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Eloïse Gudmundsson Lochon, *The EU and NATO: what future for cooperation in European security?* (May 2020)

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Attacking global problems on a European level

Final Assignment

Rob Boudewijn

4012 words

The EU and NATO

What future for cooperation

in European security ?

The original intent of the signatories of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949 was to help Europeans become independent in terms of their own security (Howorth, 2017). Over 70 years later, Europe is still not fully self-reliant for its safety, but change is on the way under the leadership of the European Union. As of today, two major military defense institutions dominate Europe. On the one hand, the North Atlantic Alliance which includes the United States and Canada along with 28 other European countries has dominated the field of European security since the Second World War. NATO as it is more commonly known, has for mission to protect the Allies freedom by political and military means. On the other hand, the European Union which started out as a coal and steel alliance, and has since then expanded into many other fields, now stretches its grasp to form collective foreign, security and defense policies for its members, the CSDP and CFSP. Joachim Koops (2017) advances that the EU and NATO now find themselves as two international organizations with overlapping membership and mandates, protecting Europe, and potential for either cooperation or competition. For Koops (2017) ever since the creation of both organizations in the 1950s concerns about division of labor and the best institutional framework have been prevalent in the minds of scholars, organizations' staff, and countries leaders alike. With the end of the Cold War there has been an ever more pressing need for re-orientation of the Euro-Atlantic organizations (Koop, 2017). Islamic terrorism and the Russian threat have revived NATO's importance and the need for greater cooperation with the EU as demonstrated by the EU-NATO joint declaration of 2016 (Koop, 2017). Joylon Howorth (2017) predicts three scenarios for the future of EU-NATO relations. Either a decomposition of the European integration and a resurgence of even stronger dependence on NATO. Or the EU works on making the CSDP more effective and expending defense financial capacities while still remaining dependent on NATO. Lastly NATO becomes Europeanized, whereby Europe achieves strategic autonomy and assumes leadership for its own defense through taking over NATO and integrating the CSDP into it.

By carefully examining the work of Koops, Howorth and other authors on EU-NATO relations and its challenges, combined with informations on the EU, the CSDP and the CFSP, this paper will try to answer the research question of "How can the EU and NATO's cooperation problem be solved?". This research will be designed around a single case study structure to try and provide a thick description of how EU-NATO relations currently function, focusing especially on the decision-making process, and what barriers are blocking the way for the EU to become a strategic autonomous body or at least to cooperate more fully with NATO. This paper will start with an in-depth overview of the issues at the heart of the cooperation problem between NATO and the EU, including the theoretical perspectives of inter-organizational relations, resource dependence theory, and the practice approach. This will then be followed by an examination of the multi-level nature of the decision-making process within the EU for the CSFP and CSDP, but also between the EU and NATO concerning cooperation between the two entities. The final section will explore the different solutions available to solve the issues undermining cooperation between NATO and the EU, and how these could lead to the realization of Howorth's (2017) prediction in which the EU will take over NATO entirely.

The cooperation problem between the EU and NATO is hampered by sub-factors that make it particularly hard to solve, it can be qualified as a wicked problem. A central issue has been the participation problem caused by Cyprus and Turkey. Cyprus is a member of the EU but not of NATO, while Turkey is a member NATO but not a member of the EU. In 2004 the EU and NATO came up with the Berlin Plus agreement to give the EU access to NATO's resources if they wish to engage in operations when NATO does not. Yet this agreement has largely not been implemented due to Turkey's demands for institutional red lines which prevent members of the EU that are not part of NATO to take part in decision making, therefore denying Cyprus the possibility to participate in EU-NATO meetings. Turkey blocks any attempts at creating more formal stronger cooperation between the alliance and the union, while Cyprus blocks cooperation between Turkey and the EU. This political deadlock prevents any progress and results in cooperation failure between the two security organizations (Smith & Gebhard, 2017). A second source of problems comes from Washington's demands for the EU to take on a greater share of the burden of responsibilities in NATO, especially financially. The constant American leadership of NATO has had a demotivating effect on Europeans, but as Europe is not central on the US radars anymore with the end of the Cold War, Europe has had no choice but to develop its own defense capacity. Yet the USA, even after Trumps repeated allegations on the obsolescence of NATO, has not retracted enough from NATO to give enough room for Europeans to pursue their

