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The EU in Kosovo

Consolidating European Military and Defence Identity

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The EU's presence in the Balkan area has gone on for several decades, pre-dating European integration at a political level. As diverse member states jointly intervened under NATO guidance, military ties strengthened their grip setting the ground for a possible future military security for Europe. Kosovo* specifically played a crucial role in the international acknowledgement of the need for a multinational approach among member states. Even though the CSDP promised an alternative to the transatlantic alliance, its deficits exacerbated the EU's increasing pluralism.

In light of this, militarily powerful European countries took action to enhance the possibility for Europe to take the lead in its military affairs. In particular, France and the UK were at the forefront of operations as KFOR, and the Eurocorps were partly successful in the region. Kosovo* provided the perfect means to tackle the limits of the EU military, where results were primarily based on peacebuilding and stabilisation. The future of Kosovo* remains an open question that could substantially affect the EU's military identity. This paper aims to identify to what extent operations in Kosovo* have shaped and integrated European military identity. By chronologically analysing the subsequence of steps taken in Kosovo* towards this objective, it is possible to grasp overall progress in the field that is still missing the necessary interoperability to achieve long-lasting results. My intention through this work is to shed light on EU military achievements that are often disregarded and question whether such an identity is entirely desirable as the EU expands and pluralism increases.



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*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence' (taken directly from the Council of the EU website) - <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/14/kosovo-council-presidency-and-european-parliament-agree-on-visa-free-travel/>

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the EU in Kosovo* has vastly evolved over the past two decades. Since the Balkan region underwent a series of tumults in the late '90s, European countries have attempted various forms of military intervention, both bilaterally and collectively. Criticisms in this regard rose from most of the international community as the violence worsened and Europe's military weight remained marginal. Civilian missions and peacekeeping also lacked effectiveness in many sectors, raising questions about the credibility of the European Union (EU) in its external operations as an international actor. The establishment of a common foreign policy framework, such as that pertaining to the Common Security and Defence Policy, had not matured enough to enable effective military action. For this reason, Kosovo* represents a wake-up call urging the EU to commit towards the definition of a shared military and defence identity.

The concept of a multinational military was still highly controversial at the eve of the Cold War as the EU contemplated economic and political integration that did not touch upon salient issues like security. However, drastic circumstances hijacking the European neighbourhood were crucial in accelerating EU action towards concretising the security framework set up in Maastricht. However, setting the grounds for the EU as a security actor that could later evolve into a military unit was challenged by both internal and external dynamics.

On the inside, discrepancies among member states (MS) are obvious impediments to augment military interoperability that may threaten national sovereignty. On the outside, other dominant military alliances, such as NATO, appear to have overtaken all functions which a military Europe could perform. What differentiates European MS is the comprehensive integration and common interests that can foster a higher degree of interoperability compared to any other organisation. This is a major factor in the shaping of a functional military identity.

To properly analyse how the intervention in Kosovo* and the relationship with the EU contributed to the possibility of shaping a European military and defence identity, the paper will proceed according to the following structure. In the first place, a brief *excursus will consider how the Common Security and Defence Policy came to be, to illustrate its role with respect to the North Atlantic Organisation Treaty, and whether a system made up of such a diverse range of countries can work. The second section will concentrate on the Kosovo* violence to examine European countries' military capacity and leadership within NATO military operations such as KFOR, focusing on France. Then, the evolution of a multinational military and persisting challenges will be considered in the face of further violence in the region. Thirdly, the shift from a military stance to stabilisation and institution-building will highlight how the EU brought an added*

value to solving the Kosovo* violence, primarily through the deployment of EULEX.

Finally, the last section will analyse potential future scenarios for Kosovo*.

ORIGINS OF THE CSDP

For decades, the European security policy has been an open question, as its highly political relevance never conceded a fully supranational approach that would enable comprehensive interoperability. All security aspects are grounded in an intergovernmental logic dating back to the conception of the ‘second pillar’ established in Maastricht in 1992. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) remains ‘common’ only in some aspects, leav-

ing wide discretion to a single MS. The same was likely to be the case for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Being specifically designed as the military component of the CFSP, the CSDP was decisive in offering Europe the opportunity of independently taking charge of its security issues on the military level by enhancing interoperable mechanisms among national forces.



Source: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48518.htm

*NATO official during peace-support operation in Kosovo**

In 1999, the EU set up the institutional capacity to strengthen international security by directly intervening in conflict prevention and guiding peacekeeping operations, deploying military and civilian assets.¹ However, institutional capacity is a formal requirement that does not necessarily generate sufficient engagement of MS to cooperate on a procedural and strategic level. Violence erupted in Kosovo* which significantly involved the EU, both for geographical and political reasons. The proximity and endurance of the violence threatened to hinder the integration process, which was under consolidation. On the other end of the spectrum, it also incited integration, encouraging an interoperable military response involving neighbouring territories rather than far-fetched alliances. In this context, the Balkans became the spark of the EU security policy² and the moulders of its defence identity. It is not by chance that 25% of Common Security and Defence missions took place in the Balkans.

European defence was always identified as substantially marginal with respect to other military alliances (NATO in particular) that operated on a much larger scale and many more resources. However, whilst the violence in Kosovo* was unfolding, the involvement of such alliances was constrained by the limited strategic relevance of the matter, shifting European countries to the military centre stage.

Alternative or Complementation of the Transatlantic Alliance?

