

## EU-NATO cooperation and European defence after the Warsaw Summit

### SUMMARY

On 6 December 2016 the Council of the EU adopted conclusions on implementing the EU-NATO Joint Declaration, signed at NATO's Warsaw Summit in July 2016, which aims to strengthen cooperation in a number of critical areas. The conclusions endorse over 40 concrete proposals made by the High Representative/Vice President, Federica Mogherini, and NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg.

The implementation of the joint declaration is one of three components of a wider defence package aimed at boosting integration in the area of security and defence. The package – submitted to the European Council of 15 and 16 December 2016 in Brussels – also includes measures to implement the security and defence aspects of the Global Strategy, as well as the Commission's European Defence Action Plan in support of the defence industry, both of which were presented in November 2016.

The EU-NATO Joint Declaration holds the potential to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two organisations with concrete actions, but financial concerns, the will of Member States, and recent political developments are challenges that need to be addressed for its successful implementation.



### In this briefing:

- A new chapter in EU-NATO relations
- Background
- The 2016 Warsaw Summit and EU-NATO relations
- EU defence after the Global Strategy: Where does NATO fit?
- Potential challenges
- Main references

## A new chapter in EU-NATO relations

The European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) share longstanding mutual interests and face common threats, but developing the EU-NATO relationship while respecting the independent nature of both organisations has been an ongoing challenge. The latest effort to establish a framework for cooperation is the [EU-NATO Warsaw Joint Declaration](#) signed at the July 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw. The document is timely, as Europe faces a number of challenges, including worsening relations with Russia, the growing threat of [terrorism](#), the increasing strain of migration flows into Europe, and general political uncertainty throughout the continent. On 6 December 2016 the [Council of the EU](#) and the [NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs](#) simultaneously endorsed a set of 42 concrete proposals for the implementation of the declaration. The proposals, which were presented by the High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP), Federica Mogherini, and NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, aim to implement the EU-NATO Joint Declaration in a practical and concrete manner, and to boost EU-NATO cooperation.

The joint declaration came one month after the presentation of the [EU Global Strategy](#) by Mogherini in June 2016. The Global Strategy aims to guide EU external action within the current security and political landscape, and promotes a comprehensive and collective response to challenges such as the conflict in Syria, sanctions on Russia, fragility across Africa, or the fight against terrorism and hybrid threats. As the EU and NATO [cooperate](#) closely on a number of these issues, the two documents are intrinsically relevant to each other. The implementation plan for the joint declaration was presented only weeks after the [Implementation Plan on Security and Defence](#) which sets out proposals to implement the EU Global Strategy, and a week after the presentation of the [European Defence Action Plan](#). The three initiatives combined constitute a defence package aimed at reinforcing European cooperation in this area, to move towards more effective and efficient European security and defence. The three plans have been submitted to the European Council of 15 and 16 December 2016.

