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EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE

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INTRODUCTION: EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE RECAST

In political science, international relations and history, it is often a challenge to identify what will be understood as a seminal moment. Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and its ongoing destabilization of eastern Ukraine throughout 2015 is remarkable in that it marked a calculated and definitive assault on Europe's post-war order. Not since the end of the Second World War had any European state forcibly annexed the territory of another, breaching both the letter and the spirit of several formal international treaties, specific guarantees on the territorial integrity of Ukraine and violating core provisions of the Helsinki Final Act. The annexation and ongoing conflict in Ukraine have not only fractured bilateral and multilateral relationships with the Russian Federation, but have also redefined the terms under which European security and defence have been understood for the last 25 years.

For most European states, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had remained the bedrock upon which their post-Cold War security was founded. The US security guarantee, institutionalized in the Alliance's military command structure, was at its heart. NATO's challenge over the last 25 years had been to make itself relevant to a radically changed security environment. It had done so through an active engagement in regional peacekeeping and peacemaking (as in the Balkans), direct military intervention overseas (as in Afghanistan and Libya), and through the twin processes of enlargement and partnership, most especially a partnership with Russia. To a significant extent, therefore, NATO had been recasting itself as a multilateral security organization, with an almost residual core common defence obligation.

Throughout NATO's transformation, however, concerns had been expressed that the Alliance was losing its focus on its original conception: a military alliance pledged to the mutual defence of its members. There were some complaints that NATO in general, and the USA in particular, were over-anxious to accommodate Russian concerns on the stationing of NATO forces on the territory of new NATO member states and on the deployment of an anti-ballistic missile system to defend against missile launches from so-called 'rogue' states. In response, many more argued that NATO had to evolve as threats to European security became ever more diverse and less amenable to a purely military response. They insisted that accommodating Russia's legitimate security concerns (and its historic anxieties) necessitated a more cautious approach to NATO enlargement and the forging of a genuine partnership with Russia on a wide range of shared security concerns including ballistic missile defence. However, Russia's destabilization of Ukraine, and its annexation of part of that state, rendered these arguments invalid. NATO has returned, front and centre, as Europe's core security and defence institution.

For its part, the European Union (EU) remains an emerging security framework with significant potential added-value in the political, diplomatic and economic realms but unable to deliver a core defence and security guarantee. The EU has only a tightly circumscribed security role which is based on limited and declining national military resources. None the less, the EU has developed a security and military capacity which has been independently deployed on more than 30 missions and operations overseas, a handful of which have been militarily substantial. It has also constructed a dense institutional infrastructure for policy development and implementation, predicated on a web of both supranational and intergovernmental decision making. These structures and processes span a broad policy spectrum of economic, political, diplomatic and military action. With revolutions at its borders, however, the EU's much vaunted holistic approach to security and its declared commitment to democratic development and international justice is under extraordinary pressure.

The balance of European states is an eclectic mix of those which desire NATO and/or EU membership but are not able to secure it, those which simply pursue an independent national defence, and those which define themselves—formally or informally—as neutral or non-aligned. For most of these states, it is the broader multilateral matrix that delivers their security: most especially the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. Each of these institutions has faced its own transformational challenges: the end of the Cold War, the persistence of many 'frozen' conflicts and the emergence of 'thematic' security challenges, such as terrorism, climate change and cyber security. The recent and profound deterioration in Europe's security situation has had a direct impact on both national and multilateral security and defence strategies, and institutional structures in 2015.

NATO BACK TO THE FUTURE

NATO and Russia

The ongoing Ukraine crisis has created a wholly different strategic situation in Europe. While there has been no question of NATO military engagement to thwart ongoing Russian intervention in Ukraine, NATO has been directly engaged in the crisis. Unannounced Russian military exercises, substantial troop movements, unannounced and unauthorized military overflights, submarine manoeuvres and war 'games' have all been used by the Russian military in 2015 to test European defences and have increased military tensions to heights not seen since the end of the Cold War. The announcement in May of the modernization of 40 Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles, which were claimed as being able to 'overcome even the most technically advanced anti-missile defence systems', further exacerbated tensions. In sum, NATO ministers noted at their June summit that 'Russia is challenging Euro-Atlantic security through military action, coercion and intimidation of its neighbours'.