ambitions (Howorth, 2017 ; Smith & Gebhard, 2017). The EU's desire for autonomy is further weakened by the facts that its launch of the CSDP as a regional military security project has largely failed, leaving the EU dependent on the USA especially with the rise of the Ukraine crisis (Howorth, 2017). Other than these two key issues, other problems also impact the EU-NATO relationship. European domestic problems of nationalism, divergent cultures, unequal defense ambitions, financial issues, along with troubles in the East and South all diminish the EU's capabilities to cooperate with NATO or develop its own common defense policy for autonomy (Howorth, 2017). Organizational differences between the EU and NATO also play a role. NATO is an established hard military umbrella whereas the EU is seen as a junior partner with rather soft power capabilities and the CSDP is perceived as merely an experiment by many over the Atlantic, showing the lack of credibility of the EU in defense matters (Smith & Gebhard, 2017). Finally, Brexit's impacts on the EU and the CSDP, changes in diplomatic and budgetary capabilities, are bound to have a ripple effect onto NATO (Smith & Gebhard, 2017). Current efforts to try and improve EU-NATO cooperation are evaluated as rather weak (Howorth, 2018). The Joint Declaration made in 2016 only mentions cooperative projects that are so basic they should be already taken for granted, such as maritime cooperation, common exercises, and the countering of hybrid threats (Howorth, 2018).

To understand better why this cooperation problem appears to be so persistent, further investigation in the relationship between the EU and NATO is necessary. The theory of inter-organizational relations (IOR) can be used to explain the relationships between international organizations. IOR looks at the life cycle that links organizations, starting at their formation phase, followed by the interaction phase of cooperation or rivalry in which the EU and NATO are now, and finally the joint impact phase (Koops, 2017). The more overlap in the core aims of organizations the more they are likely to compete, so with the EU expanding itself towards military crisis management, a core competence of NATO, cooperation has been made more difficult. Koops (2017) further advances two other perspectives, which are most relevant to the EU-NATO case according to him, on why organizations cooperate or compete, the resource dependence theory (RDT) and the practice approach. RDT's core tenet is that organizations cooperate to have access to each other's resources that they do not possess. This is illustrated by the Berlin Plus agreement which give the EU access to otherwise unattainable NATO resources. Yet it also advances that organizations still want to preserve their autonomy and avoid disputes over primacy and subordination. One can see that the EU tried to free itself from NATO by creating the CSDP, but due to its failure and new external threats from Russia and terrorism the EU had to go back to depend on NATO and their resources (Koops, 2017). The practice approach can explain how NATO and the EU still cooperate despite the Cyprus-Turkey problem. Indeed, it suggests that organizations use informal

channels of cooperation when formal ones are frozen, so common practices and relationships develop between the staff of organizations (Koops, 2017). Unfortunately, such informal and improvised channels can be limited and are not a sustainable approach to manage Europe's security (Smith & Gebhard, 2017). Informal cooperation between EU and NATO still remains one of the most active channels of cooperation that their relation has managed to develop, therefore it should be considered relevant. Many authors suggest that literature on the relationship between the EU and NATO is still not very developed (Koops, 2017 ; Smith & Gebhard, 2017 ; Graeger, 2017). The IOR, RDT and practice theory together can partly help explaining why the EU and NATO's cooperation problem remains and how they have managed to cooperate despite it all. Both organizations may have similar aims which can encourage rivalry, but this does not seem to be the key issue preventing cooperation (Koops, 2017). Due to the large failure of the Berlin Plus agreement the EU has not even used NATO resources as much as it could have, this might encourage it to develop its own resources as we will see later. As Howorth (2018) suggest, the EU and NATO's cooperation problem also lies in the fact that the USA doesn't want to be responsible for European security anymore and the EU is supposedly striving towards strategic autonomy but struggles to do so because of the Cyprus-Turkey issue and other internal problems. Solutions exist to overcome these problems but first one must understand how the decision-making process works in the EU, and between the EU-NATO, concerning defense topics.