NATO's changing configuration in the post-war era saw substantial re-orientation when adapting to international crisis. To maintain efficiency and effectiveness pertaining to the transatlantic alliance, MS have been faced with the imminent endeavour of selecting a more targeted response that appropriately addresses regional issues. The Balkans were a first milestone that triggered the need for frontline participation of European forces in military operations.³ The length of the violence in both Bosnia and Kosovo*, in 1995 and 1999 respectively, called for a long-lasting effort of external intervention in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Moreover, the latter calls for substantial investment in value reconstruction, making the involvement of third parties highly controversial and, in extreme cases, coercive. The rhetoric backing up peacebuilding resonates with arguments upholding humanitarian intervention inherently in contrast with the doctrine of non-intervention.⁴ However, the shaping of European identity and intervention of regional neighbouring forces increased the chances of creating a dialogue with the Balkan area, hereby mitigating domestic disruption and possibly avoiding conflicting principles.

The involvement of NATO in Southeast Europe undoubtedly precedes the actual establishment of anything close to a truly military Europe. Paradoxically, the alliance fostered

1. European Union External Action Service. 'CSDP capabilities'. [online] Available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/5393/csdp-capabilities_en

2. David Cadier (2011), 'EU Mission in Kosovo (EULEX): Constructing Ambiguity or Constructive disunity?', Transatlantic Security Paper N.3, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique. [online] Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/133016/201108.pdf>.

3. Paul Latawski and Martin A. Smith, *The Kosovo Crisis and the Evolution of a Post-Cold War European Security: The Evolution of Post Cold War European Security*. Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2003.

4. Ibid.

the environment for a military Europe to develop, while simultaneously discouraging the full-on commitment of European MS, which saw more potential in the vast number of resources granted by the United States' (US) dominant position. The Balkans, instead, and Kosovo* in particular, shed light on the ever more urgent need to develop a military identity, not only on paper but in the form of a substantial intervening force. Furthermore, a smaller and more united front than the European countries could offer was also more likely to develop more concrete interoperability at strategic and tactical levels. When analysing the perks of building a solid European defence, it only seems natural to question the survival of the transatlantic alliance, which has outlived its original purpose. Does the establishment of a military Europe founded in the CSDP represent a valid alternative to NATO? Rather than exclusive, the two may be considered complementary. With the end of the Cold War and the outburst of the Balkan violence, a *modus vivendi* has characterised the relationship between the Atlanticist and the Europeanist approach, which have come to generate a "necessary fiction".⁵

This is not derogative in its meaning but rather pragmatic, as it balances the need for a more cohesive and united European security supported by the US in some areas. This entails that it is undoubtedly necessary to, on the one hand, maintain transatlantic relationships at a very general level of interoperability while also, on the other hand, construct a 'fiction' preserving a defence capacity that is

singularly European and may reach targeted interoperable degrees. It is also noteworthy to acknowledge that recognising such a complementarity was a crucial building block in the generation of the EU's second pillar, but more importantly, in the overall European integration process⁶ which extensively combined high and low politics. Kosovo* was a wake-up call for both sides of the Atlantic, showing how some crises must be resolved by European military forces rather than a larger NATO intervention.

Efforts seeking the coexistence of the two defence mechanisms were not only assumed but explicitly set out during the Clinton administration. The formal recognition of such complementarity was stated in the *Security Strategy for Europe and NATO published by the Department of Defence* where "preserving and enhancing the effectiveness of European security organisations, especially NATO, (...) [is a] principal vehicle for continued United States leadership and influence on European security issues."⁷ Notwithstanding the importance of the zone of stability due to the long lasting 40-year relationship enabled by the Allies, areas of geopolitical interest diverge significantly among NATO members, making some matters specific to European defence. Such adaptation has allowed the preservation of NATO as a means rather than a hindrance to Europe's military identity. With the Balkans calling for intervention, the CSDP paved the way for a pluralistic security community that could potentially operate through general and targeted interoperability.

5. Simon Duke (1999) 'NATO and the CFSP: Help or Hindrance?' [online] Available at: <https://www.nato.int/acad/fellow/95-97/duke.pdf>

6. Ibid.

7. United States Security Strategy for Europe and NATO, (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, 1996).

'Defence Europe': a Pluralistic Security Community

The concept of a security community dates back to the 1950s when Karl Deutsch attempted to contribute to "the study of possible ways in which men someday might abolish war".⁸ Following this definition, European countries have set in motion this process not only by participating in the establishment of a zone of stability, but especially through the aggressive integration process undertaken in Maastricht and subsequently in Lisbon. The *sui generis* Union that came to be needed to go beyond the guarantees of a pluralistic security community by forging an actual defence community. However, exactly this pluralism set considerable obstacles to consolidating a stable defence identity based on an interoperable logic. These impediments were quite evident and amplified as European countries were catapulted into the South-eastern Europe violence. But those same shortfalls fuelled the MS' will to act against national interests, as long as it favoured a pluralistic defence community. The compromises behind the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe, the Reconstruction Agency and Association Process, testify that "Kosovo could be our military Euro, creating a political and defence identity for the European Union in the same way the Euro is the expression of economic and financial integration."⁹

European Defence goes beyond a purely rationalistic theoretical framework, as it was initiated in a case requiring swift deci-

sion-making and responsiveness. Another factor determining this *modus operandi* was that *given the low level of risk to national interest that Western European leaders perceived coming from Yugoslavia, the priorities emerging from the interaction between domestic and international demands and constraints shaped their response to the Yugoslav crisis more than consideration tailored on the definition of an efficient conflict-solving policy.*¹⁰

Whilst this statement entails that efficiency of solutions appeared to be secondary for many countries, it also highlights the growing awareness of a need for collaboration on the international arena, which was the fuel for the macro-regional defence community.