Unsurprisingly, all of this has given rise to acute concerns among NATO members and non-members alike, leading to increased NATO air policing over the Baltic states, its naval deployments to the Baltic and Black Seas, extensive military exercises in Poland and the Baltic states, an 'enhanced' relationship between NATO and Finland and Sweden, and a Baltic request in May 2015 to station up to 5,000 NATO troops in those states. NATO's later decision, taken at its June ministerial meeting in Brussels, Belgium, that it would dispatch heavy weapons (tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery and transport vehicles) to the Baltic states, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, and provide a 5,000-member NATO 'spearhead' force, demonstrated, however, the Alliance's sensitivities to the permanent stationing of NATO troops near the Russian border. The question has also been raised in 2015 as to whether NATO's core strategic doctrine, written in 2010 and which aspired to '... a true strategic partnership between NATO and Russia', now has to be abandoned and revised to account for the possibility of Russian aggression against a NATO member state.

NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, focused his efforts in 2015 on the Alliance's military readiness and territorial defence (criticizing a further 3% drop in European defence spending in 2015), providing reassurance to NATO allies and partners, managing the Alliance's changed role in Afghanistan and building defence capabilities to ensure shared and integrated defence capacity. At the February 2015 Munich security conference the Secretary-General had noted 'a dangerous pattern of Russian behaviour: annexation, aggressive actions and intimidation' but still insisted later that year that 'Our goal is still cooperation with Russia... That serves NATO and it serves Russia'.

NATO's Dangerous 'Open Door'

NATO's enlargement process remained stalled in 2015. While the door formally remained open to any European country in a position to undertake the obligations of membership, enlargement had already generated internal political tensions within the Alliance even before the Ukrainian crisis. With enlargement featuring strongly in Russian narratives on encirclement, broken NATO promises and efforts to 'humiliate' Russia, these tensions have been only sharpened. Some insist that the ongoing Ukraine crisis underpins the need for NATO enlargement to proceed so as visibly to combat Russian aggression, while others insisted that precipitate decisions on enlargement had deepened Russian fears and led, at least in part, to the current crisis. For all member states Ukraine's situation underlined the implications of extending NATO's security guarantees to new member states. The key argument now was whether further enlargement would increase or decrease the security of NATO members.

While NATO has maintained the rhetoric of the 'open door', it continues to forestall actual entry to any of the aspirant members. Formally, for example, NATO continues to reiterate the Alliance's commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity and denounced the March 2015 'Treaty on Alliance and Integration' signed between Russia and the separatist Georgian region of South Ossetia. At the same time, Georgia is no closer to its goal of a formal NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP). Indeed, with NATO's increased focus on the territorial defence of its members, arguments have emerged that by creating, in practice, an enlargement 'taboo', NATO is in danger of contributing to the creation of greater regional instability. The fear is that the mismatch between NATO's rhetoric and its practice creates an unsustainable 'in-between' status for fragile neighbouring states. They remain the target of Russian destabilization measures; close enough to NATO to raise Russian fears but far enough away from NATO's defence guarantees to make them vulnerable.

NATO and Afghanistan

NATO concluded its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission operation in Afghanistan in 2014. At its peak, ISAF engaged 130,000 NATO-commanded troops from more than 50 countries of whom 3,485 were killed. In 2015 the ISAF mission was replaced by NATO's operation 'Resolute Support', engaging over 12,000 troops in support roles to the 350,000-strong Afghanistani security forces in training, planning, logistics and advisory roles. With its withdrawal from frontline security duties, NATO troop losses in the first half of 2015 fell by 90% (with five deaths), compared with the same period in 2014.

Institutional Developments

Defence spending among NATO's European partners continued to fall in 2015—if at a slower pace than previously—by more than 1.5% compared with 2014. Overall, defence spending has fallen by approximately 20% between 2008 and 2015, compared with an estimated 50% increase in Russian defence spending over the same period. The June 2015 NATO ministerial meeting agreed to 'name and shame' those Alliance members failing to reach their agreed 2% of GDP defence spending target, even as existing data clearly highlighted the fact that just four—perhaps five—of the 28 Alliance members were meeting that goal. NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg insisted that the Alliance faced additional and ever more serious challenges and that it '...couldn't do more with less indefinitely'.