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) covers all areas that relate to the European Union's security, it includes the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) which is there to help the EU respond proactively to international crisis using a mix of civilian and military tools and to eventually establish a common EU defense system. The CFSP decisions are made by the European Council where heads of states meet twice a year. The CFSP is made in a strong inter-governmentalist environment of states bargaining, where all states have equal power, pooled sovereignty, and a desire for consensus. So, the level of decision making is reserved to states, which can be expected as foreign policy is delicate issue on which states are keen to preserve their sovereignty. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Affairs Service (EEAS) are in charge of implementing the policy decisions taken by the European Council. The CSDP particularly focuses on the military operations and missions' aspect of security, the humanitarian Petersberg tasks and Rapid Reaction Forces organization. Here one can see some overlap with NATO's aims of military crisis management as mentioned earlier. Supranational institutions such as the Commission and the European Court of Justice play little to no role in the CFSP. Yet in the case of EU-NATO relations this does not mean that there are no multi-level interactions. Simon Smith, Nikola Tomic and Carmen Gebhard (2017) explain how the EU and NATO are institutionally connected. For EU-NATO meetings,

the EU is represented by the Political and Security Committee (PSC) while NATO is represented by its only decision-making body the North Atlantic Council (NAC). The Political and Security Committee (PSC) was created in the treaty of Nice as a preparatory body to make recommendations to the Foreign Affairs Council and the Council of Ministers. It is chaired by a representative of the EEAS and composed of ambassadors that meet twice a week. The North Atlantic Council is usually composed of ambassadors, permanent representatives of NATO members, but can also host heads of state or foreign and defense ministers. In both bodies consensus is the dominating decision-making procedure to avoid defection and dissatisfaction (Smith et al., 2017). The PSC and the NAC meet informally and formally, during informal meetings Turkey and Cyprus are represented. Even in the eventuality that the participation problem of Turkey and Cyprus was resolved, formal rules of procedure and authority would still be lacking and prevent decision-making (Smith et al., 2017). For now, PSC-NAC meetings are more of a consultative process, no actionable outcomes are allowed to be produced (Smith et al., 2017). So, at this institutional level there is a lack of decision-making capabilities, reflecting the concentration of decision-making power at the state level mentioned previously. One level which has some visible impact is the individual level. For example, ambassadors in the NAC have some freedom of manoeuvre to negotiate, even if that is not the case in the PSC (Smith et al., 2017). Nina Graeger (2017) further explains that diplomatic and military staff of NATO and the EU at Brussels headquarters and on the ground during missions engage a lot with each other. They create informal practices that allow for cooperation despite the stalemate of the Berlin Plus agreement. These kinds of under the radar micro politics can include things such as information sharing and spontaneous military cooperation (Graeger, 2017). So decision-making at the individual level even if not formally allowed still takes place and has some local influence power. Overall decision-making in the EU about foreign and security matters is concentrated in the hands of states, with some delegation for implementation (Fiott, 2017). In EU-NATO relations collaborative decision-making is extremely weak because it is not institutionalized which is part of the wicked problem of cooperation the organizations are facing. Yet at an individual level some decision-making is made independently from states and can have some impacts and improve collaboration between the EU and NATO. As Koops (2017) puts it, NATO-EU relations are "the sum of processes, developments and outcomes at the international system level, the individual level, the national level, the bureaucratic level and inter-secretariat levels" (p. 321).