The CFSP framework shaped the EU's decision in this regard. It implied that the actual military response was minor, once again emphasising the need for a military Europe, but several other contributions were activated, showing commitment to shape a common policy for the region as a whole. The EU launched a common strategy for the Western Balkans to adopt a comprehensive approach towards Kosovo*. However, notwithstanding the participation of several European states in NATO's bombing campaign in March 1999, the EU was once again set aside, as its weakness in this field was exposed.¹¹ At this point, Europe's defence was still very abstract and the benefits to be gained were still not sufficiently clear to the pluralistic community. The possibility of developing military interopera-

8. Karl W. Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1957), p.3.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Selvaggio Lucarelli (1997) "Europe's response to the Yugoslav Imbroglio" in Jorgensen, K.E. (ed) *European approaches to crisis management*, The Hague, Kluwer, pp. 35-63

11. Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, (2000) 'Negotiating in a time of crisis: The EU's response to the military conflict in Kosovo', EUI Working Papers RSC No.2000/20. p. 3. Available at: https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/1660/00_20.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

bility with a more targeted approach was only a later consequence of the failures to respond militarily during the Balkan war.

For this reason, reliance on other non-European countries was still a priority when the Stability Pact was first proposed under the roof of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)¹² in 1999, allowing for US and Russia to get involved. The pact was oriented towards the enablement of Southeastern Europe's integration within the Euro-Atlantic structures, the only prospect aiming at long-term stability. However, coming from the EU, the initiative demonstrated that leadership had not once again been left completely in the hands of the US. Moreover, the credibility of a European force as an international actor was at stake and collective

influence in its response was crucial in determining their role in the American-led liberal order.

The building process of European defence was a continuous sequence of trial and error, as initiatives and setbacks followed each other. In contrast, European and NATO pre-eminence alternated. With European defence still at its starting point, it lacked concrete military capabilities independent from NATO. Through a series of missions, such as KFOR, partnerships among European countries were gradually strengthened. In the meantime, notwithstanding the evident limits of a pluralistic community, the concept of European defence better matched the security priorities of several EU MS striving towards a multinational military.

THE ROLE OF THE KOSOVO* VIOLENCE

As the Kosovo* violence evolved, various operations of both military and civilian nature witnessed the participation of many EU states, creating the environment for a military Europe. After NATO airstrikes terminated the upheaval of mass violence, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) troops finally withdrew and UNSC Resolution 1244 was implemented. Four major pillars were defined to ensure conflict prevention and to rebuild Kosovo's* society from scratch.¹³ The United Nations Interim Administration Mission

in Kosovo* (UNMIK) took care of civil administration. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) provided humanitarian assistance. The OSCE was tasked with democratisation and institution-building. The EU was responsible for the final pillar, namely reconstruction and economic development. However, the military plane remained in the hands of NATO, which maintained security within the region.

12. Ibid.

13. Zupancič Rok, and Nina Pejić, (2018) The EU's Affair with Kosovo. In: Limits to the European Union's Normative Power in a Post-conflict Society. SpringerBriefs in Population Studies. Springer, Cham. [online] Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-77824-2_3

Distinct from the UNMIK pillar structure, the Kosovo* Force (KFOR) engaged in supplying security in Kosovo*. The NATO-led international peacekeeping force started its mandate 48 hours after adopting Resolution 1244 (9th June 2009), and was initially known as Operation Joint Guardian. The multinational brigades were characterised by a general interoperable logic, as all national contingents strived to enable a secure environment in Kosovo*. The five brigades each had a leading nation designated to accomplish the objectives and European countries had a primary role in this regard. Even though its operations reduced over time, allowing Kosovo's* Security Force to become entirely self-sufficient, KFOR was an indispensable military instrument that continues to exist with the participation of the EU, NATO, and non-EU/non-NATO members.

NATO Dependence

The fact that KFOR was a NATO-led mission inevitably caused all Kosovo* military-based operations to be dependent on NATO. However, the military presence in Kosovo* was undoubtedly a short-term solution due to its intrusive and harsh nature. On the contrary, since 1997, the EU has been highly involved in shaping a normative reality that could mould Kosovo's* society in the long run.¹⁴ This entailed a secondary but crucial role for Europe in the region that contributed to ensure the endurance of the security provided by NATO. At the same time, this process

strengthened NATO's status as the ultimate security provider in the EU, triggering an audacious response from European countries. France and the United Kingdom were prompt in agreeing upon the undeniable need for the EU to urgently work on developing effective military capabilities to break the need for a transatlantic aid. This was clearly stated on the 4th of December 1998, when the Franco-British summit for a Joint Declaration on European Defence was held in Saint-Malo. The respective Heads of State agreed on "the need to give the European Union (EU) the capacity for autonomous decision-making and action, backed up by credible military forces, to respond to international crises when the Atlantic Alliance is not involved".¹⁵ The end of the declaration was never the proposal of substituting NATO. Still, it remained in line with the idea of complementarity of the two actors while allowing the acquisition of autonomous action enabled by credible EU military forces. The declaration emphasises that "In pursuing our objective, the collective defence commitments to which member states subscribe (set out in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, Article V of the Brussels Treaty) must be maintained".¹⁶ Simultaneously, the belief that European countries coordination in building an independent Euro-Force may not only bolster European international response but also contribute to NATO activity is evident: *"In strengthening the solidarity between the member states of the European Union, in order that Europe can make its voice heard in world affairs, while acting in conformity with our respective obligations in NATO, we are con-*

