

**PESCO AS THE MODERN DEFENSE INITIATIVE OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION:
POSITIONS OF WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
VS
POSITIONS OF EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

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Abstract

The EU member states' modern security initiatives, realized by the defence alliance for Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) have been found out. PESCO implementation process was initiated and headed by France and Germany. The countries proposed a step-by-step approach to strengthening defence capabilities and operational commitments to increase the overall defence efforts of United Europe. Allegedly, nowadays there are many practical problems and challenges on the way to the successful implementation of PESCO. Its successful overcoming will be facilitated

by the ability of initiator countries to deal with short-term operational issues. The differences in the strategic culture and models of European defence, the long-term priorities of some member states also will have significant importance for the long-term perspective of the successful functioning of PESCO.

Key words: *European Union, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), security*

THE RELEVANCE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

The establishment of cooperation and joint action by the EU countries to guarantee regional and global security are particularly relevant in the light of modern geopolitical, military and information threats and challenges to international and European security. Three key factors of the EU's security and defense policy initiatives revival are highlighted. Firstly, there is considerable destabilization of the EU's geopolitical and security environment. There should be mentioned Ukrainian conflict, tense relations with Russia, mainly of the Baltic States, and hidden energy insecurity on the eastern flanks of the Union. There are increased jihadist terrorism and mass migration from different regions of the Middle East and North Africa, and especially from Syria, on the southern flanks. Secondly, the United Kingdom as one of the security "heavyweights" of Europe exits from the EU. Thirdly, the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential election raised the question of the future of transatlantic security partnership. Donald Trump became the first US president who expressed an unorthodox point of view on the US role in NATO, openly questioning its existence [Beckmann, Kempin 2017]. The theses of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel "we Europeans must take our fortune, we must fight for our future, for our destiny as Europeans" [Allen, Mulholland 2017] and the German Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen "Brexit and the US elections have opened our eyes. Europeans should take more responsibility for their security" sound reasonable considering these factors and considering generally the situation when hybrid threats and transnational terrorism are increasingly emerging in the global security field [Koenig, Walter-Franke 2017].

Taking into account the fact that the EU wants to be a more important player in the global political arena, its member states are eager for their share of participation. The EU has chosen a geostrategic approach to global affairs, adopting the EU Global Strategy in June 2016. It establishes four 'common interests': (i) promoting peace and security, both internal and external, as security outside Europe and within it are closely intertwined; (ii) prosperity, which requires an open and fair international economic system and continuous access to common global resources, taking into account Europe's economic dependence on trade and the need for the unimpeded delivery of natural resources; (iii) promoting the resilience of the Union democratic countries and respect for its norms and values; and (iv) promoting a rules-based global order with the multilateralism as a key principle [Council Conclusions on Implementing the EU Global Strategy in the Area of Security and Defence 2016; Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy 2016]. Certainly, the EU needs to use all the tools it has at its disposal to promote itself and protect its interests. In this case, the researchers argue security is not just a matter of defence. It also concerns trade and energy policy, development assistance and other EU instruments used to

strengthen security. Neither the military potential should be neglected. Although the EU is strong in trade policy, development, economic and financial assistance or sanctions, it is predominantly weak in military strength [Camporini, Hartley, Maulny, Zandee 2017]. In this context, some EU member states intend to continue to rely on NATO for all defence capabilities, enhancing them, while others seek to use their sovereignty and enhance defence capabilities bilaterally and within the EU [DeMint 2018]. Their modern security initiatives have been embodied in the implementation of the defence union for Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

The European Council summit was held in Brussels on 22-23 June 2017. The summit decisions have direct implications for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The key summit decision was the approval of the EU military integration. France, Germany and the European Commission leaders (first of all European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini) have successfully used the opportunity to make changes. The summit communiqué and EU leaders' statements made clear the intention to step up military integration [Moldovan 2017]. Integration should cover the institutional sphere, defence and industrial complex, the EU arms and military equipment market. PESCO should be the core of such integration [European Council meeting (22 and 23 June 2017) - Conclusions 2017], which was finally approved at the European Council meeting on 14 December 2017, bringing together 25 the EU member states (except the United Kingdom, Denmark and Malta) [European Council meeting (14 December 2017) – Conclusions 2017].

On top of that, the EU increases defence funding. The European Commission plans to spend € 500 million from the European Defence Fund on these goals in 2019 and 2020, and to bring the annual funding up to € 1 billion by 2020 [A European Defence Fund: €5.5 billion per year to boost Europe's defence capabilities 2017]. However, this amount seems symbolic and cannot fully ensure the effective functioning of PESCO, comparing to the United States, China or Russia, which spend several hundred billion dollars annually on defence. Specific recommendations are needed to coordinate the EU member states' armed forces and increase their defence capability to increase the Union's defence capability.