As mentioned previously, Howorth (2017) foresees three scenarios for the future of EU-NATO relationships. His hope is for the third scenario to come through by which the EU takes over leadership in NATO while the US retreats from the alliance, and for the CSDP to become integrated into NATO (Howorth, 2018). This would make NATO the real and unique defender of European security. For this

scenario to play, the cooperation problem between the EU and NATO needs to be solved before-hand, and one of the key issues jamming cooperation has been the Cyprus-Turkey quarrel. Resolving the participation problem of Cyprus and Turkey is no easy task but is in the process of being solved. Because this is a membership problem two solutions are on the table, either Cyprus is allowed to join NATO, or Turkey is integrated in the EU. Turkey is currently a candidate for the EU and has been since 1987, yet issues of human rights and democratic backsliding, along with the tensions over Cyprus, have frozen their candidacy, this solution is therefore not viable (European Commission, 2019). Cyprus joining NATO on the other hand seems more plausible. The current security design of Cyprus relies on Greece, Turkey and the United-Kingdom, all members of NATO. Damon Wilson (2019) advances that NATO membership for Cyprus would not only help reunify the island around one security actor but would also provide NATO greater checking power over the Eastern Mediterranean region. It would give Turkey a limited presence on the island to legitimately protect the Turkish Cypriot community, and vice versa for Greece, while rotating NATO forces from other members of the alliance would provide confidence building for a successful settlement (Wilson, 2019). The Greek Cypriot president has already signaled support for NATO membership and diplomatic talks with the Turkish Cypriot leader have resumed, so there is hope that in a near future Cyprus will be able to join NATO and solve the participation problem. Overall, helping Cyprus ascend to NATO membership should be a focus point for NATO and the EU in order to solve their cooperation problem. European states have a lot to gain from Cyprus including getting closer to making Europe "whole, free, and at peace" (Wilson, 2019, para 7). This would allow the EU, through NATO, to oversee threats such as terrorism, organized crime, migration, and human trafficking, which all take place in the waters surrounding Cyprus (Wilson, 2019). This would certainly please the EU and its member states considering the exponential strategic advantages it could create. In addition to that, having all their members also being parts of NATO would help the EU to assume leadership in NATO and the merging with the CSDP. So, EU member states should feel motivated to invest in this solution and making Cyprus "another strategic win for the free world" (Wilson, 2019, para 8).

Yet for the EU to do this, it will require the US to step down which they will only do if the EU proves to be capable of taking over. Fiott (2017) encourages the EU and its members to increase their defense budget spending to match the NATO requirements of 2% of GDP annually which would help solve the free-riding accusation of US politicians and scholars. The EU is currently undertaking a multitude of initiatives such as the European Defense Fund which could help narrow the gap between US and European spending (Fiott, 2017). Howorth (2018) also shows that the EU is currently taking steps towards leadership with the recent European Global Strategy (EUGS) that states the EU's desire to

deepen its cooperation with NATO and recognizes the need for Europeans to be better equipped, trained and organized to participate fully in ensuring their own security. The CSDP has been recently relaunched with the creation of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the Military Planning and Conduct Capabilities (MPCC). All this combined with Trump and the general American feeling that the US membership of NATO is more loss than gains, transferring NATO to Europeans appears to be entirely possible if the EU steps up its game financially and assumes leadership (Howorth, 2018). States, being the major actors in the CSDP, are the only ones with decisional power that can work to align their interests and ambitions in order for the EU to successfully take over NATO as Howorth (2018) recommends. The EU still faces numerous internal divisions and challenges, members disagreeing with policies is not uncommon. Due to the deep desire for consensus, especially on sensitive issues such as the CSFP and CSDP, the EU has learned to work with package deals. Whereby members negotiate tit-for-tat over different issues through linkages. Considering the importance of the EU's common defense policy, and the rise of threats to the south and to the east, member states could be more inclined to compromise on some issues in order to satisfy some members reluctant to invest more in CSFP and CSDP and gather consensual support for EU-NATO cooperation.