14. Ibid.

15. Joint Declaration on European Defence. Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit, Saint Malo, 3-4 December 1998. [online] Available at: <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/newsroom/latest-news/ri-view=News&id=2244063>

16. Ibid.

*tributing to the vitality of a modernised Atlantic Alliance which is the foundation of the collective defence of its members.*¹⁷

France as a framework nation

The St. Malo summit was only one expression of EU countries acting to implement a military force exclusively composed of European troops. Among these countries, France stands out as a major promoter of such an initiative. The country's participation in Kosovo* was quite outstanding on a diplomatic and operations (military or civilian) level.¹⁸ In the first place, Bernard Kouchner, the French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, was assigned as the first UN Special Representative of the Secretary General for Kosovo* for the administration of the territory in 1999, showing diplomatic commitment. Concerning the military level, France has constantly been present on the territory from stabilising the initial conflict throughout the peacebuilding process. It continues to this day to provide stability in parts of the region. Originally 7.000 troops were part of the Kosovo* Force and several French commanders have taken the lead throughout KFOR's history. Today, it is the second largest contingent in KFOR and UNMIK, with more than 2.000 French soldiers across two operations.¹⁹

Committing to the Balkan stabilisation was only part of France's ambition for European defence. As mentioned in the previous section, the Kosovo* violence was a turning point for military capable European coun-

tries to encourage independent EU forces' capacity to act. This new stance entailed a detachment from fears of loss of sovereignty, which always greatly concerned French citizens when dealing with EU integration. Even though maintaining a national sovereignty in defence remained indispensable for France, its engagement in Europe's defence, together with a strong military power such as the UK, really marked a change in the EU security environment. In this regard, Kosovo* was a determinant in fostering the need and will of ex-euro-sceptic countries to move towards an interoperable multinational military framework that could be relied upon during interventions in neighbouring regions such as the Balkans.

Eurocorps Takes Charge

The decade of major political upheavals brought to life a component of European defence that finds its origins with the founding fathers of Europe, with France once again playing an important role. The Eurocorps dates to 1987 when the Franco-German Brigade (BFA/DFB) showed the first glimpse of land force interoperability in Europe. In 1995, the Eurocorps became fully operational, and their preparedness was first put to the test in Bosnia and Herzegovina under NATO command. The outcome triggered a domino effect towards European military integration, as Germany and France proposed an officialisation of the Eurocorps to be put at the disposal of the EU, and then forwarded the

17. Ibid.

18. Mathilde Ciulla and Tara Varma, (2021) 'The lonely leader: The origins of France's strategy for the EU foreign policy', European Council on Foreign Relations. [online] Available at: <https://ecfr.eu/article/the-lonely-leader-the-origins-of-frances-strategy-for-eu-foreign-policy/>

19. Ministère de l'Europe et des affaires étrangères, 'Europe Defence', [online] Available at: <https://www.diplomatic.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/european-defence-63008/>

proposal to the Cologne European Council.²⁰ The decision of the Council was positively welcomed at the Helsinki Summit (1999), which set up the premises for the 'Luxembourg Report' signed by the five Eurocorps framework nations: France, Germany, Bel-

gium, Luxembourg, and Spain. In 2000, for the very first time, NATO entrusted the full leading capacity to an external unit with respect to the US command structure as the Eurocorps took command of an operation in Kosovo*, with Spanish



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KFOR Deployments

20. Centre Virtuel de Connaissance sur l'Europe, 'The Eurocorps', [online] Available at: <https://www.cvce.eu/en/collections/unit-content/-/unit/02bb76df-d066-4c08-a58a-d4686a3c68f7/1399861c-7b2e-4c4f-b508-9a59aac89ba9>

Lieutenant-General Juan Ortuno-Such heading nearly 350 troops.²¹ Furthermore, after developing structures and procedures, the Eurocorps was certified for several NATO Response Forces that put its operational capacity to the test. Kosovo* was the platform for this interoperable initiative to take place and eventually acquire full legal capacity and a wide degree of independence with the Strasbourg Treaty in 2009.²² On the other hand, its success in the Balkans was questionable, as several aspects hindered fully interoperable capacity.

Limits of the EU Multinational Military

From a strictly resource perspective, European Corps were well equipped and readily deployable, even without the support of the US. What was truly lacking for a successful military Europe in Kosovo* was developing a common policy. The intergovernmental logic binding the CFSP, which would have served as the guiding force behind the EuroCorps, is constrained by differing national foreign policies.²³ This was especially evident in the diverging transatlantic relations among the European powers. The UK never aligned with a Eurocorps orientation, remaining loyal to the Anglo-American relationship. This cooperation became a substantial obstacle to developing a deeper strategic Franco-British alliance that shared ideological goals but lacked the same *modus operandi* on the military field. On the other hand, the French reticence towards dependence on the US in security matters in-

directly contributed to France's engagement for Europe's defence.

Therefore, even though European military weaponry, such as satellites, launching vehicles, and transportation required by KFOR, are available to the EU, lack of unity among European countries revealed itself to be the downfall of European success in Yugoslavia.²⁴ Paradoxically, Kosovo* undoubtedly awoke the political will to enable a fully European military power that could act within existing institutions. However, the fragmented decision-making power and political incoherence impeded the necessary interoperability to enable successful EU-led operations. In addition to this, most policies and negotiations regarding South-eastern Europe often duplicated functions and overlapping institutions. Rather than a rational, structured approach, path-dependency often had the upper hand in EU response.²⁵ This inefficiency made decision making problematic, especially in situations of crisis, making the realisation of a European military identity even more challenging.