PESCO members have approved a list of 17 joint projects in December 2017. It is about the efforts to strengthen cooperation in narrowly defined areas, each with different groups of participants. These projects are divided into two categories. The first group is devoted to operational dimension; these projects are aimed to improve participation in the Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations (for example, in Crisis Response Operations). The second group projects are aimed at developing capacity (for example, a marine project on (semi-) autonomous mines action systems). Some countries' contributions and the nature of PESCO projects indicate focusing on crisis response in southern Europe. Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece are involved in the largest number of projects (9-16). Member states from Central Europe participate in 1 to 4 projects on the average; similarly to the Nordic countries (Sweden and Finland take part in three projects each). Only Lithuania and Slovakia are the leading countries in the two projects [Gotkowska 2018].

Therefore, current and future defence initiatives' implementation have been discussed since their initiation, especially between initiating countries representatives (France and Germany) and Eastern European countries and between those who support NATO and those who argue for the need to strengthen the EU's

defence capability. The intensification of such discussions actualises a comprehensive study of the modern defence initiatives within the European region and their prospects in the context of the security strategies of the countries of Western and Eastern Europe.

1. THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

This study draws on research conducted on identifying contemporary security (which are mainly hybrid) threats facing the EU countries as well as on analyzing proposals and initiatives regarding the search for new cooperation instruments, mechanisms formation and new institutions construction aimed at overcoming modern geopolitical and security challenges. In this context, it is a question of rethinking the post-Westphalian identity, the identity formed after World War II and the Cold War, the identity emerging after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014. There is a rapidly growing literature on the security efforts of combination/dismemberment in the European and Euro-Atlantic area between NATO and the EU [Apetroe, Gheorghe 2018; Drent 2018; DeMint 2018], and, consequently, discussions on the new defence initiatives prospects. Researchers develop the claim that PESCO is one of the unification instruments for states which have conflicting or incompatible security strategies [Blockmans 2018; Boháček 2018; France, Major, Sartori, 2017]. PESCO is interpreted as embodying the EU's strong desire to act as an important military player. But there are many sceptical visions of the future, and some researchers put forward the view that PESCO does not bring fundamental changes [Howorth 2018; Seitz 2018].

The studies analyzing and comparing the states' positions on PESCO should also be noted. We mean positions of Germany, France, the countries of Eastern Europe that are considering the development of military cooperation within the EU, including PESCO, taking into account their national interests and international positioning [Billon-Galland, Quencez 2017; Gotkowska 2017; Gotkowska 2018; Kempin, Kunz 2017; Keohane 2017; Koenig, Walter-Franke 2017]. In general, researchers make attempts to answer the EU defence initiatives future questions concerning modern security challenges in various dimensions and areas.

Separately, it is necessary to highlight the reviewed EU legal acts, the EU and states' leaders' statements, which indicate the ideas and peculiarities of implementation of defence initiatives [Allen, Mulholland 2017; Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). FR/DE/ES/IT Proposals on the necessary commitments and elements for an inclusive and ambitious PESCO, supported by BE, CZ, FI and NL 2017; Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the Defence and Security Conference Prague: In defence of Europe 2017; Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy 2016; European Council meeting (22 and 23 June 2017) - Conclusions 2017; European Council meeting (14 December 2017) – Conclusions 2017; Letter of intent concerning the development of a European intervention initiative (EI2) 2018].

Therefore, these and other issues have become the subject of researchers' interest, including Western and Eastern European, other countries scholars. At the same time, the relatively few researches on comparing the positions of PESCO initiator states both among themselves and with the positions of the states with a restrained attitude towards such initiatives should be taken into account.

2. WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' PESCO INITIATIVE DISCUSSIONS

Jean-Claude Juncker called PESCO 'the Lisbon Treaty sleeping beauty' [Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the Defence and Security Conference Prague: In defence of Europe 2017]. Indeed, the defence alliance idea, as outlined in the Lisbon Treaty *acquis communautaire*, was discussed many times, but member states were not able to agree on its implementation criteria and peculiarities [Gotkowska 2017]. France and Germany have been able to awaken this "beauty" and are leading PESCO implementation process these days. PESCO is a voluntary, inclusive, result-oriented, and legally binding framework for defence cooperation, with an ambitious commitment addressing the most important security and defence challenges.

