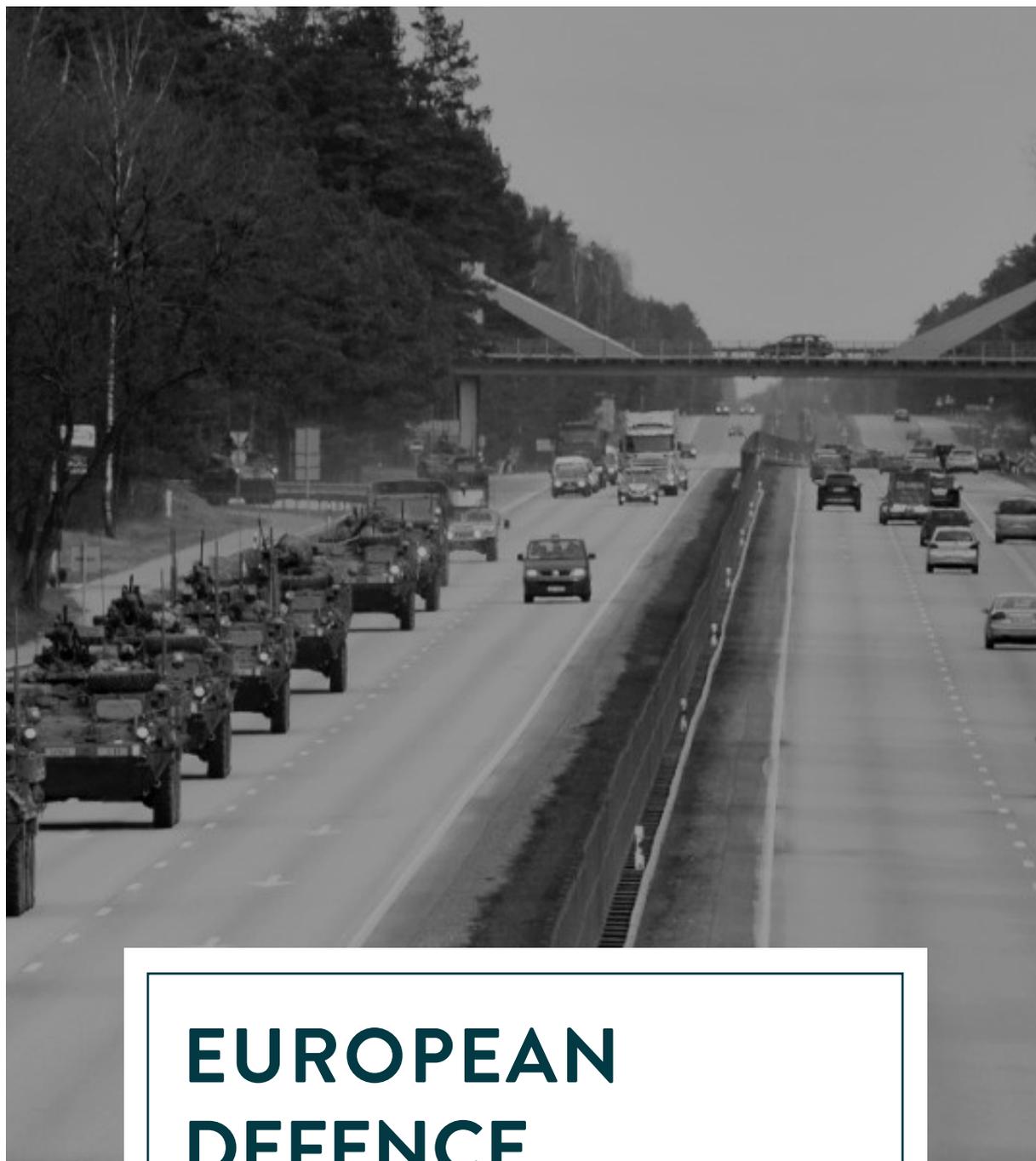




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EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND THE PROJECT OF MILITARY MOBILITY

Di Alessandra Giada Dibenedetto
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The idea of achieving a truly European Defence has throughout the last years taken a more solid shape and has more concretely materialized with the launch in December 2017 of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). The latter is aimed at deepening defence cooperation among the 25 member States of the European Union (EU) that have decided to join the initiative and, hence, jointly develop defence capabilities and make them available for EU military operations. The advancement of this process highlights the willingness of the EU to take more responsibility for its own defence and thus guaranteeing, through its own resources, security to the citizens of the Union. As 17 initial projects have been approved under the framework of PESCO, Military Mobility can be seen as the core and leading project with a long-term projection so far launched. Indeed, it has also been included by all 25 member States among the more binding commitments to take under PESCO.