The 2004 violence

Even after the mitigation of the Kosovo* conflict, the relationship between locals and external intervening parties was far from stable. Not only was UNMIK's authority questioned by sections of the population, but there was a particular reticence towards KFOR's security keeping within the region. The circumstances

21. Kristian Kahrs (2007) 'Change of Command' North Atlantic Treaty Organisation [online] Available at: https://www.nato.int/Kfor/chronicle/2000/chronicle_200004/p03.htm.

22. North Atlantic treaty Organisation, 'Strasbourg/Kehl Summit Declaration', issued 04 April 2009 [online] Available at: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_52837.htm?mode=pressrelease

23. Eric Engle (2009) 'The Eurocorps: Toward a European Army?' [online] Available at: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1335744>

24. Ibid.

25. Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, (2000) 'Negotiating in a time of crisis: The EU's response to the military conflict in Kosovo', EUI Working Papers RSC No.2000/20. p. 3. Available at: https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/1660/00_20.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

caused a parallel setup of security structures responding to Belgrade, ranging from police forces to courts and other means of security and law enforcement.²⁶ Integrating Kosovo* Serbs into UNMIK's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government showed little results, and low-level violence continued long after the war.

Despite EU efforts to act cohesively and coherently, disunity was a determining element of the high readiness response. In March 2004, the small incidents and clashes among the Kosovo* Albanian majority and the Kosovo* Serb minority spiralled into violent riots that spread across Kosovo*, wounding KFOR members and policemen. The outbreak served as an abrupt wake-up call for the international community and towards a struggling military Europe, demonstrating that Kosovo*'s political and security situations were highly unstable.²⁷ Kai Eide, UN Secretary-General, proposed a reconfiguration of the UNMIK which foresaw increased responsibility for the EU in dealing with Kosovo*. The Council of the EU and the European Commission acted

in the mediation, regulating the two sides and the Ahtisaari Plan (report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's* future status).²⁸ Through a series of transitional periods, the Report suggested a gradual shift towards supervised independence of Kosovo*.²⁹

In the meantime, the violence had caused further talk about the EU taking the lead in the post-conflict society. Such a role for European countries in Southeast Europe wasn't new, as the EU had already established a military and police reform mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The various failures of the EU in its military response to the violence triggered an increase in the integration of European Defence. The CFSP proposed a new framework increasing the budget for CSDP missions and operations.³⁰ After being tested several times, the European military identity had not yet proven its consolidation or independence. Taking over as a peacebuilding force in Kosovo* was an opportunity to establish its power in security capacity, fostering the environment for a hard power interoperable future.

26. EUNPACK (2017) 'The EU's Crisis Management in the Kosovo-Serbia crisis', [online] Available at: <http://www.eunpack.eu/sites/default/files/deliverables/D5.1%20The%20EU's%20Crisis%20Management%20in%20the%20Kosovo-Serbia%20crises.pdf>

27. Wolfgang Koeth (2010) 'State building without a state: the EU's dilemma in defining its relations with Kosovo', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15, 227–247. [online] Available at: <https://kluwerlawonline.com/journalarticle/European+Foreign+Affairs+Review/15.2/EFAR2010017>

28. Marc Weller (2008) 'Kosovo's Final Status.' *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944) 84, no. 6 (2008): 1223–243. [online] Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25144990>.

29. UNSC, Letter dated 26 March 2007 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (26 March 2007), S/2007/168, p. 2.

30. Steffen Eckhard, *International assistance to police reform: managing peacebuilding*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

STABILISATION IN THE BALKANS: EU DEFENCE CREDIBILITY AT STAKE IN KOSOVO*

As NATO dependence and political disunity were a major hindrance during conflict resolution, violence management during the stabilisation in the Balkans represented a further chance for European defence to develop. The key concepts that shaped this development were substantial moulders of the European military identity. Among these, Hill's capability expectations gap³¹ undoubtedly accurately describes EU military potential, which was not met with EU military action. During the war, European countries' aspirations in conflict resolution lacked the coordinated political will and capability from MS, often leading to insufficient efforts. This outcome introduces another key concept, characterising subsequent EU action to compensate previous response deficits. Structural diplomacy³² is the approach the EU employed to establish societal structures in Kosovo's* ruins. Traditional diplomatic presence is supported by military deployment, aid, and assistance to ensure overall good governance. Moreover, what really defined the EU's orientation towards crisis management was the adoption of a comprehensive approach which envisaged the enshrining of principles and collaborative processes within the institutional setting. This final key concept came to overrule the others as stabilisation became more concrete and Europe provided security within a context of rule of law.

Armed Forces and Peacebuilding

When looking at armed forces and peacebuilding during the Balkan stabilisation process, the former echoes with untapped potential. In the first place, even though a military identity had not yet been concretised, the will in major MS, stimulated by the violence, could have been sufficient to attempt mere coordination among distinct national armed forces. Engaging in specialisation would undoubtedly have allowed the most efficient country in each military sector to respond appropriately in its area of expertise. However, this process would have established a relationship of dependence among European countries that were still not trusting enough of their defence partnerships in the EU. A specialisation approach would have implied giving up certain capacities, leaving military roles uncovered nationally, or weakening existing capabilities for national all-round security.

