other European and Asian counterparts, and the institutions that have formed the backbone of that international order (The White House, 2017). In asserting the priority of the strategy as protecting American citizens, values and way of life, the strategy states "Engaging with the world, however, does not mean the United States should abandon its rights and duties as a sovereign state or compromise its security" (The White House, 2017, p. 7). The document acknowledges the need for cooperation with partners and alliances in order to counter prevailing threats.

The 2017 Strategy also attaches the exceptionalism of the United States to its historical track record in assisting "fragile and developing countries become successful societies", citing as its foremost example the recovery of Western Europe through the Marshall Plan (The White House, 2017, p. 38). Moreover, the NSS reaffirms the importance of a "strong and free Europe" (The White House, 2017, p. 47). It underscores the interdependence of U.S. and European shared values; prosperity, stability and security; and affirms the U.S. commitment to European allies, stating "the NATO alliance of free and sovereign states is one of our greatest advantages over our competitors, and the United States remains committed to Article V of the Washington Treaty." The strategy goes on to maintain that "The NATO alliance will become stronger when all members assume greater responsibility for and pay their fair share to protect our mutual interests, sovereignty, and values" (The White House, 2017, p. 48).

Thus when placed in context, it becomes clear that whilst the tone of President Trump's remarks (and tweets) on the subject are in stark contrast with those of his predecessors or what is expected of a head of state, the substance of his administration's policy statements are reflective of the historical evolution and in keeping with the variations generally expected out of a change in administration or the change in political party in office. They are a continuation of past policies.

Defining a European Strategic Outlook

Since its foundation, a primary challenge in developing a coordinated foreign and security policy under the umbrella of the European Union has been agreement over a common European strategic outlook and culture (Schmidt & Zyla, 2011). Such challenges have been inherent in all areas of political and economic integration, yet external policy has proved to be more sensitive due to the issue of sovereignty.

Leading European States such as France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy have also retained the desire to maintain a leadership role within the international community, and have recognized the benefits of utilizing the European Union to do so.

A challenge in identifying a coherent European strategic culture has been the fact that 28 Member States bring with them 28 different perspectives and sets of interests (Biehl, Giegerich & Jonas, 2013). Yet there appears to be a common agreement on the role of the EU's economic and value-based political leadership within the international community.

Significant progress has been made in the EU's integration in security and defence over the past two decades, particularly in identifying a common outlook towards the strategic challenges that the Union faces. In this regard, the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016 has sought to bridge existing gaps, and focus on commonalities between member states, most evidently in developing the role of the EU as a civilian security actor. In fact, in discussing the "construction of 'European security'", Selchow reviews the discourse and language used in the EUGS, and considers them a space for the negotiation and contestation of concepts and identities that make up the notion of European security (Selchow, 2016).

There are indeed several strong narratives and themes that emerge from the EUGS that are reflective of the broad EU-wide consultative process before the strategy was drawn up. The document also acknowledges the importance of collective security. The EU's member states may have varying strategic outlooks and priorities, but as High Representative Federica Mogherini acknowledges, "none of our countries has the strength nor the resources to address these threats and seize the opportunities of our time alone" (European Union, 2016, p. 3). She emphasizes the importance of "shared interests, principles and priorities". She notes that "Grounded in the values enshrined in the Treaties and building on our many strengths and historic achievements, we will stand united in building a stronger Union, playing its collective role in the world" (European Union, 2016, p. 7).

In highlighting the priorities of the EU's external action service, an emphasis is placed on enhancing the EU's strategic autonomy. Yet it is also maintained that the future of European security and defence remains embedded within the framework of NATO. It is acknowledged that "NATO, for its members, has been the bedrock of Euro-Atlantic security for almost 70 years. It remains the strongest and most effective military alliance in the world" (European Union, 2016, p. 36). Enhancing the EU's capabilities would firmly complement those of the transatlantic alliance.

The EUGS states that "a more credible European defence is essential also for the sake of a healthy transatlantic partnership with the United States" (European Union, 2016, p. 20). It also highlights that "On the broader security agenda, the U.S. will continue to be our core partner" (European Union, 2016, p. 36).