NATO's 2011 operation in Libya and its experience in Afghanistan up to 2015 have highlighted critical European shortages in areas such as precision munitions, air-to-air refuelling, electronic jamming and air defence suppression, intelligence targeting, and tactical and strategic airlift capacity. With European budgets facing only increased pressure as a result of the ongoing fiscal and budgetary austerity, the need to convince NATO's European members to pool capacities and to develop complementarities was highlighted as being all the more urgent. NATO's overwhelming dependence on the USA (which now accounts for 75% of all NATO military spending) is agreed to be unsustainable and raises serious questions over Europe's commitment to its own security, but the Alliance's

objectives to increase defence spending and readiness have not yet yielded substantial results.

NATO ministers in 2015 noted progress on the Alliance's Readiness Action Plan, the enlargement (from 13,000 to 40,000) of the NATO Response Force and the 48-hour readiness of the 5,000-strong Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. Together, this restructuring of NATO forces is argued to offer 'renewed emphasis on deterrence and collective defence capabilities, and to maintain our ability to effectively deal with any future challenges'. These measures also include greater flexibility given to the commander of NATO forces in Europe to prepare and execute a response to immediate threats.

THE EU: AN EMERGING SECURITY ACTOR, FREE RIDER OR WEAK LINK?

EU-Russia Relations

Strikingly, the proximate trigger for Russia's efforts to destabilize Ukraine was not related to NATO's action, or inaction, but was rooted in the popular Ukrainian revolution demanding closer association with the EU through the 'Euromaidan' protests. The collapse of the Russian-supported Government in Ukraine prompted a vigorous Russian propaganda campaign, claiming that right-wing forces—supported by the EU and USA—threatened Russian-speaking populations across Ukraine. Mass protests in Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine erupted. Unidentified Russian military personnel (the so-called 'little green men'), supporting local security forces, took control of Crimea, and on 16 March 2014 a referendum in the territory—illegal under the Ukrainian Constitution—was held and used to justify the formal annexation of Crimea by Russia. Subsequently, Russian-backed rebel forces elsewhere in eastern Ukraine sought to establish their own *de facto* states. Bitter fighting throughout 2014 and into 2015 resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and tens of thousands of displaced persons. Peace talks in September 2014 resulted in the Minsk Protocol, which was designed to create a workable ceasefire and establish a peace process. Renewed fighting in early 2015 in the Donbass region and territorial gains by Russian-backed forces, prompted a second round of negotiations, resulting in the Minsk II agreement. However, sporadic fighting continued in 2015, with increasing evidence of both Russian involvement with, and command of, the rebel forces in Ukraine.

For the EU, this crisis has redefined its relations with Russia. The fact that the Russian intervention in Ukraine was directed to thwart Ukraine's closer relationship with the EU, the visible European symbolism in the Euromaidan protest movement and the flagrant breaches of multiple, formal treaty obligations underpinning Europe's post-Cold War security architecture together created a near-existential crisis for the Union's foreign policy. In response, the EU has instituted several rounds of targeted sanctions against Russian officials and selected businesses and business leaders, suspended a wide range of bilateral co-operation frameworks, banned imports from entities based in Crimea and entailed a broader range of substantive sectoral economic sanctions. These sanctions—notwithstanding some rhetorical differences among EU member states—were renewed without debate by EU ministers responsible for foreign affairs in June 2015 for a further period of six months, or until Russia was deemed to be fulfilling its obligations under the Minsk accords.

While the sanctions package has remained solid, it has exposed specific fault lines in EU foreign policy. The significance of close bilateral ties has been evident in the initial reluctance of Bulgaria, Cyprus and Greece to agree to sanctions, while distinctive British, French and German economic interests (in financial services, arms exports and natural gas, respectively) have also shaped EU debates on sanctions. Meanwhile, Poland and the Baltic states, most obviously exposed to, and experienced in, Russian geopolitical ambitions, have publicly criticized what they have seen as the inadequacy of the Union's response. The European Parliament, in a 2015 report, also stated that the Ukraine crisis is simply the most acute of several in which Russia is engaged, noting that 'directly or indirectly, [Russia is] involved in a number of "frozen conflicts" in its neighbourhood—in Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkha-

sia and Nagorno Karabakh' (see *Regional Conflict and European Security*). It is still difficult to assess, at this juncture, what will ultimately govern the Union's relationship with Russia, the 19th-century-style geopolitics of Russia's President Vladimir Putin, or the 21st-century interdependence and rule-of-law focus championed by the EU.

