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Common Security and Defence Policy

This presentation is structured into four parts and highlights some of the most stringent challenges which the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has been recently facing.

Strategic Coherence and Internal Cohesion:

- If the EU will not be able to manage internal cracks, such as the rise of nationalism, so-called sovereignty or major differences in member states strategic cultures, future risks and challenges to CSDP might be endogenous. A failure to coordinate efforts on CSDP might draw Europe back on the US and return the European security landscape to 1950s. EU will need to find innovative ways to solve the crises of sovereignty of borders and of defence. What does Europe want is not easy to operationalise, because of increasing polarisation or even fragmentation of European integration.
- CSDP is a domain where differentiated integration might work better, because states are driven by different threat perceptions, strategic environments, interests and capabilities (power). My research suggests that differentiated integration in the form of a role-player model in CSDP could enhance the strategic knowledge production and capability development. Security and defence collaborative regimes such as CSDP can have an empowering effect on member states. An unintended consequence of the role-player model could be a 'Europe à la carte', where members would only support the policies in which they can have a benefit (i.e. national interest).

Brexit

- The anticipated withdrawal of the UK from the EU is forecasted to strain the CSDP and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) budget. In 2018, the UK accounted for approx. 16% of the EU security budget. To compensate this, and to pursue existing peace and stabilisation missions, an increase in member states' contributions to CSDP can be expected.
- A series of peace and defence cooperation mechanisms were adopted after Brexit: Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), European Intervention Initiative (EI2) (outside EU framework), European Defence Fund (EDF), Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), European Peace Facility (proposed), which are output oriented and can contribute to providing an element of strategic autonomy. For the new instruments to be effective, it is important for the EU to manage member states' expectations and ensure they will enable to reach strategic objectives.

External Strategic Environment and Sources of Instability

- A particular US leadership and what some call a US strategy underpinned by a logic of 'retreat' and 'systemic competition' with China, has pushed the EU to think seriously about the scenario of US abandonment.

- Strategic autonomy, which was also inspired by the UK Brexit referendum, would, some argue, allow the EU to gain an element of independence from US decision-making and pursue an agenda of international security based on own normative vision, with mediation, diplomacy, peace missions and global justice at its core. Some argued that the road to strategic autonomy might lie in a merger between CSDP and NATO, i.e. the Europeanisation of NATO.
- Multipolarity and great power competition is another challenge with implications for CSDP/CFSP. In the future, the EU is expected to aim at having good relationships with all countries and avoid return to bipolarity, because a bipolar logic would push countries to choose, and it cannot be ruled out that they might chose China, due to economic reasons.

New Security Technologies

- Future and emerging technologies such as autonomous robotics and artificial intelligence can have a disruptive and transformative impact in the security and defence domain. If the EU will invest sufficiently in research and development, it might be in a position to harness the benefits of the new security technologies. New funding of transnational and interdisciplinary research, inter alia under EDF, will have the potential to address to a certain extent capabilities and technological-industrial weaknesses. Dual-use technology, i.e. technologies which can be attributed to both civilian and military purposes, constitute an area in which the EU could establish a new area of competence.

I would like to conclude by mentioning that the points I have made today are based on my research on CSDP/CFSP. My most recent research output includes the book "Peace, Security and Defence Cooperation in Post-Brexit Europe. Risks and Opportunities", co-edited with Professor John Doyle, Dublin City University.