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Reasons Behind European Union's Inadequacy to Create a European Army



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This Food for Thought paper is a document that gives an initial reflection on the theme. The content is not reflecting the positions of the member states but consists of elements that can initiate and feed the discussions and analyses in the domain of the theme. All our studies are available on www.finabel.org

DIRECTOR'S EDITORIAL

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has reintroduced the debate concerning a common European defence, forcing Europeans to recognise the return of conflict to a previously peaceful continent. The military pillar of the European integration process has long been an aspect of European politics that has attracted little attention, owing to the belief that NATO protection would be sufficient to face contemporary threats and challenges. However, the current geopolitical reshuffle and many theatres of confrontation highlight the importance of renewed attention to European defence. This paper will shed light on the historical evolution of the conceptualization of a European Army, and will then analyse institutions and policies in place, as well as ways in which NATO and the EU can cooperate in the defence sector. Finally, the obstacles to the creation of a European Army are assessed against the backdrop of the current Russian war with Ukraine and the recent adoption of the EU Strategic Compass.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mario Blokken', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Mario Blokken

Director PSec

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ABSTRACT

The concept of a European Army has been a part of the European agenda for several years. Despite some notable efforts to be established, it has yet to officially exist. The seed of a European Army was first planted after the Second World War when the need for a united Europe was evident and more necessary than ever. Jean Monnet was the one to attempt to create a “mock-up” based on Pleven’s plan, which, however, did not flourish. Since then, the idea has been pushed back whilst NATO is responsible for the security and defence of Europe, with Europe being reassured by that

and therefore avoiding becoming more active (Herr & Speer, 2022). Nevertheless, European Union leaders and civil society are starting to approach the idea of a Common European Army more seriously. Emmanuel Macron has stressed the significance of a European Army on several occasions, whilst the cooperation between NATO and the EU indicates that Europe is trying to play a key role in the defence and security of its population. This paper will attempt to make an in-depth analysis of a European army and explain the reason for its failure.

INTRODUCTION

Since the creation of the European Union, the issue of security and defence for Europe, as well as the creation of a Common European Army, has been monopolising discussions on a military and political level within the Union. Important policies such as the Common Defence and Security Policy and projects like the Strategic Compass, the European Defence Fund (EDF) and the Permanent Structured Cooperation have gradually shaped and altered Europe’s security and defence future. This paper will try to comprehend the reasons behind the European Union’s failure to create a European Army. To do that, we primarily need to examine the historical background of European Security and Defence, how it was

created, and the most important instruments and institutions that contributed to the development of the idea of a Common European Army. The concept of a European Army is not new and can be traced to the aspirations of the European Union pioneers. Following the historical background, we will discuss NATO’s role, how it was formed and most importantly, what influence it has had on creating a European Army. Many people claim that it is impossible to compete with NATO due to its robust structure and funding. (Herr & Speer, 2022). Lastly, we will discuss the creation of a Common European Army itself, the obstacles and limitations of this project, as well as the current state of affairs.

Creation of EDC

By the end of the Second World War, Europe had experienced two of the deadliest total wars in its history, which completely altered the façade of the Continent and shed light on the need for a Common European army capable of defending European citizens during challenging times. As a result, the first attempt at a European Army commenced in 1948, when Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (BENELUX), France, and the United Kingdom signed the Treaty of Brussels, aiming for collective defence against Germany. This treaty laid the groundwork for a second endeavour in 1952, when French Prime Minister René Pleven proposed the creation of the European Defence Community (EDC) with France, Italy, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, and the Federal Republic of Germany being the founding members. Moreover, the EDC was described as a supranational organisation with common institutions, army, and budget, and whose overall function had to comply with the North Atlantic Treaty (NATO) framework (Fiott, 2017). In addition, army forces would consist of troops coming from different national backgrounds, whilst the general military units were composed of same-nationality soldiers (Fiott, 2017). However, this venture did not manage to flourish due to France's apprehension that the rearmament of Germany could prove threatening given past experience, whilst the supranational nature of the proposed army could lead to neglecting or abandoning national forces. Likewise, the establishment of NATO in 1949 played a key role in the decline of the European Defence Community in 1954 (Fiott, 2017).