The concept of Military Mobility was well known and developed within Europe until the end of the Cold War; however, with the period of distention that followed, the necessity and capacity of quickly moving troops in the continent started fading, thus leaving the place to new regulations hampering the rapid deployment of forces across European States. Nonetheless, the situation of instability that characterizes nowadays environment and the need to ensure security inside the EU and at all its borders has led to the consideration that more Military Mobility means more readiness, deterrence and overall security.

As the modus operandi of such mobility of the Armies and its implications cover a broad spectrum of possibilities and opportunities, a clarification of what this new EU project aims at, which geographical areas it would cover and the practical domains it encompasses is needed. The starting point as well as the ratio behind the project of Military Mobility is that talking about a truly European Defence entails the possibility and capacity of rapidly deploying forces across the Union without the presence of regulations and infrastructural obstacles that restrict or slow down the movement of troops. Indeed, achieving full

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and effective Military Mobility is not about lifting controls at the borders, but facilitating passage by standardizing cross-border military transport proceedings and avoiding long bureaucratic procedures, while every State completely maintains its national sovereignty. As a matter of fact, as the High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini correctly pointed out, even the best assets lose their effectiveness and efficiency if they cannot be deployed on time. On the same line, increasing the number of available assets is unproductive if their ability to move is constrained.

The project of Military Mobility has a wide geographical scope which covers the entire territory of the EU, including its more external borders, and extends itself on all routes: north-south and east-west. Such an omnidirectional approach entails movements of full military formations and equipment via road, rail, air and sea across European States for many different purposes among which: carrying out joint exercises, acting quickly in case of an emerging crisis caused by man or nature alike, countering hybrid threats, securing the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC). These tasks can be carried in the context of Common Security and Defence Policy missions, or national and multinational activities.

Defined as the perfect starting point and testing ground for defence cooperation at the EU level, Military Mobility requires a whole of government approach which includes different Ministries at the national level and many domains, namely: legislation and diplomacy, bureaucracy and procedures, command and control chains, and transport infrastructures. On the regulatory side, the European Union, thanks to the efforts of its agencies, has moved the project forward with the approval of the Joint Communication of the European Commission on improving Military Mobility in the EU in November 2017 and the setting of a Roadmap by an ad-hoc working group on cross-border military transportation within Europe (in the framework of the European Defence Agency, EDA); the two documents have led to the drafting of an Action Plan on Military Mobility presented in March 2018. As the latter defines the steps to be taken and the related timeline for

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advancing the project, a closer look at its content is essential to grasp a better understanding of the domains and actors involved in the process and the necessary adjustments and actions to be initiated. In detail, the document indicates four main aspects on which to work for improving Military Mobility and sets priorities for each. First on the list are the military requirements, namely setting up a definition of the infrastructures needed for Military Mobility, a task in the hands of the European External Action Service (EEAS), in consultation with NATO when opportune. This action involves a deep analysis of the existing transport infrastructure framed in the trans-European transport network (TEN-T), and whether they are appropriate and sufficient for fulfilling military movements' needs. At this regard, the EU will start a process that is expected to terminate by 2020 and that sees the Commission assessing the gaps present in the TEN-T related to its possible military use and geographical scope. Member States, on their side, following the directives of the Action Plan, will have to appoint a single national point of contact who to refer for information on transport infrastructure, and take military requirements into account while planning to build new transport infrastructure. On this aspect, it is paramount to highlight that the EU approach is 'dual-use' aiming at structuring infrastructures for both military and civilian purposes. This method's intention is to ensuring smart financing and investment in new infrastructure projects, thus improving the overall movement of persons and goods across Europe. What follows in the Action Plan is a further adjustment of the regulatory and procedural issues concerning the transport of dangerous goods whose rules in terms of military transport are nationally set, while those applying to the civilian use are internationally determined. Hence the EU will have to work on a possible alignment at the European level of the various national provisions. Another issue that the document addresses is the one of customs and Value Added Tax (VAT), field in which the Commission has started a process of in-depth investigation aiming at finding ways for simplifying customs formalities and aligning the VAT treatment for defence. Moving military supplies, in fact, can result in costs and possible delays. Finally, the Action Plan focuses on the matter of acquiring

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permission on cross border; this process necessitates more consistency and harmony. Therefore, member States will have to identify national regulatory restrictions and possible solutions in order to improve Military Mobility.