The 2018 review of the strategy's implementation emphasizes the relationship with the United States, despite the uncertain rhetoric and statements being made. The review asserts that "A strong and well-functioning transatlantic partnership remains a crucial element for Europe's security and prosperity. The EU remains committed to the strategic partnership with the United States, based on shared values, interests, and a willingness to play a responsible role in world affairs to our mutual benefit." Whilst the successes in collaboration are underscored, it is noted that the EU has also "stood up for our values, principles and interests when we felt that they were challenged and we will continue to do so. This is particularly true when it comes to defending and promoting the rules-based international order that has been built together with the U.S. in recent decades" (European Union, 2018, p. 11).

Whilst the EUGS maps out the vision that the Member States seek to achieve through their coordinated role, the annual reports published on the implementation of the strategy provide detailed insight into the practical progress that has been made. In her forward to the 2017 report, Mogherini notes, "more has been achieved in the last ten months than in the last ten years" (European Union, 2017, p. 5). Achievements over the past years include a new command centre for EU training and advisory missions, and progress towards developing greater 'military mobility', a political agreement to establish a 'European Defence Industrial Development Programme', and more ambitious proposals to set up a 'European Defence Fund' and a 'European Peace Facility' (see European Union, 2017; European Union, 2018). Enhanced cooperation has also seen the development of a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) and a Civilian CSDP Compact (see European Union, 2019). The EU also deepened its partnerships with NATO. In fact, the third annual review highlights the "unprecedented cooperation between the EU and NATO, with no less than 74 common actions to date in the framework of the two Joint Declarations of 2016 and 2018" (European Union, 2019, p. 11. See also European Union, 2017, p.23; European Union, 2018, p.8).

Perhaps the most visible achievement has been the launching of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) in December 2017 (see Fiott, Missiroli & Tardy, 2017), which aims to fulfil the need for "enhanced coordination, increased investment and more cooperation in developing defence capabilities". The fact that such cooperation is taking place within a treaty-based framework is a revolutionary aspect, in light of the historical political hesitancy that has always existed in this regard (see EEAS, 2019).

In reviewing the progress made and assessing prospects for the future of the European Union in this regard, two points must be raised.

Firstly, the real test to PESCO and the EU and the leaps and bounds that have been made in coordination in this field will come in the face of crisis that requires intervention, particularly one in which other "like-minded" military actors (such as the United States) will be reluctant to act. If one thinks back to the reaction of the international community to the Arab Spring, and more specifically to the civil war that broke out in Libya, political and public opinion within the United States recognized the need for intervention, but felt that it was not a priority for the United States but should have been for other regional allies. Thus, the U.S. agreed to lead from behind, and facilitate a greater political role while the military intervention was spearheaded by the UK and France. At the time, Germany was a non-permanent member of the Security Council, but it abstained when the vote was taken. The question is whether the technical cooperation facilitated by PESCO will trickle into the political deliberations when the EU faces similar scenarios.

Secondly, it may be argued that the benefit of PESCO is the existence of PESCO itself. The coordination and enhanced investments in military and defence will expand the military profile of the EU as a collaborative power within the international community. Furthermore, the ability to boast such capabilities, even if not put to use, is in itself a demonstration of power and influence within the international system. Therefore the benefit of PESCO may be in the collaboration itself, even if it is not put to the test.

Envisioning Europe’s world role

The end of the Second World War provided an opportunity for integration. Whilst attempts were made at pursuing integration at a political and defence level, it was evident that the climate was not yet ripe. The end of the Cold War provided a natural next step for furthering European integration, whereby the international milieu facilitated, if not expected, the European Union to begin to rely on its own capabilities without necessarily requiring the United States to extend its reach across the Atlantic.

We witnessed efforts to develop both the political and logistical requirements, embodied in treaty reforms from the Maastricht Treaty, to St Malo and finally the Lisbon Treaty. Concurrently, we also saw NATO evolve and redefine the way it perceived its own role within the evolving international system through the publication of updated strategic concepts to better reflect the times.

The course of events has also tested the political will and strategic commitments of both the Europeans and their American allies. The fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia, Kosovo, the Iraq War, Libya and Syria, have all tested the resolve of the transatlantic allies and raised debate as to which side of the Atlantic leadership and responsibility should lie (Anderson, 2018).

Moreover, the delicate balance between pursuing European security and stability via NATO and/or the European Union is a continuous debate that seeks to ensure effectiveness and a smart distribution of capabilities (see Smith, 2018; Howorth, 2018).