While it is understandable that the EU MS were not ready to specialise, a tighter cooperation producing economies of scale concerning logistics, training purposes, and equipment expenditure³³ would not have entailed any drawback for national defence. Eliminating duplication would have generated the appropriate environment to develop common European capabilities. Post-violence Koso-

31. Christopher Hill (1993) 'The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe's International Role', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Volume 31, No.3

32. Stephan Keukeleire and Tom Delreux, *The foreign policy of the European Union*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

33. Charles Grant (1999) 'European defence post-Kosovo?' Centre for European Reform, Working Paper [online] Available at: <https://cer.eu/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2012/cerwp3-5671.pdf>.

vo*. Kosovo* would have been the perfect test for such cooperation, as the exponential violence had quieted down and response deficits would have been acceptable, without any substantial issues between MS. Fostering such an approach would have been crucial in setting the right relationships to enable future interoperability.

Military interoperability can take various forms, which determine its effectiveness. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between general and targeted interoperability, as the two have substantial differences concerning the number of states that can be involved and the time lags across which they evolve. The former is traditional of NATO operations as it can take place across a wide range of countries and is gradually established over time. The perks of general interoperability include maximising opportunities by preparing units to operate with partners as needed but limiting shared functions among them.³⁴ This implies that the group army and corps follow national guidance separately, as an interoperable approach is present only at a division level. This works well in NATO because transborder training exercises and coalition solutions trigger increased cooperation across many states.³⁵ At the same time, considerable gaps remain concerning operational and tactical activities.

Kosovo* was a chance for the EU to distinguish its military capacity from NATO, not through its resources, which evidently cannot

compete, but through a strategic development of a higher degree of interoperability, enabling and increasing readiness. The benefits of targeted interoperability appear to be more compatible in a European context, where a shared sense of purpose and command style is more likely to occur. The multinational operations envisaged by European policy planners require balancing of the current prevailing general interoperability basis with a focus on targeted interoperability among specific units.³⁶ This would imply that European defence forces act on a truly interoperable level when called to action, enhancing European defence overall. Closer armed forces make it easier to plan, build, and execute interoperability.

On the other hand, deliberately built interoperability, typical of the 'targeted' approach, is tendentially limited to a defined period. For this reason, even though prompt crisis response necessarily recurs to targeted interoperability for its immediate effectiveness, it is fundamental to maintain relationships and multinational training operating with foreign militaries, encouraging a 'general' approach for long term success. In the Kosovo* scenario, finding a balance among the two is particularly crucial due to its length and the overall involvement of the international community.

General interoperability on a military plane is also a consolidator of alliances on all levels of military intervention. Enabling a comprehensive approach sets the scene to also operate fluidly in post-conflict situations requir-

34. Christopher G. Pernin et al., (2019), 'Targeted Interoperability: A New Imperative for Multinational Operations,' Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. [online] Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2075.html.

35. Christopher Pernin, (2015), 'Commentary: Building Interoperability for European Defense,' Defense News. [online] Available at: <https://www.defensenews.com/opinion/commentary/2015/11/06/commentary-building-interoperability-for-european-defense/>.

36. Christopher Pernin, (2015), 'Commentary: Building Interoperability for European Defense,' Defense News. [online].

ing peacebuilding from different countries. Regarding Kosovo*, the EU undoubtedly was the largest player involved. The stabilisation and association process directed towards the Western Balkans aims not only to stabilise the political and economic situation to transition to a market economy, but also to promote a regional cooperation to make the future prospect of EU accession more feasible.³⁷ The latter is an exceptional objective which would truly revolutionise the international status of the area. Still, it also requires interoperable means, both on a military and civilian plane, which the EU did not put into practice from the start. The steps towards a more 'European' Kosovo* were many. Each contributed to the democratisation of Kosovo* on the one side, and the consolidation of a European civilian and military identity on the other. It is evident however that the latter is still feeble in its concreteness.

From the Stability Pact to EULEX

After acknowledging the undeniable deficit faced by European military power, which was still inherently dependent on the Allies during the Kosovo* violence, EU activism was initiated not only on the military front but in all aspects concerning stabilisation of its neighbourhood. Already in 1999, Germany's contribution to a Troika meeting introduced "the door to a long term political and economic stabilisation process."³⁸ By attempting to anchor the area in the values pursued by the institutional structure of the European Com-

munity, the Stability Pact followed the same concepts which France had already proposed for Central and Eastern Europe in a similar project. However, in this case, the German novelty consisted in orienting the whole region towards gradual integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures.³⁹ The enthusiasm of the MS in undertaking such an initiative can be explained by the shared feeling of acting quickly and collectively, fuelling a proactive approach towards Kosovo* while asserting a capacity to lead.

Notwithstanding this crucial objective of consolidating European leadership, the support of the US was fundamental if Euro-Atlantic institutions were to frame the new stability in the region. Due to the involvement of numerous actors of the international community and Russia's reticence to abide by any referral to NATO, the pact revealed itself to be a good platform for stability that was however constrained by the diversity of players concerned. It was only in 2008 that the EU finally launched the most innovative mission to date: EULEX.