The EU and the Neighbourhood

In May 2015 Federica Mogherini, the Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR-VP) and Head of the European Defence Agency, noted that the security situation in the EU's direct neighbourhood had deteriorated significantly. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), encompassing 16 countries across the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe, was designed to be emblematic of the difference that the EU could make to traditional geopolitics. Its focus on a holistic, long-term engagement with regional partners across a broad range of policy areas such as trade, migration, security, development and human rights would, it was argued, facilitate the development of strong and democratically grounded partners. More than 10 years after its establishment, however, the ENP has visibly failed, with almost all 16 of those states in a more parlous security situation than they were before the inception of the ENP.

In 2015 the EU and HR-VP Mogherini emphasized the nature and scope of the threats facing the Union and its partners. Unlike her immediate predecessor, Catherine Ashton, Mogherini focused less on the virtues of the Union's 'comprehensive' security approach and more on the need for the EU to execute a more effective foreign policy, especially towards the Union's southern borders. She highlighted, in particular, how the conflicts in Syria and Iraq were amplifying the threat emanating from fundamentalist militia group Islamic State, which was so visible in numerous terrorist acts during 2015. She also linked this to the Middle East and the urgent need for a viable peace process, expanding partnership with Israel, and the EU's role as a key donor to the Palestinian Authority and the United Nations (UN) Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, demanding in February 'a collective rethink' on approaches to that conflict.

The most immediate reflection of Europe's challenge in the southern neighbourhood was, however, the migration crisis in the Mediterranean. Migration levels rose sharply in 2014–15, as a result of ongoing and deepening political instability in Libya and Yemen, civil war in Sudan and South Sudan, ethno-religious repression in Eritrea and the ongoing civil war in Syria. In 2014 an estimated 250,000 people attempted the Mediterranean crossing, resulting in over 3,000 deaths. In 2015 that figure was expected to more than double. The death of 800 refugees in a single incident in April 2015 sparked public outrage and new efforts to address the symptoms of the underlying security challenges. Following several, occasionally acrimonious, ministerial meetings, the EU agreed an expanded humanitarian rescue mission in the Mediterranean, a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) naval operation designed to disrupt the work of human traffickers, the resettlement of an additional 20,000 Syrian refugees, as well as the redistribution of 40,000 refugees from Italy and Greece to other EU member states. In the latter decision, the member states refused to agree national quotas—as sought by the Commission—agreeing only to a collective target, with the United Kingdom refusing to accept any allocation within the programme.

The EU and Syria

The Syrian civil war and the associated humanitarian crisis marked its fourth anniversary in 2015. Criticism of the EU's response centred on its proportionality, as the UN estimated in 2015 that over 200,000 people had died, over 6m. were internally displaced and a further 3.8m. had sought refuge overseas—with that figure likely to rise to more than 4.25m. by early 2016. While the EU, together with most other international actors, regarded the origins of the conflict as residing in the brutal military suppression of legitimate political dissent, the Government of President Bashar al-Assad and its allies in Russia and Iran continued to frame it in terms of combating the armed insurrection of militants and foreign forces. Since the

start of the crisis, the EU and its member states have sent some €3,350m. in humanitarian aid and devoted substantial diplomatic efforts towards a political solution. Over the course of 2011–15 a comprehensive European sanctions regime had been put in place, including an armaments embargo (partially lifted in 2013 to assist Syrian opposition groups), extensive economic and trade sanctions, a visa ban and a 'freeze' on the financial assets of specified Syrian government officials, as well as many other restrictions.

During 2015 greater attention was devoted to addressing the specific threat posed by Islamic State in Syria. Several EU member states, the UK, France and Netherlands joined the ad hoc, US-led multilateral coalition pledged to the disruption and destruction of Islamic State in Syria, following the latter's continuing military successes in both Syria and Iraq in 2015. EU policymakers were also focused on the role of those fighting within Islamic State, especially EU citizens, and the threat such individuals pose in their home countries and elsewhere within the Union.