PESCO members join this union, despite the different approaches to security policy and attitudes towards the development of military cooperation within the EU. For example, on the one hand, PESCO is joined by the Baltic States and Poland, which support NATO, on the other hand, by Austria and Finland, which are not members of the Alliance.

Originally, France pursued extremely ambitious military objectives in the development of the EU's security and defence policy by initiating PESCO. It is about strengthening the military capabilities of participating countries, so they can carry out crisis management operations in the southern regions (Africa and the Middle East), using the EU instruments, structures and financial resources. In the case of Germany, the political dimension of the approach to initiating PESCO was manifested in the desire of this state to support French initiatives for closer European integration at least in one of the spheres, as well as to demonstrate the French-German tandem functionality in the EU. Berlin's desire to show the new US administration the European willingness to take more responsibility for its security and that it can invest more in military cooperation was equally important. Of equal significance, there are also anti-American sentiments, widespread in German society, and ideas about the need to strengthen NATO are unpopular. The question of strengthening industrial cooperation in the EU defence sector also plays a crucial role for Germany, as it is considered beneficial for German defence companies [Gotkowska 2018].

Italy and Spain are also supporters of deepening European defence cooperation, mainly because of the deteriorating security situation at their southern borders, which affects their internal security. For example, Italy sees no real or potential contradiction between a clear NATO commitment and genuine support for deeper military co-operation within the EU [Keohane 2017]. It is also important that these countries seek to "share the burden" of solving the problems with other EU members. Sweden, Finland, the Baltic States and Romania also strongly support the new defence initiatives potential development but are more cautious about the issue of an autonomous EU military command and any other initiative which may call into question the NATO benefits in Europe. All of these countries prefer to avoid further fragmentation of the EU and at the same time to maintain a NATO leading role in European defence [Varga 2017].

The EU member states different points of view have led Germany and France to offer a step-by-step approach enhancing defence capabilities and operational commitments as a means of enhancing the United Europe common defence effort [Billon-Galland, Quencez 2017]. This step-by-step approach will allow the EU member states further cooperation in the defence sphere as intended by two initiating states. The EU countries will be able to develop new commonalities, without

highlighting the significant differences in the vision of the ultimate goals of such cooperation. Thus, such an initiative has fostered optimism sense among Brussels officials and officials from some European capitals in nowadays complex political and institutional environment of the EU. At the same time, there is a caution degree in their statements on the future of the initiative, given the numerous unsuccessful attempts to develop a serious EU defence cooperation project.

The French-German strategic partnership has taken on new dimensions after the victory of the ambitious Emmanuel Macron in the French presidential election. “I want to overcome the stereotype about France, responsible for international affairs, but mired in its internal problems, and about Germany - economically powerful but naive in the face of global threats” - stressed Emmanuel Macron to overcome the old stereotypes in Berlin on January 10, 2017 [Koenig, Walter-Franke 2017]. The defence issues led to the bilateral cooperation agenda. The plan to joint work on “a new generation of fighters” was announced following the French-German Defence and Security Council meeting on July 2017 [Hepher, Thomas 2017]. Both countries have also reaffirmed their support for the EU defence package and have indicated their desire to see the rapid results of such cooperation.

According to the aforementioned, PESCO cooperation programs must meet the highest excellence criteria. These are high-end missions and ‘first-entry’ capability in operations, either in a coalition with the United States, or within NATO, or in a special coalition. Reference is made to the joint production of European fighter jets by France and Germany, naval patrol aircraft for ocean surveillance missions, or European missile defence. PESCO programs can help to develop equipment, which are traditionally shipped from outside the EU, especially from the US. The 10% bonus provided by the European Defence Fund for PESCO programs is a good incentive for other countries to join this cooperation form with extended commitments [Camporini, Hartley, Maulny, Zandee 2017].

However, there were serious disputes between the two countries regarding PESCO until June 2017. Thus, official Paris and Berlin are promoting two different initiative visions. On the one hand, French is focusing on the project ambition and effectiveness potential and insist on high entry criteria and strong operational commitments. On the other hand, Germans view PESCO through the European integration lens, insist on the project inclusivity, warning that setting too high standards for participation in PESCO could strengthen existing disparities, and create new ones within the EU and between many member states. Therefore, Germany has proposed projects also aimed at strengthening cooperation and capacity in non-military areas (such as training, arms, medical supplies and logistics). After all, Germany itself has become a leading country in four projects and has been involved in seven more. On the other hand, France, despite passionate PESCO supporting, eventually became a leading country in only two projects and participated in four [Gotkowska 2018].