## Background

### EU-NATO relations beyond the Cold War

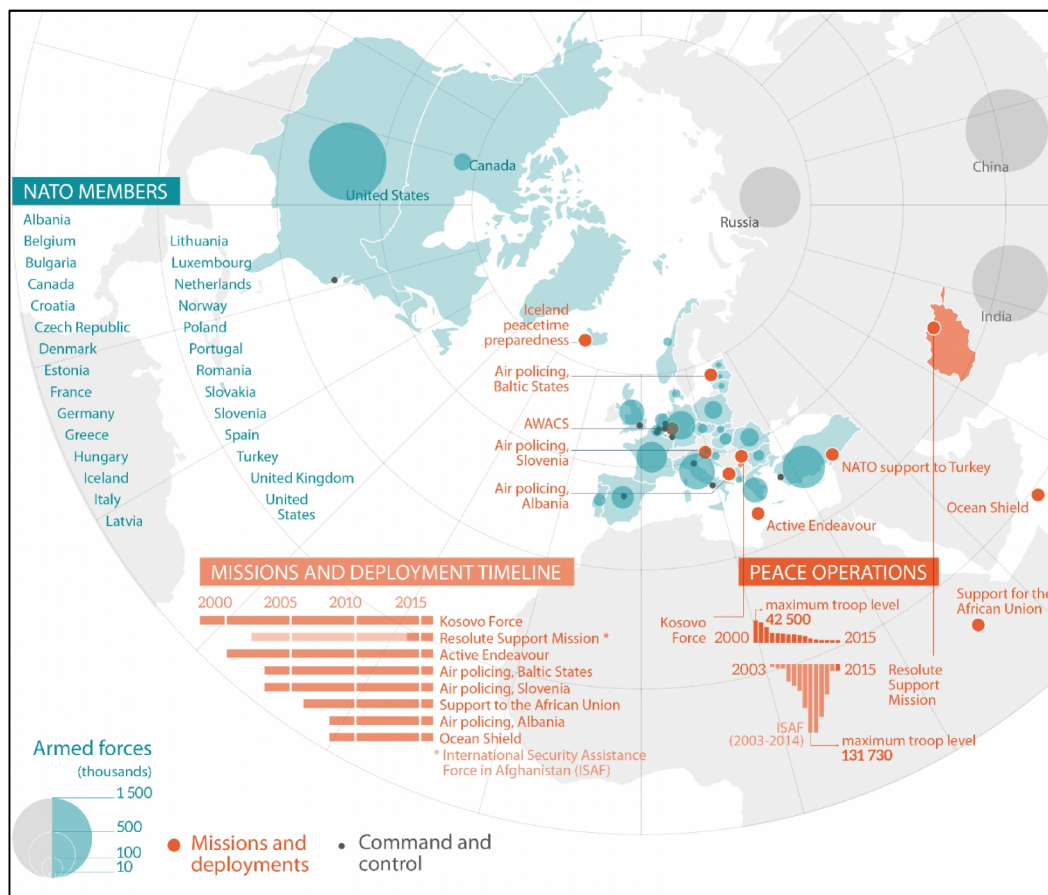
Economic and political integration within Europe developed over the course of the Cold War. But for defence and security integration, the transatlantic dimension, through the NATO alliance, was central to security in western Europe over that period. The fundamental changes following the end of the Cold War created new opportunities for integration in security and defence policy, while also calling NATO's purpose into question. Instability in Europe quickly put these discussions on hold. As one commentator put it at the time, Europe was on a '[strategic vacation](#)' when political crisis erupted into armed conflict in the Western Balkans. The breakup of Yugoslavia and subsequent wars in Europe's backyard [showed](#) that the EU was slow to act in unified response to crises, while NATO took the prominent role.

The memory of the conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later in Kosovo had a lasting [impact](#) on decisions to further EU security and defence integration, and to strengthen the tools available for conflict prevention and crisis management. The [Petersberg Tasks](#), agreed in 1992 (and incorporated into the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999), laid out conditions for the deployment of military units for EU humanitarian, peacekeeping, and crisis management operations. In 1998, [the Saint Malo Declaration](#) was signed by the

United Kingdom and France, opening the door to intensifying European integration on defence and security policies in conjunction with NATO.

Following early institutional agreements between NATO and the Western European Union (WEU), the [2002 NATO-EU Declaration on a European Security and Defence Policy](#) set the foundation for building a more strategic partnership between the EU and NATO. To this end, the '[Berlin Plus](#)' arrangements were agreed upon in 2003 establishing the parameters for when and how the EU could use NATO assets for EU-led peacekeeping and crisis management operations. 'Berlin Plus' was quickly put to use in December 2003, when [Operation Concordia](#) took over from [Operation Allied Harmony](#) in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The second and last time the EU made use of NATO assets in the 'Berlin Plus' framework was [EUFOR Althea](#), replacing [NATO's Stabilisation Force \(SFOR\)](#) peacekeeping operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2004.

**Figure 1 – NATO presence and exercises within and beyond Europe**



Data: NATO, SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database.

In the past ten years NATO has developed its [operations](#) inside and outside Europe. Since Cyprus joined the EU in 2005, the ongoing dispute between Turkey (a non-EU NATO member) and Cyprus (a non-NATO EU Member State) has [hindered](#) any further cooperation between the two organisations in the 'Berlin Plus' format. As a result, NATO and the EU have learned to cooperate informally. While there has been no formal cooperation in the context of 'Berlin Plus' since 2004, the EU and NATO regularly rely on [informal cooperation](#) when operations coincide. This has been the case in Kosovo, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa and most recently in the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>1</sup>

### Developments in NATO

Recent development of the NATO agenda can be traced by following the agenda of [NATO Summits](#), which are held periodically at the level of heads of state or government for members to determine strategy and priorities of the organisation.

As early as 2012, the year of the Chicago Summit, NATO was beginning to address fundamental questions regarding its role after a period of out-of-area activity following the 9/11 terror attacks in the USA. The alliance was preparing for a transition into a support role by transferring security responsibility in Afghanistan to local security forces. Alliance members were also dealing with the global financial crisis, and the impact of austerity on defence [budgets](#). European NATO allies [spent](#) an average of 1.6 % of GDP on defence, and the USA accounted for 72 % of all NATO defence budgets. The Chicago Summit partially addressed this problem by launching the [Smart Defence Initiative \(SDI\)](#), a set of long-term projects to increase efficiency and cost effectiveness in the alliance's procurement and activities. Shrinking defence budgets and existential questions about NATO's role in the world laid the foundation for the issues addressed in 2014 and beyond.