'Petersberg Tasks' in 1992

After the end of the Cold War, Europe was once again faced with another conflict, this time taking place in the Balkans in 1991. The Yugoslav Crisis represented a void in Europe's crisis management capabilities, while at the same time opening a new window for security and defence renewal towards a more robust and united European security policy. As a result, in 1992, the Petersberg Tasks were established by the then members of the Western European Union (WEU). More precisely, according to this agreement, the countries of the WEU declared their willingness to provide military units from their armed forces to the WEU, NATO, and the EU. In other words, these tasks include humanitarian and rescue tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making, joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance tasks and post-conflict stabilization tasks (Petersberg tasks, n.d.). The Petersberg Tasks were made official by the Treaty of Amsterdam, which also established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as the position of High Representative for EU foreign policy (Fiott, 2017).

Following the terrorist attacks in the US in September 2001 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, it was evident that European defence had to be significantly reinforced to fight the rising phenomenon of terrorism. Therefore in 2003, the EU officially published the very first European Security Strategy, a document which includes a set of objectives aiming at strengthening the security of the EU, whilst reflecting the urgency for "multilateralism and the liberal international order" (Fiott, 2017). This led to the creation of the European De-

fence Agency (EDA) in 2004, an intergovernmental agency whose aim was “to support the Member States and the Council in their effort to improve European defence capabilities in the field of crisis management” (Fiott, 2017).

Treaty of Lisbon

The Treaty of Lisbon amounts to another attempt to enhance European defence and its mechanisms as it introduced the initiative of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), a policy espousing defence cooperation and coordination between Member States whilst creating internal political and military structures which facilitated civilian and military operations outside the EU. Furthermore, the Treaty of Lisbon introduced several mechanisms, including a commitment to mutual assistance in the event of a terrorist attack occurring on European ground, the permanent structures cooperation (PeSCo) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) (Fiott, 2017).

European Union’s Global Strategy

During the 2016 NATO Summit in Poland, the High Representative introduced the European Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy. However, the most important moment of the Summit was the joint declaration on increasing practical cooperation between NATO and the European Union. According to this cooperation, the two of them would collaborate on (Dick Zandee, Sico van der Meer, & Adája Stoitman, 2021):

- countering hybrid threats, including through the development of coordinated procedures;
- operational cooperation at sea and on migration;
- coordination on cyber security and defence;

- developing coherent, complementary, and interoperable defence capabilities;
- facilitating a stronger defence industry and greater defence research;
- stepping up coordination on exercises;
- building the defence and security capability of the partners in the East and South.

European Council Endorses the Strategic Compass

On 24 March 2022, due to the Russia-Ukraine war, European leaders established the Strategic Compass, “a plan of action for strengthening the EU’s security and defence policy by 2030” (A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade, 2022). In other words, the plan proposed actions which needed to be implemented in a specific timetable with the overall aim to “improve the EU’s ability to act decisively in crises and to defend its security and its citizens” (A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade, 2022). Moreover, according to the Strategic Compass, the EU will have a Rapid Deployment Capacity of up to 5000 troops responsible for different kinds of missions, as well as the ability to deploy 200 fully-equipped CSDP mission experts, reinforcing the EU’s civilian and military CSDP missions and operations by promoting a rapid and more flexible decision-making process (A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade, 2022).

In brief, the European Union, since the end of the Second World War, has remarkably tried to apply policies aiming to strengthen its defence and security. However, after several years and especially after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Europe’s inadequacies were made starkly evident in terms of a lack of preparedness, creating an immense need to

renew its defence. For example, Europe has yet to officially establish a Common European Army. Nevertheless, there have been some

efforts to initiate military cooperation within the framework of CSDP. These military forces will be further explained in the next chapter.

EUROPE'S CURRENT ARMED FORCES - EUROCORPS

To begin with, EUROCORPS constitutes a multinational military headquarters consisting of armed forces originating from France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, and Luxembourg, who together operate under the name “Framework Nations” (UNI.LU, 2016). The Corps is composed of a military Headquarters based in Strasbourg, with personnel and support units, whilst its overall staff accounts for 60,000 soldiers.