The EU has weathered crises and rifts before. Challenges, particularly those related to failures in security and defence policy, have always been followed by renewed efforts over integration and continuity. After all, the process of European integration is one that at its roots was defined as an “ever closer union” that would be brought about gradually and over time. Thus, the EU – and its member states – may seize the opportunity at hand to further the course of European integration when it comes.

It is within these contexts in mind that the recent statements by President Donald Trump must be measured, and the implications for the wider transatlantic relationship and prospects for European security considered.

The current milieu is unique in that we are not witnessing a drastic turn of events that is transforming international order, but gradual shifts that are indicating a slow retreat by the United States. Whether this shift will be temporary or not is impossible to predict. In the meantime, it is certain that an erosion of the liberal international order has been set in motion – which will be difficult to reverse.

This context has set the stage for the possibility of further progress in strengthening the technical and political collaboration between the EU member states within the sphere of security and defence.

Success has been achieved in the institutionalization of commitment and cooperation through the work of the European External Action Service, the publication and implementation of the EUGS, and the commitment to develop its own strategic autonomy through PESCO. In parallel, the past five years have seen greater efforts to move towards increased defence spending under the umbrella of NATO.

We have seen greater efforts to strengthen European initiatives from within the institutions and also from leading member states.

France and Germany have traditionally been at the helm of the European integration process, and have sought to tap into the current climate in order to strengthen the international political profile of the EU, and their respective roles at the forefront.

In June 2016, the French and German Foreign Ministers at the time – Jean Marc Ayrault and Frank Walter Steinmeier – published a joint "vision" on the future of Europe on the heels of Britain's Brexit vote. They described the result of the referendum as a regrettable decision that would result in consequences for both the UK and the rest of the EU. They asserted that the EU is a source of stability in the world, and would work to champion cohesion within the Union and strengthen its role on the world stage (Ayrault & Steinmeier, 2016).

In September 2017, France's President Macron spoke about his vision for the future of Europe, and pegged the challenges being faced in consolidating European security and defence on the lack of a common strategic culture. He therefore proposed the creation of a European Intervention Initiative which would seek to foster collaboration and bridge the varying European strategic cultures that exist (Macron, 2017).[18] This initiative has been described as separate, but complementary to the work of the UN, NATO and the EU, in that it would facilitate cooperation within the context of such multilateral frameworks (Letter of Intent, 2018).

President Macron also sought to lead the European debate on the future of European security and defence taking due account of President Trump's remarks regarding the share of defence spending within the transatlantic alliance. In a widely reported interview on French radio in November 2018, in the midst of centennial commemorations for the World War One Armistice, President Macron spoke of the need to create a "true European army" (BBC News, 2018). Macron spoke of the need to "have a Europe that can defend itself alone – and without only relying on the United States – in a more sovereign manner" (Noack & McAuley, 2018). This was met with mixed reactions – namely positive – from the likes of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and European Commission officials (see BBC NEWS, 2018; Reuters, 2018). Trump misleadingly tweeted that France's suggestion "that Europe build its own military in order to protect itself from the U.S., China and Russia" was "very insulting" (Noack & McAuley, 2018).

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[18] The initiative was later launched in June 2018, with the Defence Ministers of Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK as signatories to the Letter of Intent.

Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas has also actively remarked on the role that Germany as well as Europe should pursue in the light of President Trump's repeated statements on European Defence spending. In a speech delivered in August 2018 he referred to Kagan's proverbial "jungle growing back" which would replace the rule-based liberal international order that the western allies had cultivated. He expressed the opinion that the rhetoric emerging from Washington could result in fundamental shifts within the strategic realities that Germany and Europe function, and therefore necessitates policies that would maintain collaboration and balance within Europe and across the Atlantic. He maintained that "By strengthening the European pillar of the transatlantic alliance, we are creating the conditions for ensuring that Americans and Europeans can rely on each other also in the future" (Maas, 2018a).

Maas has also spoken of the need to cultivate an "alliance of multilateralists", turning to partners such as France, Canada, and also appealing to Japan and other European partners to join a network of countries committed to a rules-based world order. He has described this not as an "anti-Trump alliance" but as an effort to counteract "those who have declared war on the multilateral world order." (Hoffmann, & Schult, 2019). He has argued that the security challenges being faced can only be addressed collectively, and that it is in Europe's interest to lead such an initiative (see Hoffmann, & Schult, 2019; & Maas, 2018b).