To also help with the cooperation problem Gebhard and Smith (2015) insist that a bottom to top approach should also be encouraged to help institutionalize informal cooperation even further. Indeed, the common operational culture that has developed between the staff of both organizations can be seen as form of application in essence of the Berlin Plus agreement (Gebhard & Smith, 2015). Considering the Berlin Plus agreement has not been implemented in part due to the participation problem of Cyprus and Turkey, an opportunity of killing two birds with one stone may arise in this situation. With Cyprus joining NATO, the Berlin Plus agreement intensions may be implement. This would help formally institutionalize the links between the two organizations, the merging of NATO with the CSDP and the leadership take over by the EU. Jean-Claude Junker himself saw an opportunity to refuel European integration through defense integration (Junker, 2017). While Emmanuel Macron has been encouraging for an increase in the EU's military crisis management (Macron, 2017). Since Brexit, the ties between France and Germany have been reinforced, Macron and Merkel have agreed to push for an even more serious EU defense project (Howorth, 2018). The EU-NATO Joint Declaration produced in 2016 was signed only by NATO's Secretary General, the president of the European Commission and the president of the European Council. Perhaps if both state leaders and the EU's highest representatives wish to turn the EU into a security actor capable of leveling up with NATO, a new declaration could be signed but this time by member states themselves to pledge their commitment. If done in a proper treaty form this could bind the EU states under international law to

develop the CSFP and CSDP, not alongside, but within NATO, therefore creating hope that Howorth's (2017) scenario of a Europeanisation of NATO could take place. On the basis that the EU assuming leadership in NATO is the best things that could happen for European security, this would then be the best solution to solve the EU-NATO cooperation problem, a full-on merging. Cyprus needs to be integrated in NATO, then the EU must present a united and determined front with the desire to accept leadership, and then cooperation between the EU and NATO will be at its peak as they will become one.

Throughout this paper, one tried to understand why the EU and NATO struggle to cooperate. Current central issues are the participation problem of Cyprus and Turkey, along with the failure of EU member states to take responsibility for their own security which is heavily criticized by an America tired of holding the short twig in the bargain. Europe is currently dependent on NATO for the security of the continent. It has to overcome this cooperation problem and turn it around entirely into a progressive acceptation of leadership under the apprenticeship of NATO. The EU must increase its strength not alongside but within NATO (Howorth, 2018). In order to do so the EU has to solve internal disparities such as the unequal commitment of members to a common defense and security policy. European countries also need to increase their spending on defense and research to level up with NATO requirements and convince the United States that they are capable of finally taking over NATO as originally intended (Fiott, 2017 ; Howorth, 2017). Most importantly through NATO, European countries must focus on solving the Cyprus-Turkey tensions and help Cyprus integrate the North Atlantic Alliance, thereby solving the participation problem and making all EU members part of NATO as well. This will allow for an easier unification of NATO and the CSDP. Several issues are pressurizing the EU to improve its defense capacity with the Ukraine crisis in the East, the migration and potential terrorist threats coming from the South, but also the feelings of nationalism and Euroscepticism that are rising and risk breaking the ranks of European integration altogether. Several scholars have pointed out all the signs showing the EU is on the right path towards solving the cooperation problem with NATO. Informal cooperation channels are already well established both in Brussels and in foreign grounds where missions are taking place (Gebhard & Smith, 2015). The EU and key leaders for European integrations such as the French President and the German Chancellor have been working towards expanding the common defense policies through several initiatives already in place and active (Howorth, 2018). Perhaps all the EU needs now is a little push. Gebhard and Smith (2015) suggest that if the EU and NATO were faced with high pressure scenario forcing them to pool their forces together, this could allow for an override of the current political blockages and help the Europeanisation of NATO. In his article Howorth (2018) even presents the plans of other scholars for a withdrawal of the USA from

NATO over ten years. The EU now has no choice but engage in this challenge and truly solve its cooperation problem with NATO if it wants to avoid having the grass cut from under its feet by the next military crisis that will hit the European Community.

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