When the 2014 [Wales Summit](#) was first announced in 2013, there was a clear set of issues for NATO to [address](#). The future role of NATO in Afghanistan as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan reached its conclusion, defence spending of NATO members, and increasing transnational threats from instability in the Middle East. However, the Wales Summit took on new meaning in the months leading up to the meeting after [Russia's annexation of Crimea](#) and aggression in eastern Ukraine. NATO still decided on the next steps in Afghanistan, including a training and advisory mission, and [pledged](#) to reverse the decline in defence expenditure. However, the situation in Ukraine brought territorial defence back to the top of the agenda. The NATO-EU [relationship](#) was also re-emphasised as a key partnership to counter [hybrid](#) threats.

### Developments in the EU

The parallel quest for deeper EU cooperation in foreign affairs, including in security and defence, was enshrined in the [Lisbon Treaty](#), in which EU Member States agreed to codify their common efforts on external relations, and to further strengthen the EU's capacity to act autonomously in security and defence. The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) [incorporated](#) the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and other agreements for deepening security cooperation into the Treaty framework. Under CSDP, there are 35 ongoing or completed [operations](#), however logistical issues still arise without a permanent command structure. Of the 35 missions and operations, 21 have been civilian missions, a noted strength of EU action abroad. Bridging the gap between the military and civilian nexus, especially in the context of CSDP missions and operations, also remains a challenge.

To this end, the [European Council](#) held a meeting on security and defence in 2013 to set out a path to strengthen EU security and defence cooperation. The meeting took place against a backdrop of similar issues faced by NATO, in particular declining defence budgets and the need to approach spending on defence in a smart and efficient manner. The December 2013 European Council [concluded](#) that the CSDP and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) were not being utilised to their full capacity as set out in the Lisbon Treaty. The European Council followed up on this in June 2015 by mandating the HR/VP to initiate a new, comprehensive global strategy for external action.

## The 2016 Warsaw Summit and EU-NATO relations

Many of the issues concerning NATO's future remained on the [Warsaw](#) agenda in 2016 but additional challenges to Euro-Atlantic security included rising terrorism and unprecedented migrant and refugee flows from the Middle East. A major outcome of the Summit was the agreement to intensify NATO's deterrence posture by [increasing](#) the alliance's military presence in the east. The first steps include deploying multinational battle groups in each of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. In the Middle East, allies pledged to further capacity-building efforts in Iraq, to support the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL by deploying surveillance aircraft to gather intelligence, and to maintain Operation Resolute Support in Afghanistan beyond 2016. It was also decided to expand NATO's presence in the Mediterranean Sea, especially in cooperation with [EUNAVFOR MED](#) (Operation Sophia). The EU-NATO [Joint Declaration](#) was seen as bolstering a vital partnership to face the current security climate. Among the potential areas of cooperation, it specifically identifies the need to bolster resilience for countering hybrid threats, broaden and adapt operational cooperation at sea and on migration, improve coordination on cyber-security and defence, develop interoperable defence capabilities of EU Member States and alliance members, strengthen the defence industry, increase coordination on exercises between the two organisations (envisioned in 2017 and 2018), and build up the defence and security capacity of partners in the east and south.

The range of decisions made at the Warsaw Summit reflects the division of [interests](#) and priorities within the alliance, which has been exacerbated by the sudden focus to the east as a result of Russian aggression. On the eastern flank, alliance members are especially alarmed by Russian aggression in Ukraine (having already been concerned by Russia's actions in other former Soviet states). Polish President Andrzej Duda [called](#) for a permanent NATO presence in Poland almost immediately after being sworn in. Stationing NATO troops has a deterrence effect against Russia, but [concern](#) remains over the ability to counter the hybrid tactics used by Russia in Ukraine. These same tactics could also be used by Russia to [undermine](#) the credibility of NATO. The Warsaw decision on rotating NATO battlegroups in the east only came reluctantly, after lesser measures had been taken in 2014, as some older NATO members remain sceptical about NATO actions that might provoke Russia. At the same time, both NATO and EU members in the south face [migrant flows](#) from the Middle East, mostly via Turkey, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean Sea. Instability in the Middle East has also led to the emergence of a number of transnational threats, most notably the [rise](#) of ISIL/Da'esh (or 'Islamic State'). Within the alliance, Turkey, France and Belgium have been victims of terror attacks directly linked to the group since 2014, while attacks with some or indirect connections to ISIL/Da'esh have also taken place in other NATO members.