The institution of Eurocorps was initiated by the President of France, General de Gaulle, and the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, with the signing of the Elysée Treaty in 1963. Moreover, this cooperation was further enhanced in 1987 when the two countries created the French-German Security and Defence Council, which led to the establishment of the French-German Brigade two years later. After such successful past cooperation Eurocorps was officially created in 1992 at the La Rochelle Summit, where Germany and France signed a Joint Report (UNI.LU, 2016). The subsequent Supreme Allied Command in Europe (SACTEUR) Agreement which was signed between Germany and France, further underlined the tasks and responsibilities of Eurocorps, putting it under the command and within the framework of NATO. In the same context, in 2006, Eurocorps became NATO's Response Force.

The responsibilities of the Corps include ensuring common defence under the auspices of the treaties and carrying out peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. Moreover, sol-

diers originating from other member countries could also be put under the command of Eurocorps (UNI.LU, 2016).

Nowadays, it is more evident than ever that an enhanced European Common Security and Defence Policy is necessary due to several terrorist attacks and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. A robust CSDP should be carried out by instruments such as Eurocorps with the aim to boost European cooperation in defence, without however undermining NATO as an institution and overshadowing it (Ramirez, 2017).

As a result, Eurocorps are of significant importance, although they should not be compared to NATO, whose role will be analysed later on, as they are instead an essential policy and military instrument to the European Union. Whilst Eurocorps might be lacking NATO's substance and gravity its structure, experiences and operational abilities nevertheless reflect its beneficial role to the EU. Eurocorps has its own characteristics and specificities whilst at the same time incorporates NATO's “patterns and duties” (Ramirez, 2017). Being able to perform its duties and its responsibilities whilst also respecting and following NATO's guidance and rules has made many scholars conclude that Eurocorps can participate in the development of more integrated military forces on a European level (Ramirez, 2017).

It is evident that the architecture for a European Army already exists through Eurocorps and Battlegroups, which are discussed in the following chapter. A potential expansion of

Eurocorps to include military troops from all EU states could enhance its strength and put it under the authority of the European Council. If all EU member states contributed to

Eurocorps by offering personnel and military resources, European defensive cooperation would be even stronger, possibly speeding up the process towards a European Army.

EUROPEAN UNION BATTLEGROUPS

The European Battlegroups, alongside Eurocorps, constitute another force of the European Union responsible for implementing the Common Security and Defence Policy established by the European Union, as discussed above.

Firstly, during the European Council summit in Helsinki in 1999, the necessity for creating a European rapid response dominated the discussions and was more essential than ever. More precisely, the main project included the development of a military corps comprised of 50,000-60,000 military personnel, thus enhancing the EU's preparedness and autonomy against threats and imminent crises both internally and externally (Reykers, 2017).

In practice, during the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the UN asked the EU for help, sending 1,800 troops from 12 member states of the Union as part of Operation Artemis. The success of the operation indicated that the European Union achieved the goal of being efficient when dealing with serious conflicts in a rapid and systematic way. As a result, these military troops paved the way for the further enlargement of European rapid response forces and the development of the European Union Military Rapid Response Concept. Furthermore, within the context of the Headline Goal of 2010 and under the auspices of France, Britain and Germany, the European Union Military Staff created the Battlegroups project (Reykers, 2017).

As far as the structure of the Battlegroups was

concerned, they consisted of one member state country or "framework nation" based on multinationality, interoperability and military effectiveness. Battlegroups function on alternation, meaning that every six months, another group is formed and awaits. In the same context, their tasks ought to correspond to what is mentioned in the Treaty on European Union, which entails information on tasks concerning combat forces and crisis management. Likewise, the Battlegroup are responsible for: conflict prevention, separation of parties by force, stabilisation, reconstruction, military advice to third countries, evacuation operations and assistance to humanitarian operations whilst relying on rapid response, the main reason behind their creation. The Battlegroups function within a specific context ought to follow the criteria set by member states whilst the training and the certification are also member state's responsibility (Catherine, 2008).

However, the Battlegroups have encountered several hindrances that do not allow them to fully commit to their purpose and fulfil their tasks. Such hindrances entail an insufficient financial apparatus as well as economic restrictions on military outlay posed by the member states themselves (Catherine, 2008). Looking at the prospects of Battlegroups, it is essential to underline that the financial and political difficulties need to be dealt with for the Battlegroups to function more effectively. One way this could happen is by alternating

their modularity. In addition to the above-mentioned difficulties, another issue concerns the fact that Battlegroups account for one of the several military mechanisms utilised and cannot be examined alone without other organisations, such as NATO. This means that member states must be committed to several

military instruments, thus leading to financial criteria that cannot be met. It is not an easy task to have troops committed to different European instruments and, especially when compared to NATO, the clear priority given to NATO becomes apparent (Catherine, 2008) (Reykers, 2017).