Operations Pillar

Launched in December 2008, EULEX Rule of Law mission represents a turning point for the EU contribution to solve the Kosovo* violence and perhaps to a future enlargement of itself. Being the largest deployment of agents and contributing states, it aims to reach a total of 1,950 internationals, complemented by 1,250 locals, supplied by all European MS

37. Jitske Hoogenboom (2011) 'The EU as a Peacebuilder in Kosovo', Civil Society Dialogue Network [online] Available at: http://ceplio.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CSDN_MS-Meeting_Romania_Policy_Analysis_EU_as_a_Peacebuilder_in_Kosovo.pdf

38. Lykke Friis and Anna Murphy, (2000) 'Negotiating in a time of crisis: The EU's response to the military conflict in Kosovo', EUI Working Papers RSC No.2000/20, p. 3. Available at: https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/1660/00_20.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

39. Ibid.

with the aid of Canada, Croatia, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and, more surprisingly, the US.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding the limited involvement of the US, this contribution is symbolically crucial, as EULEX results are demonstrative of European capacity to take over with a transfer of leadership in Kosovo*.

Full operational capacity was officially declared in April 2009, founding its legal basis on the Council Joint Action.⁴¹ The dual mandate of EULEX revolves around promoting the rule of law whilst dealing with civilian crisis management. According to the overarching programme strategy, it consists of “assisting Kosovo authorities, judicial authorities and law enforcement agencies in their progress toward sustainability and accountability” through “monitoring, mentoring, and advising, while retaining certain executive functions”.⁴² Activities are grouped under three main components: police, justice, and customs.

The police component represents the largest component, as it works on the enhancement of administrative and especially operational capacities of the Kosovo* Police, such as forensics and special forces. EULEX is innovative in capacity building as it does not only operate at an a priori-level, guaranteeing training and advice, but keeps track of effectiveness of such training by monitoring and assisting Kosovo* Police officers on the ground.

Full scale EU involvement

EULEX’s fully integrated Rule of Law mission assuming executive function was the ultimate effort for European engagement in the region. The programmatic approach, which required an operating method depending on performance indicators, allows for a regular strategy review every six months. It is also true that the mission was put in place with a series of institutional challenges that may have substantially hindered achievements.⁴³ Among these, we can identify the acceptance of deployment specifically in the Northern area, the applicability of law, and the paradox of state-building.⁴⁴

Acceptance of EULEX has been a concern for both the Kosovo* Serb and the Kosovo* Albanian communities. Therefore, any deficiencies in the North were provoked by the rejection of Kosovo* Serbs rather than the lack of consensus among European states, which were instead fully intentioned to avoid any deadlocks. Furthermore, criticism from the media points to inefficient intervention against corruption and clientelism.⁴⁵

As acceptance will be ultimately result-dependent, EULEX’s capacity to deliver is crucial. Its work is a determinant for Kosovo’s* stabilisation but especially for moulding a more Euro-Atlantic societal context embedded in an EU institutional framework. Consequences will be substantial for the EU’s credibility as an international actor and the consolidation of a proper military identity.

40. David Cadier (2011), ‘EU Mission in Kosovo (EULEX): Constructing Ambiguity or Constructive disunity?’, Transatlantic Security Paper N.3, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique. [online] Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/133016/201108.pdf>

41. COUNCIL JOINT ACTION 2008/124/CFSP of 4 February 2008 on the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, EULEX KOSOVO. [online] Available at: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/showPage.aspx?id=1459&lang=En>

42. <http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/?id=27>

43. Giovanni Grevi, ‘The EU rule-of-law Mission in Kosovo’, in Grevi, Helly & Keo-hane, eds. 2009. European Security and Defense Policy: The first ten years (1999-2009). p.359

44. David Cadier (2011), ‘EU Mission in Kosovo (EULEX): Constructing Ambiguity or Constructive disunity?’, Transatlantic Security Paper N.3, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique. [online] Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/133016/201108.pdf>

45. <http://www.eulex-kosovo.eu/en/judgments/>

KOSOVO'S* 'EUROPEAN' FUTURE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE EU'S MILITARY IDENTITY

The innovative approach brought about by EULEX set the ground for major developments concerning Kosovo* and the EU in the long run. The capacity to successfully combine an enlargement policy enabled by CSDP instruments may represent the key to the needed coordination among MS to foster a security context that is resilient enough to construct a solid military identity. Moreover, Kosovo's* full-on stabilisation, based on the

implementation of Rule of Law, could make it a possible candidate for EU accession.

Strengthening EU External Action

One of the major factors contributing to EULEX's success was a "unity of purpose"⁴⁶ demonstrated by European MS, a characteristic lacking often in foreign policy. The challenges in this regard are still noteworthy, as



Kosovo Police (KP) during the exercise on riot control supported by EULEX Special Police Department (SPD)

Enisa Kasemi

46. David Cadier (2011), 'EU Mission in Kosovo (EULEX): Constructing Ambiguity or Constructive disunity?', Transatlantic Security Paper N.3, Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique. [online] Available at: <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/133016/201108.pdf>

it is highly unlikely that the EU will pursue a wholly “technical mission”⁴⁷ in evidently politically relevant circumstances. Furthermore, the endeavour taken on by EULEX in accelerated institution building is hindered by a fundamental aspect supporting the system: state-building. EULEX has been working closer with the Commission to capitalise a “conditionality lever”⁴⁸ that will enable acceptance by local authorities to engage in a simultaneous institution and state building for Rule of Law to be effective.