EU Missions and Operations

The Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy—and its associated Common Security and Defence Policy—has, over the last 15 years, facilitated the deployment of 34 security missions on three continents, of which 17 were operational in 2015. The most striking feature of these security endeavours was that civilian missions outnumbered military operations by more than two to one, with 24 civilian missions, nine military operations and one joint mission. Civilian missions usually involve police, judicial or other personnel from the EU member states assisting local agencies in the delivery of domestic or cross-border security. Military operations are usually dealing with active conflict situations that are as yet too fragile to sustain a purely civilian operation. Two major EU military operations have taken place in the Balkans: Operation Concordia (in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia) and EU Force (EUFOR) Operation Althea (in Bosnia and Herzegovina). At their respective high points, these missions had force strengths of several thousand troops each. In Africa, Operation Artemis in 2003 comprised a force of about 2,000 troops sent to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) at the behest of the UN, pending the deployment of a larger UN force. The EU was able to deploy substantial numbers in about three weeks and to transfer the contingent to UN command some three months later. In December 2008 the EU established a naval force, EU NAVFOR (Operation Atalanta), to address ongoing concerns with piracy in the seas surrounding Somalia and the Horn of Africa, which became the EU's first maritime operation and whose mandate was extended in March 2015 to the end of 2016. The EU's 'Bridging Operation' in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) was initiated in March 2008, with the deployment of approximately 3,700 troops as the military component of a UN operation to protect refugees and to support the delivery of humanitarian aid. Many of these troops later transferred to UN command in March 2009, at the conclusion of the EU mandate.

In 2015 the EU was managing 11 civilian security missions (totalling over 4,000 personnel) and six military operations (totalling over 3,000 troops). During 2014–15 the EU launched four new civilian missions: EUCAP Sahel Mali, which was designed to provide strategic advice and training for the three internal security forces in Mali (the police, gendarmerie and national guard); the CSDP EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine (EUAM), which was to assist in the reform of the civilian security sector, police and the rule of law; the EU Military Advisory Mission in the Central African Republic (EUMAM RCA) to support the CAR authorities in reforming their armed forces; and the EU Police Mission for the DRC (EUPOL RDC) to provide assistance, support and advice to the Congolese authorities for security sector reform.

Europe's budgetary and financial crisis has seriously affected the capacity of member states to fulfil their obligations in both NATO and EU security missions. In view of the fall in defence spending (see above), the need to consider greater sharing of military capacity has only increased. In June 2015 EU defence ministers met, in part, to follow up on a special European Council defence summit in 2013. They reviewed the

limited progress in the area, and agreed to request the HR-VP to prepare an EU global strategy on foreign and security policy, which was to be submitted to the European Council in June 2016. They also agreed to continue work on a more effective, visible, and result-orientated common security and defence policy, the further development of both civilian and military capabilities and the strengthening of Europe's defence industry.

Institutional Developments

In an interview published on 8 March 2015, the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, referred to the need for a 'common European army (...) that would help create a common foreign and security policy, and show Europe's responsibility worldwide'. He also placed the proposal firmly in the context of the Ukraine crisis, noting that '... a common army among the Europeans would convey to Russia that we are serious about defending the values of the European Union'. The intervention prompted immediate and largely negative reactions from several European governments and was studiously ignored by most others. Some support was, however, visible from both Germany and France, but the suggestion was not pursued.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) has been operational for five years. It was designed to combine national diplomatic and EU institutional assets in support of a more coherent EU foreign policy. Criticism of the service is well rehearsed: confused reporting structures, ongoing disputes between the EEAS and the European Commission over responsibility, demands from the European Parliament for greater policy input, the (im)balance between national diplomats and career EU officials, allegedly obstructive management structures and the absence of a cadre of strong senior deputies to the High Representative. There is no doubt that the transition from an ideal-type plan for an EU diplomatic corps to the reality of establishing such a diplomatic network from a variety of sources with very different operating cultures has been challenging.