Whilst applauding the progress that has been made within the EU through PESCO, he also maintained that the EU has an important role to play as a civilian actor and in crisis prevention, highlighting that "Security is not exclusively a military question" (Hoffmann, & Schult, 2019). During the 2019 Munich Security Conference, Maas argued that security must be conceptualised holistically without focusing on defence budgets alone (Maas, 2019).

These sentiments have also been echoed by High Representative Federica Mogherini, who referred to the evolution of the European Union into a "security provider 'at large'". She describes the success achieved over the past years as the fruition of "A dream that our founding fathers and mothers always dreamt of, but never managed to accomplish". She asserts that European soft power is now finally complemented by "a credible hard power component" (Mogherini, 2019).

In fact, Mogherini has also acknowledged that cooperation with NATO remains a fundamental aspect of EU's security and defence outlook, noting that "NATO is the pillar of Europe's collective defence; it is even mentioned in the European Union treaties". She maintains "For us Europeans, strategic autonomy and cooperation with our partners are two sides of the same coin" (Mogherini, 2019).

This reality is epitomized by the fact that other EU member states do still prioritise the relationship with the United States and will go to great lengths to anchor its security umbrella within the continent. This was exemplified by the Trump Administration's commitment to boost U.S. troop presence in Poland, and the efforts that have been made on the part of the Polish Government to secure a more permanent U.S. military presence in that country (Baker, 2019).

Despite the remarks coming from the White House, the relationship between the United States and its European counterparts continues to function across a broad range of issues. Testament to this is the visit to Germany by U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo in May 2019. Here Heiko Maas asserted that "The very close contacts between Europe and the United States of America is not only in our mutual interest, I think it is also the expression of a deep-rooted friendship, which is based on shared values above all". Both Maas and Pompeo spoke of the broad range of foreign and security issues over which strong collaboration remains important (U.S. Department of State, 2019).

Concluding Remarks

Through his frequent remarks deriding the contribution of European states towards their individual and collective defence, President Donald Trump has sown seeds of doubt into the prospects for the transatlantic relationship. Yet a wider review of this relationship and security and defence efforts within the EU shows less cause for alarm.

It may be argued that the message of Trump's foreign policy remarks is not necessarily new. Concerns over burden sharing have always persisted and will remain, but so too will Atlanticist sentiments and commitments, both within the current administration and the opposition. U.S. strategic culture is in fact defined by both its commitment to extended deterrence, but also the tendency to "look inwards".

Security has always been at the heart of European Integration. Identifying and formulating a common European strategy has been a challenge, yet considerable progress has been made in cultivating a common European strategic outlook, if not culture. Moreover, the current international milieu provides the EU, and its member states, with the opportunity to focus on building its strategic autonomy and common strategic outlook, and in the process seeks to cultivate a common strategic culture that may generate greater cohesion. In fact, the third annual review of the European Global Strategy recommends that "Europeans can work towards a common strategic culture, entailing convergence in threat assessment, commitment to common responses, and, as a prerequisite of this, acting on the principle of solidarity enshrined in our Treaty" (see European Union, 2019, p. 12).

Recent developments beg the question as to whether the EU is trying to move towards creating capabilities that would make it completely autonomous from the United States, and even hypothetically eventually allow it to detach from NATO, should the circumstances arise. Perhaps this is the case, but we are certainly not there yet, be it in terms of capabilities and autonomy, or even in terms of political will. Thus, bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the United States, and the role of NATO will remain at the heart of Europe's strategic activity, and ultimately, EU strategic culture for the foreseeable future. Moreover, the ability to rely on NATO's (and U.S.) hard power will allow the EU to focus more effectively on civilian security capabilities and its soft power as a global actor.

As with all foreign and security policy, a major source of influence comes from domestic sources. Recent political developments and elections have shown that traditional politics and political establishments are increasingly being challenged, and the EU will likely spend the coming years distracted by having to deal with domestic instability in an attempt to overcome the challenge posed by fringe and anti-establishment political parties.

Whilst this has the potential to "distract" the EU from external policies, the current political fragmentation may alternatively be remedied by the efforts championed by the institutions, as well as by leading member states such as France and Germany, to create internal cohesion through effective external action. This is the great hope of the EUGS.

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