## EU defence after the Global Strategy: Where does NATO fit?

The enhancement of cooperation with NATO is part of a greater effort to strengthen, streamline and optimise EU defence, consistent with calls by the Council of the EU and the [European Parliament](#). In June 2016, Federica Mogherini [unveiled](#) the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) document to the European Council. It sets a comprehensive vision for EU external action in the coming years. Like [previous](#) strategy documents, it describes an EU taking responsibility [for its own defence](#), and forging policy that is complementary and not in competition with NATO. A main aspect addressed in the EUGS is security and defence. The Global Strategy views NATO as the 'primary framework' of collective and territorial defence for most Member States, but acknowledges that the EU must improve

its ability to act autonomously as a security actor. This includes improving organisation, training, and establishing permanent institutional structures. As the HR/VP has affirmed, the development of EU security and defence policy is not about the creation of a [European army](#) but about how the EU can assist Member States to contribute to security and defence at the European level, including through cooperation with NATO.

In October 2016, Mogherini [chaired](#) a meeting of the 28 EU defence ministers in Bratislava to discuss implementation of the EU Global Strategy and the EU-NATO Joint Declaration. On 14 November 2016, the EUGS [Implementation Plan on Security and Defence](#) was [presented](#) to EU ministers. The plan outlines 13 action points to implement the security and defence aspects of the EUGS in order to achieve the full potential of the EU Treaties in response to external

crises and challenges. NATO is cited consistently throughout the plan as a key partner and as 'the foundation for the collective defence for those States which are members of it'. A central point of the plan is that 'Member States have a "single set of forces" which they can use nationally or in multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations, NATO, EU or ad hoc coalitions ... The development of Member States' capabilities through CSDP and using EU instruments will thus also help to strengthen capabilities potentially available to the United Nations and NATO. Mutual reinforcement, complementarity and coherence will be ensured, including through the implementation of the Joint Declaration'. Other relevant points include the provisions for coherence with NATO's Defence Planning Process; standardisation in defence research and technology in coherence with NATO; avoidance of duplication of NATO structures in the planning and conduct of military missions and operations; seeking synergies with other high-readiness initiatives, notably within NATO, in order to improve the usability and deployability of the EU's rapid response toolbox; cooperation with NATO, strategically in areas of mutual interest, and operationally in areas where the EU and NATO are both deployed, as well as on military-capability development.

On 15 November 2016, the HR/VP and NATO's Secretary-General [presented](#) their package of 42 proposals for the implementation of the joint declaration to EU defence ministers in Brussels. The proposals, which focus on boosting EU-NATO defence cooperation in areas corresponding to the seven areas outlined by the declaration, were presented to the EU Foreign Affairs Council and to the NATO Ministers of Foreign Affairs on 6 December 2016. They include a variety of instruments for cooperation in the seven areas mentioned in the joint declaration, including in information-sharing, strategic communications, bolstering resilience, interoperability, defence capabilities (including maritime and aviation), defence research and industry, and capacity-building. In their endorsement of the proposals, both bodies emphasised that nations only have a 'single set of forces' and that the two organisations can enable them – through the right tools – to use them more efficiently towards more security in Europe.

#### Relevant European Parliament resolutions

- Resolution on the [implementation](#) of the Common Security and Defence Policy (23 November 2016)
- Resolution on the [European Defence Union](#) (22 November 2016)
- Resolution on the [mutual defence clause](#) (Article 42(7) TEU) (21 January 2016)
- Resolution on the [impact](#) of developments in European defence markets on security and defence capabilities in Europe (21 May 2015)
- Resolution(s) on the [implementation](#) and [financing](#) of the Common Security and Defence Policy (21 May 2015)

The third part of the defence package, the **European Defence Action Plan**, was [presented](#) by the European Commission on 30 November 2016. It proposes a European Defence Fund and other actions to support Member States spend more efficiently in joint defence capabilities, strengthen European citizens' security, and foster a competitive and innovative industrial base. It explicitly states that its actions will lead to a stronger EU in defence, which ultimately means a stronger NATO. It underlines that complementarity with NATO should be ensured, inter alia, through the implementation of the joint declaration, which, as mentioned, includes proposals on research and industry.