Rather, however, than any particular institutional fix, be it an EU 'army' or the EEAS, the EU continues to suffer from a basic existential division between its Union-centred ambitions and its member state-centred will. In part, this is a function of a lack of a shared understanding of what the Union's international role should be. To that end, Mogherini launched in 2015 a process of 'strategic reflection', which was designed to guide the EU's foreign and security policy, but which was to be created through a broad process that involved member states, EU institutions and the broader foreign policy community, inclusive of academia and research institutes, the media and civil society. Her declared objective was to present the strategic review to the European Council by June 2016, and thereafter potentially bring about the elaboration of a new EU foreign and security policy strategy.

Another key institutional development—reflecting concerns with respect to the role of EU citizens in international terrorist movements—is the creation of new synergies between the EU's internal security policy and its foreign and external security policy. The Union's Internal Security Strategy, adopted by the European Council in December 2014, created new working arrangements between the HR-VP, the EEAS, the European Agency for the Management of Operational Co-operation at the External Borders (FRONTEX) and the European Police Office (Europol), which were developed and further institutionalized in 2015, and which are evident in several CSDP missions and operations (EUFOR RCA and EUCAP Sahel Mali). Links between internal and external security were also pursued in the programming and implementation of several EU-external assistance instruments during 2015.

EUROPE'S KEY SECURITY CONCERNS

Terrorism

The rise of Islamic State has destabilized critical regions in the Middle East and is extending across North Africa both on its own terms and in partnership/alliance with locally grown terrorist groups. Its impact through terrorist and other attacks in member states and against European targets in North

Africa have also highlighted the linkages between external and internal security and most especially the phenomenon of European citizens' active support for such attacks. The high profile attacks in 2015 against the offices of satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris (12 people killed), Copenhagen (two killed) and at the Tunisian resort of Sousse (38 killed) raised threat perceptions in the member states and among the general public.

At the same time, the profile of terrorism remains complex, with four terrorism-related deaths in 2014 compared with seven in 2013. These deaths arose from an attack in Brussels in May of that year, conducted by a religiously inspired individual who had returned from the conflict in Syria. The threat of terrorism remains at the centre of much European security thinking and is increasingly focused on EU citizens and residents travelling to Syria, Iraq and Mali to fight alongside extremist groups. Although only a small number of such returning fighters may be committed to carrying out attacks in the EU, those individuals who have travelled in specific conflict zones are seen as posing a significant threat and may also serve as recruiting agents with combat and operational experience, capable themselves of armed attacks and also acting role models to others.

Europol's 2015 Terrorism Situation and Trend Report noted that the total number of terrorist attacks and terrorism-related arrests in Europe had increased. A total of 201 terrorist attacks were reported in 2014, as well as the arrest of more than 770 individuals for terrorism-related offences. The majority of such arrests were on suspicion of membership of a terrorist cell, but they also included arrests for terrorist propaganda, financing and training. The Europol report notes an ongoing rise from 2011 in arrests for religiously inspired terrorism, while arrests for separatist terrorism have significantly decreased.

Cyber Security and Defence

Cyber security, combating the use of computer networks for criminal purposes, has become a more important feature of the EU's political and security agenda. Estonian government, web and media servers collapsed in 2007 under a sustained cyber attack, which followed the controversial removal of a Soviet-era memorial. In April 2011 member states requested that the European Commission should consider the development of a dedicated centre for cyber crime, building upon the work of the European Network and Information Security Association (ENISA), established in 2005. Earlier, ENISA had noted that member states had neither the information base, warning systems nor remedial strategies effectively to tackle cyber attacks. That agency also published a report on the first pan-European cyber-security exercise, *Cyber Europe 2010*, which simulated a sustained cyber attack on European public networks. The report found substantive weaknesses in cross-border collaboration and potentially serious gaps in how member states responded to a cyber emergency, which could result in the collapse or loss of critical network systems.