NATO: EUROPE'S SAFEGUARD

After the end of the Cold War, the need for a robust security and defence apparatus in Europe was more evident than ever, as Europe suffered the consequences of two consecutive wars whose impact was enormous on all levels. Due to this situation, as well as the overall environment of uncertainty, economic instability, and social disparity, Western European countries decided to invest in a collective security solution, creating an Alliance. The latter consisted of the BENELUX countries, France and Great Britain. This alliance signed the Brussels Treaty in 1948, which aimed to promote collective defence and help each other in case an armed attack occurred against any member states. This constituted the first step towards the establishment of the North Atlantic Treaty ("Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1949, 2017).

Furthermore, a Republican Senator, Arthur Vandenburg, constituted an important figure in the process, since he was the one who proposed a resolution which aimed at creating a treaty for security in Western Europe and which treaty would be bonded with the United Nations Charter but outside of the Security Council framework to avoid the Soviet Union from exercising veto powers. This resolution successfully passed, leading to negotiations for the North Atlantic Treaty and, finally, the

signing of the treaty in 1949, which created NATO. The parties of the treaty were the United States, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom. One essential clause of the treaty mentioned that any attack against one member state would instantly be considered as one against all of them. Therefore, they would collaborate against the common enemy ("Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 1949, 2017).

However, they still lacked military structure to facilitate and harmonise their actions. This void was filled when the Korean War broke out in 1950, as well as the detonation of an atomic bomb by the USSR, both of which increased the overall unease towards the Soviet Union's intentions. As a result, NATO finally acquired a Headquarters and a secretariat, making it an official organization with a command formation and robust structure (A SHORT HISTORY OF NATO, 2022).

NATO's creation did not only prevent the USSR from expanding, it also protected Europe against the reappearance of nationalism and promoted political integration on a European level. Such matters were also mitigated by the presence of American forces in Europe who would maintain peace and security. The

main reason for NATO's longevity and ability to remain intact after all the challenges was due to its original mandate: to prevent nationalism and lay out the groundwork for collective defence and security, which would ultimately lead to democratization and political integration on the European Continent. Contemporary wars in Kosovo, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and the terrorist attack of 2001 unveiled NATO's capacity to successfully respond and deal with any threat which could risk the stability and peace that NATO managed to establish over the years (A SHORT HISTORY OF NATO, 2022).

In the same context, new types of threats are making their appearance more and more often, thus challenging NATO's abilities to deal with contemporary threats whilst also creating the need for it to adapt and further evolve to survive but also fulfil its main purpose of collective defence. The Russia-Ukraine war, terrorist attacks, cyber threats, and the immigration crisis have caused political and military turmoil, putting NATO's capabilities to the test. Undoubtedly, the organization has been through several stages and has dealt with different situations in accordance with the different times in which such situations arose, demanding specific approaches. As a result, when NATO was first created, its main purpose was defence, later it is working towards bringing stability to Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Now however, it has to deal with an array of new threats and be prepared to successfully deal with them (A SHORT HISTORY OF NATO, 2022).

The European Union's security and defence future is significantly linked to and based on NATO forces. In contrast, the EU-NATO relationship is essential for a robust defence plan. One main reason is that, on the one hand, NATO has a rather long history and a background full of challenges and accomplishments. It is the only alliance that has managed

to overcome several obstacles and has adapted to challenges and the advent of new threats while maintaining its good relations with the EU. Over the past few years, the EU and NATO have strengthened ties since they have worked together on 74 projects and both respect and value each other's contribution to security and defence (A SHORT HISTORY OF NATO, 2022).