Meanwhile, by deploying a plethora of international organisations, EU external action in Kosovo* has been gradually disclosing the EU’s identity as a security actor. This is ensured through effective cooperation with international stakeholders, enhancing added value which can only be generated by a European *modus operandi*. Combining existing EU bodies in Kosovo* with EULEX and its improved mandate guarantees the coherence of EU external action. Stronger bonds created among European MS working closely with the Commission is the basis for an interoperable European Defence at the core of a shared military identity. The steps taken to face the situation in the Balkans have been a series of trial and error for the EU, which shed light on its limits as a united military actor. EULEX constitutes an operational success for the CSDP that has shown the ability to capitalise on experiences and mistakes made in the same neighbourhood. Adaptation was considerable as, despite political obstacles, the mission was

launched, emphasising that CSDP operations have some degree of autonomy. By demonstrating the EU’s presence on the ground, such missions function as enhancers of the EU’s international status, especially in areas where the US has been slowly retreating as the EU takes over leadership. In addition to this, NATO’s willingness to share the security burden with EULEX testifies the CSDP’s international recognition, promoting the EU as a regional security actor.

Finally, when establishing Rule of Law, the EU’s mission also contemplates the balance between a proactive and reactive approach, which envisions cooperation and intervention in response to a normative breach.⁴⁹ The two approaches must be combined by EULEX.

The Road towards EU Enlargement

To ensure proper application of the EU *acquis*, *EULEX was complemented by the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) on the 27th of October 2015*. The agreement was welcomed as a “milestone for the EU-Kosovo* relationship. It will help Kosovo* make much needed reforms and will create trade and investment opportunities.”⁵⁰ The SAA specifically focuses on respect for democratic principles and core elements at the centre of the European single market by establishing a contractual relationship of mutual rights and obligations over a large range of sectors. European standards can be implemented through a series of reforms that enable cooperation in education, energy

47. Solveig Richter, “Promoting Rule of Law without State Building: Can EULEX Square the Circle in Kosovo?”, in Asseburg, Muriel & Kempin, Ronja, eds. 2009. *The EU as Strategic Actor in Security and Defense?* p.34

48. Ibid.

49. Solveig Richter, “Promoting Rule of Law without State Building: Can EULEX Square the Circle in Kosovo?”, in Asseburg, Muriel & Kempin, Ronja, eds. 2009. *The EU as Strategic Actor in Security and Defense?* pp. 42- 43.

50. Commissioner Johannes Hahn, (2015) *Consilium Europa SAA*

employment, and especially justice and home affairs, which were already started through EULEX. Establishing free trade is obviously a cornerstone of the SAA as it could later foster the environment for free movement of goods, services, people, and capital.⁵¹ Achieving institutional coordination combined with administrative capacities that allow application and law enforcement is also an important aspect that needs to be prioritised. Creating both economic and political links between the EU and Kosovo* is crucial for the successful implementation of the SAA.⁵²

However, the chance of such an enlargement also impacts the prospects for the European military identity, which is still in construction. Establishing such a tight relationship with a region that has been in crisis for the last decades is as risky as it is potentially beneficial. On the one hand, the Balkans have put European unity to the test on many fronts, exposing substantial weaknesses in the process. They have also provided an opportu-

nity for the EU to blossom in the security environment. Most of the progress was made through a change in command within NATO operations and EUFOR's action. Still, a soft approach based on a comprehensive package established European credibility as a security actor. The latter lies at the basis of a European military identity. Anyhow, EU enlargement always generates further differences and discrepancies among the interests of MS. In dealing with high politics and foreign affairs, the intergovernmental logic adopted within the EU entails more issues with finding a common vision towards external action. Even though state and institution building still have a long way to go in Kosovo*, all aspects should be treated as important to fully concretise a European Kosovo*. The repercussions of a possible delay on the consolidation of a military identity have to be considered, as both general and targeted interoperability will have to be built from scratch with any new MS.

51. Novitat Xh. Nezaj (2015) 'The development of Kosovo and its relationship with the EU', Discussion Paper, No. 4/15, Europa-Kolleg Hamburg, Institute for European Integration, Hamburg. [online] Available at: <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/110956/1/827020082.pdf>

52. Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The paper has traced a timeline of European involvement in Kosovo* to pinpoint the main events characterising the consolidation of a military Europe.

In the first instance, the notion of 'defence identity' was conceived as largely farfetched in a context where internal political disputes never truly set the stage for adopting an effective common foreign policy acting as a 'hard' power. Originally, the pillar at the foundation of the CSDP was not created to evolve in what could one day constitute a multinational military corps. The gaps in its capacities were widened as the ongoing conflicts in the Balkan region kept on putting Europe's defence strategy to the test, confirming an evident NATO dependence. On the other hand, some leading European countries in the military field, specifically the United Kingdom and France, manifested the willingness to distinguish Europe's military capacity from the transatlantic alliance. The means to show such potential were provided by Kosovo* itself, as the KFOR operation enabled European leadership to concretise as Eurocorps took command. However, internal dynamics remained a major hindrance to an interoperable military approach, making unexpected crises a dealbreaker for European effectiveness. Even though hard

power was still weak, the European traditional *modus operandi*, based on moulding the societal context through a soft power directed by Rule of Law, was a promising strategy to obtain a dual outcome. Ensuring long term stability in Kosovo* was the primary objective of EULEX, but for Europe to stand out as an international actor was a much hoped for secondary effect of the initiative. Finally, as institutionalisation slowly took place, notwithstanding deficits in an interoperable military, European countries have shown an outstanding capacity to adapt and learn from the past regarding the Kosovo* violence.

By setting out the chance for a secure environment in the proximate neighbourhood, steps towards a real European Defence have been taken. The grounds for a closer partnership and cooperation across EU MS have been set as general interoperability is fostered by shared external military alliances. Acknowledging the potential for enhanced interoperability through operations focused on a targeted approach has been a slow but steady process for several European countries. It now remains an open question whether a future enlargement of the EU will accelerate or hinder this objective.

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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:

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