In January 2013 the European Cybercrime Centre was established at Europol's headquarters at The Hague, Netherlands. With an annual budget of €3m. and a staff of 55, the Centre's mandate is to tackle all forms of cyber crime, including that which might have a political/military dimension such as attacks on critical infrastructure and information systems in the EU. Its working method is to assist member states' own authorities and to work with international partners. To that end, an early aim of the centre has been to develop a common standard for cyber-crime reporting in order to provide a unified European understanding of the cyber threat and to correlating that data from across Europe, thus identifying critical patterns. In 2013 the European Commission issued its long awaited Cyber Security Strategy in which it proposed a legislative directive on network and information security. Since the formal adoption of the Cyber Security Strategy, questions have been raised, in the light of ongoing revelations surrounding US, British and German intelligence surveillance of European telephony and e-mail traffic, as to why the EU and its member states were so unprepared and unsecured against such threats.

In April 2015 the European Commission published the European Agenda on Security for the period 2015–20. At its

launch, First Vice-President Frans Timmermans declared: 'Terrorism, organized crime, and cybercrime are complex and evolving security challenges that cross European borders. This (strategy is designed) to support Member States' co-operation in tackling security threats and step up our common efforts in the fight against terrorism, organized crime and cybercrime.' With regard to cyber-crime, the aim is to identify means to overcome obstacles to criminal investigations online, notably on issues of competent jurisdiction and rules on access to internet-based evidence and information.

Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

There is no doubt that the issue of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) remains a major one. In particular, the EU security strategy describes the development of an Iranian nuclear military capability as 'a threat to EU security that cannot be accepted', and has sought to engage with the People's Republic of China, Russia and the USA to convince Iran to bring its nuclear programme fully within the non-proliferation regime.

The EU's approach to the proliferation of WMD is defined by a set of basic principles and associated action plan. In that context, the EU has committed itself to insert what is referred to as a 'WMD clause' into all new bilateral agreements. The clause itself commits the partners to implementing their respective non-proliferation obligations as well as—depending on the partner—undertaking additional international commitments and/or strengthening national export controls. However, although this clause has been included in more than 100 agreements since 2003, in practice the clause has either been abbreviated to just the 'essential' first section, has been weakened by internal EU disagreement, or has been dropped entirely—as in the case of India.

Following the UN decision in 2010 to impose a fourth set of sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme, the EU agreed to extend its own sanctions regime designed to persuade Iran to comply with its international obligations and to constrain its development of sensitive technologies in support of its nuclear and missile programmes outside the framework of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) permissions. The EU measures included a ban on new investment, technical assistance and technology transfers to the Iranian gas and oil industries, as well as restrictions on Iranian transportation, banking and insurance sectors, and new visa bans and asset freezes on members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards.

The EU's declared objective is to achieve a negotiated, long-term settlement which guarantees the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme and respects Iran's legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy within the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The EU has taken a leading role in the P5+1 or E3+3 framework, comprising the UK, France and Germany alongside the USA, China and Russia. Over the course of 2015, and working with officials of the Iranian Government under President Hassan Rouhani, negotiations culminated in Geneva in July 2015. The final agreement centred on an incentives package of technological support for Iran's nuclear programme, the normalization of economic relations and other assistance in return for strictly supervised guarantees on the Iranian civil nuclear programme which would forestall development of nuclear weapons.

Regional Conflict and European Security

Throughout 2015 regional conflicts—both active and frozen—continued to have an impact on European security, with the Ukrainian crisis taking centre stage and complicating several others. Significant progress was made towards the resolution of the political impasse between Kosovo and Serbia, while most other stalemated conflicts, such as those in Cyprus, the territory of Transnistria in Moldova, the secessionist regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, and the territory of Nagorny Karabakh disputed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, continued to exercise the attentions of European politicians, diplomats and multilateral institutions. The conflict in Mali, which broke out at the end of 2012, served in particular to highlight serious limitations in both European political will and military capacity as well as to highlight the success of the Union's 'comprehensive' approach to security