However, many people have claimed that the significant American military presence in NATO established in the EU apportions a disproportionate amount of responsibility to the US to maintain stability and peace in Europe, resulting in European nations "free-riding" their duties (Palm, 2019). As a result, it is time for the EU to step up and create a Common European Army, which would be able to bring stability and promote security and peace to Europe's erratic regions like the Balkans and the Eastern borderlands. In the same context, several US officials have pointed out that due to Europe's inertia, NATO has developed several projects whose purpose is to promote Europe's security and defence capabilities, such as the Common Security and Defence Policy (Palm, 2019) (Palm, 2019). However, this inaction is facilitated by the fact that Europe and the US are well aware that in moments of crisis, it is NATO that will support Europe, thus limiting any aspiration for a Common European Army. To many observers, it seems as though the Russia-Ukraine war only appears to have made Europe more dependent on NATO and the US than ever before (Palm, 2019).

On the other side of the spectrum, the Council has been rather sceptical of NATO's role in European security and defence due to ruptures between them. This could be seen when former US President Donald Trump threatened to withdraw from the alliance if the EU member states did not fulfil their funding commitments. These differences are

also linked to the fact that both NATO and the EU promote different interests and adopt different methods, with the former perceived as a “peacekeeper” compared to the latter having a more exclusively military strategy (Leponiemi, 2022).

The relationship between NATO and the European Union, therefore, significantly impacts the idea and the creation of a Common European Army, since NATO constitutes an intergovernmental organisation, it can facilitate defence cooperation.

COMMON EUROPEAN ARMY

As mentioned above, creating a Common European Army has long been brought to the table and, as such, is not a recent idea. However, a series of conflicts and threatening situations, including the Syrian and Libyan wars, several terror attacks, Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the Russian invasion of Ukraine have culminated in the current situation in Europe’s necessity for an army more evident than ever before. Several leaders are underlining the importance of a Common European Army these past few years due to the constant and intense instabilities these conflicts have brought to Europe.

As we already mentioned, the Common Security and Defence Policy has created the framework for European Security and Defence through interstate cooperation, admittedly always with the presence and collaboration of NATO. However, a Common European Army has yet to exist, possibly due to some important reasons. Firstly, the majority of the EU member states appear to be hesitant towards allowing such power to be transferred to a European level because this could threaten national security (Leponiemi, 2022).

However, what are the conditions for a Common European Army to exist? To begin with, the EU does not constitute a sovereign state but instead consists of sovereign member states whose interests are promoted by the EU institutions. As a result, a Euro-

pean army could only exist if the EU was no longer an intergovernmental actor but rather a supranational institution. Furthermore, more centralised defence cooperation with armed personnel is needed to have a European Army. A centralised defence system would lead to Europe changing its priorities and policies based on humanitarian tasks to defend its territories and external borders. In other words, changing the focus from preserving peace to territorial defence through armed forces would significantly influence relations between other states since a European Army would instantly alter Europe’s role, giving it a more international trait based on hard and not soft power which is what the EU traditionally utilises (Leponiemi, 2022). For example, Europe’s primary reaction to the Russian invasion of Ukraine was focused on economic sanctions rather than military ones. Nevertheless, not every member state of the EU is in favour of a Common European Army since NATO’s role would be impeded to the point where American military forces would completely withdraw from Europe. However, the EU gains a lot from cooperating with NATO and can have access to military benefits (Leponiemi, 2022).

Another obstacle in the European Army constitutes the issue of responsiveness. During the collapse of the Afghan government last year, the United States managed to send 6,000

troops to handle the situation to avoid further turmoil and sudden escalation. Compared to the US's effectiveness and quick response, European member states showcased an inability to send a similar number of troops and organise such an operation. As Antony Blinken stated, "Only the United States could organise and execute a mission of this scale and this complexity" (Herr & Speer, 2022). This indicates that the EU still lacks significant military forces, and only a European military based on centralised command could compete with the United States and deal with crises and conflicts. Similarly, NATO has nine rapid reaction corps all of which are stronger than Europe's Battlegroups making it impossible to compete with NATO (Herr & Speer, 2022).

Likewise, a European Army could bring forward the issue of European identity. The European Union is proud to be an amalgam of different languages, cultures, countries, and histories. As a result, the majority of Europeans do not characterize themselves as Europeans first but primarily define themselves by their nationality. As a result, it would be difficult for citizens to put their country in second place and defend Europe in moments of crisis (Herr & Speer, 2022).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine highlighted NATO's role since countries like Finland and Sweden, which were not members of NATO because of their "military nonalignment" policy, have now commenced the procedure for joining the alliance. This indicates in times of crisis and conflict, all member states will turn to NATO due to Europe's incapacity of creating a European Army responsible for guarding its borders. The Alliance will probably outlive the European Army not only because of Europe's inability but also because of NATO's robust structure and its strong economic resources. Replacing NATO will constitute a difficult if not impossible task, whilst trying

to make NATO complementary will probably also fail and lead to crises on a political and institutional level (Leponiemi, 2022).