If the EU is devoting much of its attention to the project of Military Mobility, the ability to move Armed Forces in peacetime as well as in time of crisis is a top priority also in NATO's agenda. In the last years, in fact, the North Atlantic Alliance has focused on improving the rapidity of its response on all fronts and on adapting its command structure. Indeed, in view of the upcoming Brussels Summit in July 2018, NATO has launched the establishment of two new commands: the Joint Force Command for the Atlantic that will be based at Norfolk, Virginia (United States) and the Enabling Command which will be located in Ulm, Germany. The latter will be responsible for the movement of troops and equipment within Europe, thus complementing the EU's effort in the project of Military Mobility. Not by chance, Military Mobility represents a core aspect of the NATO-EU practical cooperation launched with the signature of the Joint Declaration in July 2016 in Warsaw, which foresees 74 concrete actions to undertake in seven areas of collaboration. While the relationship between the two bodies is gradually deepening given the evident overlap of the reciprocal security space of concern, the achievement of the objective of quickly moving forces across Europe will be a pivotal test for their more structural cooperation.

Despite still being at the beginning of a process that will develop in the years and will be completed in the long term, the project of Military Mobility has taken the spotlight in the theatre of the nascent European Defence. The project, in fact, has the potential to practically apply the widely theorized comprehensive approach as it involves the military and civilian sectors and benefits both, and to further prove and implement the NATO-EU cooperation. Not by chance, the latest event that addressed the topic, the Military Mobility Symposium organized by the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the EDA, saw the participation of different stakeholders, among which: EU and NATO representatives,

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military authorities, national delegates mostly from the Ministers of Defence and Infrastructure and Transport. The outcomes of the Symposium highlighted the main issues and set the way forward: identifying weaknesses in each country in every related domain, developing national plans to fill the eventual gaps, prioritizing resources and simplifying regulations in the course of the next years.

According to Ce.S.I. the project of Military Mobility is very ambitious and will be a determining test for the nascent EU Defence. Firstly, as it involves all 25 member States of PESCO, the capacity of proceeding in an harmonized manner will be proven. In fact, as Military Mobility transcends borders, the ability to be synchronized on the same page will be crucial in order to timely proceed with the actions and roadmap identified by the European Commission. This entails that every State fully addresses procedural, infrastructural and bureaucratic issues by the deadlines set by the Union. Nonetheless, if drafting the national gaps and needs might be an easier goal to achieve, adjusting and adapting regulations and procedures in different domains might reveal to be a harder task. Secondly, defining the priorities on which infrastructures to improve according to the operative necessities is pivotal for ensuring the most efficient development of the project of Military Mobility. This effort entails not only a precise analysis at the national level of the existing and possibly new transport infrastructures required for dual-use, but also close cooperation with the neighboring member States for improving cross-border movement. Thirdly such a complex and multidimensional project needs the appropriate presentation to the broader public. Strategic communications, in fact, play a key role in the field of EU Defence and, thus, in shaping the relative policies and directing investments. Therefore, particularly regarding a sensitive topic such as the movement of troops across Europe, messages tailored to every Nation and to specific audience are recommended. Indeed, if the project of Military Mobility requires a whole of government and society approach, the positive involvement of all actors concerned will be a determining factor in its successful implementation. Lastly, even if some examples of practical cooperation between the EU and NATO have taken place

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both at the staff, operational and political levels, as the recently published third progress report notes, the space of interaction between the two bodies should be expanded and deepened for avoiding mere duplications of efforts and ensuring coherent results.

To conclude, the activities carried out at the State, EU and NATO levels will have to be complemented, coordinated and pointing at the same direction in order to enhance what is gradually taking the shape of an EU Defence cooperation.