In November 2016 the **European Parliament** adopted two major resolutions, on European Defence Union and on the Implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy. The former [calls for](#) more spending (2 % of GDP) and a more fair and transparent defence industry. It highlights compatibility and cooperation with NATO, particularly in the east and the south, to counter hybrid and cyber threats, improve maritime security and develop defence capabilities and welcomes the joint declaration. However, it also states that 'the EU should aspire to be truly able to defend itself and act autonomously if necessary, taking greater responsibility' in cases where NATO is not willing to take the lead. The second [resolution](#) calls for an overhaul of CSDP to better allow the EU to act autonomously for collective security and defence. It also supports the creation of a permanent headquarters for the EU to command peacekeeping and crisis-management operations under the CSDP. This resolution also emphasises transatlantic cooperation and complementarity with NATO but notes that the EU should be able, using its own means, to protect EU non-NATO-members. It also underlines the fact that 'NATO is best equipped for deterrence and defence, and is ready to implement collective defence (Article V of the Washington Treaty) in the case of aggression against one of its members, while the CSDP has its current focus on peace-keeping, conflict prevention and strengthening international security' as a basis for complementarity.

### Potential challenges

In spite of their 22 common members, the EU and NATO have long had a complex relationship. With rising security threats and defence concerns, the time is now considered critical for strengthening their mutual partnership. From an EU perspective, security and defence has been given new impetus through the EU Global Strategy and other [initiatives](#). NATO has a revitalised purpose centred on territorial defence and on countering a range of threats to the Euro-Atlantic community. The question at hand is how the two can move forward as partners to address the threats and challenges that both are currently facing, without stumbling over political and other obstacles. In spite of the current momentum, a number of challenges can be expected.

The financial constraint on defence budgets remains. The reduction in defence budgets continues, but the rate of decline is [down](#) to 0.4 %, compared to the height of the financial crisis when cuts amounted to around 4 %-6 %. NATO pledged to commit at least 2 % of GDP to defence, and a similar goal for EU Member States is being debated.

Another important issue that needs to be addressed better is the [fragmentation](#) of the European defence industry. [Pooling and sharing](#) in the EU, and Smart Defence in NATO, are programmes established to address this, and could be further utilised to achieve more efficient use of resources.

Political will remains a challenge for deepening security and defence cooperation, and current political uncertainty adds a new dimension to this. The views from [national capitals](#) on security vary, while each face different internal and external challenges, making synergy at the EU/NATO level more difficult to achieve. France and Germany, for

example, have strong [views](#) on how EU defence should evolve, as well as on the role of NATO in European security.

The United Kingdom's vote to leave the EU and Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election create further uncertainty in the security sphere. The United Kingdom is a top European defence spender, but also a more critical voice on security and defence integration. [Some analysts](#) argue that a complete UK withdrawal [could](#) allow for deeper EU security and defence policy, but it remains to be seen what role the United Kingdom will play in European security. The US President-elect has caused uncertainty within NATO after [indicating](#) that he would only help alliance members who paid their fair share. NATO's Secretary-General has stated that he is [confident](#) that President-elect Trump would remain committed to the alliance, but [doubts](#) over the commitment of the American leadership remain.

Turkey may also prove to be a factor in EU-NATO cooperation. During the European Parliament's November 2016 [plenary](#) session, MEPs debated a [resolution](#) on freezing accession talks after the deterioration of democracy following the failed coup attempt in July. Yet, [Turkey](#) is a longstanding NATO member and has its second largest military forces after the USA.

Finally, the Warsaw Summit [left](#) several central matters in EU-NATO cooperation to be addressed. These include the details of a strategy toward the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the south in general, as well as possibly in the Arctic. How much the implementation of the declaration will improve EU-NATO cooperation will ultimately depend on EU Member States and NATO allies, as well as on building trust and on striking the right [balance](#) in the partnership.

## Main reference

Graeger, N., 'Security. EU-NATO Relations: Informal Cooperation as a Common Lifestyle', in: *The long-term political action of the EU with(in) international organisations*, Taylor Francis, 2016.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Kosovo (EULEX and NATO's KFOR), Afghanistan (EUPOL and NATO's ISAF), anti-piracy operations around the Horn of Africa (EUFOR-Atalanta and NATO's Ocean Shield), and in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED/Operation Sophia and NATO's Sea Guardian).

## Disclaimer and Copyright

The content of this document is the sole responsibility of the author and any opinions expressed therein do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament. It is addressed to the Members and staff of the EP for their parliamentary work. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

© European Union, 2016.

Photo credits: © luzitanija / Fotolia.

[eprs@ep.europa.eu](mailto:eprs@ep.europa.eu)

<http://www.eprs.ep.parl.union.eu> (intranet)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank> (internet)

<http://epthinktank.eu> (blog)