Furthermore, several European leaders have stressed the importance and the necessity of a European Army, with French President Emmanuel Macron and former German chancellor Angela Merkel, strongly supporting the idea, with Macron calling for a "true European Army". More precisely, because the Russian invasion of Ukraine has caused an energy crisis which has affected all European member states, Emmanuel Macron outlined how Europe needs to finally become independent. He added that "We cannot depend on others to defend us, whether on land, at sea, under the sea, in the air, in space or cyberspace. In this respect, our European defence must take a new step forward" (Willsher, 2022). In the same context, European leaders agreed on an updated military plan based on a revised and updated Strategic Compass. In other words, they created an EU rapid deployment force consisting of 5000 soldiers. However, they underlined that this does not constitute a European Army. It was France that took the initiative and paved the way for the updated Strategic Compass, indicating once again the country's firm belief in a Common European Army, reaffirming its intentions for the project to succeed despite the challenges and lack of member states support (GIJS & BARIGAZZI, 2022).

Creating a European Army does not mean detaching the EU from NATO. That does not mean cutting all ties with the alliance, even though it should be remembered that in the past former US President Donald Trump has threatened to pull away from NATO. This could be repeated leaving Europe without a defence system in times of extreme crisis just like the one it is experiencing now after Russia violently and unexpectedly invaded Ukraine (Eliassen, 2022). It is time for the EU to be

allowed to support and protect its citizens without the uncertainty and fear of being cut off. However, Europe still lacks the ability to make member states cooperate, which will af-

fect the concept of a Common Army. It needs to solve this first before engaging with the funding issue if it intends to proceed with the creation of the army.

CONCLUSION

As explained in the course of the paper, creating a Common European Army has been a long-term project that has yet to materialise for several reasons. Europe's main actor in defence, NATO, has always protected and safeguarded Europe, and the two have successfully cooperated to achieve common goals and improve their partnership. However, we must not forget that NATO and the EU have different interests and function differently. The EU bases its work on soft power through peacekeeping and policies whilst NATO utilises hard power through military armed

forces. Without a doubt, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shed light on the hidden idea of a European Army because Europe needs to be able to protect its borders and not utilise exclusively economic sanctions. Neighbouring countries to Russia need reassurance and security that they will not be attacked, and if this were to occur, such nations would need to know that armed forces will defend them and aid them. Currently, Europe cannot provide that assurance, pushing EU member states further into NATO's arms.

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Created in 1953, the Finabel committee is the oldest military organisation for cooperation between European Armies: it was conceived as a forum for reflections, exchange studies, and proposals on common interest topics for the future of its members. Finabel, the only organisation at this level, strives at:

- Promoting interoperability and cooperation of armies, while seeking to bring together concepts, doctrines and procedures;
- Contributing to a common European understanding of land defence issues. Finabel focuses on doctrines, trainings, and the joint environment.

Finabel aims to be a multinational-, independent-, and apolitical actor for the European Armies of the EU Member States. The Finabel informal forum is based on consensus and equality of member states. Finabel favours fruitful contact among member states' officers and Chiefs of Staff in a spirit of open and mutual understanding via annual meetings.

Finabel contributes to reinforce interoperability among its member states in the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the EU, and *ad hoc* coalition; Finabel neither competes nor duplicates NATO or EU military structures but contributes to these organisations in its unique way. Initially focused on cooperation in armament's programmes, Finabel quickly shifted to the harmonisation of land doctrines. Consequently, before hoping to reach a shared capability approach and common equipment, a shared vision of force-engagement on the terrain should be obtained.

In the current setting, Finabel allows its member states to form Expert Task Groups for situations that require short-term solutions. In addition, Finabel is also a think tank that elaborates on current events concerning the operations of the land forces and provides comments by creating "Food for Thought papers" to address the topics. Finabel studies and Food for Thoughts are recommendations freely applied by its member, whose aim is to facilitate interoperability and improve the daily tasks of preparation, training, exercises, and engagement.



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