Acting unilaterally, but with regional African and UN support, the French intervention of some 3,000 troops in January 2013 successfully re-established Malian government control over the national territory. Alongside regional and multilateral partners, the EU worked closely with Algeria in mediating talks, which successfully led to signing of a peace agreement between most Malian parties on 20 June 2015. In support of short- and longer-term development, the Union provided €300m. of an EU programme (2014–20) estimated at a total €615m. This comprised direct support to the state budget, a project to support food security in the north, a project to support quality and access to education and a project aimed at creating youth employment. EU support for the reform and training of Malian security and defence forces continued in 2015 through the 560-member EU Training Mission for Mali (EUTM Mali), despite ongoing attacks from Ansar Dine and other Islamist militant groups, including al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Meanwhile, in Europe, an agreement signed between Kosovo and Serbia in April 2013, under the aegis of former HR-VP Catherine Ashton, held firm. It provided for local autonomy for Serb-majority regions in Kosovo, the extension of a single police and judicial authority across the country and the dismantling of Serb-sponsored security and political institutions within Kosovo. In 2015 progress on the agreement's implementation plan was markedly slow. Agreement on the principles establishing an Association of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo proved elusive, as did further implementation on the integration of regional telecommunications.

In Georgia, however, little progress towards a resolution of the core dispute was evident, with the Ukraine crisis contributing decisively to a shift in bilateral EU-Georgian relations. The EU and Georgia signed an Association Agreement and a deep and comprehensive free trade agreement in 2014, and implementation proceeded in 2015, with Georgian exports to the EU increasing by 12% during the first six months. The EU Monitoring Mission continued to monitor the situation along the administrative boundaries with the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, while Georgia contributed to CSDP mission EUFOR RCA, with 150 light infantry troops (as its second largest contributor), and also provided two experts to EUTM Mali.

Meanwhile, Russia consolidated its relations with South Ossetia and Abkhazia, signing treaties with both. The bilateral treaty of 'Alliance and Strategic Partnership' with Abkhazia (signed in November 2014) entered into effect in March 2015, while the 'Treaty on Alliance and Integration' between Russia and South Ossetia was signed in the Russian capital, Moscow, on 18 March, the first anniversary of the Russian annexation of Crimea. The provisions of both treaties amount to the effective integration of both territories into the Russian Federation.

The regional security crises outlined above are not of concern in the abstract. They are linked to basic issues of territorial sovereignty and inviolability of borders as well as larger thematic security concerns such as cross-border and organized crime, human trafficking, gross human rights violations, trade in narcotics and political instability. They can also be linked to other thematic security concerns such as energy. Instability in the South Caucasus, for example, threatens European petroleum and gas supplies from the Caspian Sea, as was demonstrated in August 2008 when petroleum company BP suspended the operations of the Tbilisi–Supsa pipeline in Georgia owing to the Russian–Georgian conflict. It is estimated that, within 20 years, three-quarters of all of Europe's oil and gas supplies will have to be imported and EU member states have already acknowledged their dangerous reliance on a single supplier.

GEOPOLITICAL CONCLUSIONS

In a world where the global legal order is thin and often fragile, we continue to rely heavily on older legal foundations of territorial sovereignty. In Europe, the very cradle of the Westphalian state model, challenges to that order are all the more shocking. Russia's decision to annex Crimea—regardless of its perceived geostrategic justification—poses a stark and undeniable challenge to the post-Cold War order. While Russia

cannot pose the kind of strategic threat offered at great domestic cost by the USSR, it is a significant regional actor. European states, bilaterally and multilaterally (through the EU, NATO, the OSCE and the Council of Europe), also have a vested interest in restoring normal relations with Russia. However, Russia's actions towards and within Ukraine are unparalleled in modern times and have forced a fundamental re-evaluation across European foreign and defence ministries of contemporary assumptions about the nature of modern security and European territorial defence.

Fundamental questions surrounding European security and defence must now be answered. Who is to deliver European security and territorial defence? How does Europe balance its declared commitments to democracy, freedom and justice with its interests in regional stability and security? Indeed, is there even a balance to be struck? Is European security to continue to

be based on the defence guarantee provided through NATO by the USA? Is that guarantee credible if it is overwhelmingly dependent on the US contribution? How best and how soon can European security be based on greater European ownership and responsibility for its own security and defence? Is there either the will or the capacity for Europe to bear that substantial burden in the light of its own profound fiscal, monetary and budgetary crises? Finally, how can NATO best respond to an invasion and occupation scenario—as in Ukraine—where the military personnel are unidentified and are supported by a significant share of the local population?

These are quite basic questions, over which there has not been sufficient debate and which now face many European states in a direct and forcible way. While Europe continues to focus on issues of immediate security concern, it now has no choice but to address these larger issues.