Security initiatives ambitions of France are reflected in the fact that President Emmanuel Macron in September 2017 put forward another idea – the creation of European Intervention Initiative, based on the common military force, strategic culture and military doctrine and budgetary instruments. The initiative aims to complement France's bilateral military cooperation with Germany and the United Kingdom. This is likely to mean enhanced cooperation between Paris and member states in Southern Europe (including Spain and Italy), linking the capabilities of these countries with French military potential [Gotkowska 2018].

The European Intervention Initiative implementation remains in doubt these days, with the ongoing negotiations between Paris and European partners. Nine European countries in June 2018 have signed a Letter of Intent [Letter of intent concerning the development of a European intervention initiative (EI2) 2018] setting out the goal of the initiative: developing a common strategic culture which enhance European states ability to carry out military missions and operations within the EU, NATO, UN and/or “ad hoc” coalitions [Drent 2018].

PESCO format discrepancies between initiators were overcome when a compromise was proposed to transform PESCO into a “pledging machine”. Member states to join the Union no longer needed to have and provide a high level of potential or operational assets, but instead, they committed to achieving ambitious goals, thus maintaining an inclusive approach. States should be able to contribute to each of PESCO initiatives, as appropriate, and jointly develop specific defence capabilities [France, Major, Sartori 2017]. Thus, PESCO (like integration itself) has evolved into a state, process and ultimate goal - to encourage a group of European countries to increase their defence efforts and improve coordination of their defence policies [Billon-Galland, Quencez 2017]. Each member state was allowed to draw up its schedule to achieve the operational capability objectives. Such proposal has been welcomed by a considerable number of states, including removing concerns of member states from Central and Eastern Europe on NATO remaining the main European territorial security guarantor). Therefore, PESCO combines ambitious (France) and inclusive (Germany) goals to strengthen European strategic autonomy and a “step-by-step approach” to their implementation.

Another caveat concerns the differences in the strategic French and Germany culture, which may result in an inability to share responsibility for security fairly. The researchers, therefore, puts forward the view that Germany's history and its strategic culture do not allow the same types use of military intervention and involvement as France, and this may have consequences in determining the operations European defence should undertake. After all, despite Germany's desire and efforts to enhance its military capabilities, Germany's neighbours, and especially France, often prefer Berlin (due to its history) to remain a limited military force in Europe, thus not exacerbating the discomfort of other European nations.

Despite the considerable number of differences, researchers’ views rest on the assumption that Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel have initiated the EU defence project, asserting that Europeans, without the British, are less disintegrated than they have often been in the past. However, today they still have a long way to go to be united in defence policy [Howorth 2018].

3. THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES’ POSITIONS ON PESCO

We also consider it advisable to analyze the Eastern European countries’ positions, notably Poland, which opposes any NATO duplication or disconnection structures at the EU level, and whose involvement in PESCO has been questioned. Countries in the EU's eastern flank, which are directly threatened by Russian aggression and are NATO members, are sceptical to PESCO. Thus, Poland, which is focused on strengthening collective defence and reforming NATO structures, in the face of Russian aggression is actively developing strategic relations and relying on the strong security guarantees provided by the US, which has the greatest military capabilities and will to use them. Poland most openly expressed its concern on the goals and the

initiative's development directions. Poland is not interested in joining PESCO for both strategic and political reasons. Warsaw does not support the European strategic autonomy concept and is a staunch NATO's role defender and the importance of the US in European security. However, political tension between Warsaw, Brussels and Paris also plays an important role [Billon-Galland, Quencez 2017]. Poland fears an autonomous European defence policy, led by France and Germany, can conceal threats from Russia, weaken NATO's transatlantic security, and separate the United States and Britain. Poland also fears that the European defence initiative will not only have privileged access to the EU funds but will also hold back the European project of "multi-speed Europe" by relegating the position of Poland on the periphery of European integration [Varga 2017].

However, Poland supports some initiatives, recognizing the need for greater European cooperation in defence and capacity-building. The country joined the program at the last minute (only participation in two of the initiative's projects was eventually declared). Poland is concerned about the formation of PESCO as an initiative which: (1) promoting the military capability development, mainly for crisis management operations, (2) is profitable for defence industry of the largest member states, (3) is concentrated on threats and challenges from Europe's southern neighbours [Gotkowska 2018]. Joint letter of 13 November 2017 from the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defence of Poland set out three conditions for Poland's participation in PESCO. They are: the NATO's defence planning process priority; competitive, innovative and the European defence industry balanced development to the satisfaction of all member states' needs; 360-degree approach to security threats with particular attention to the east flank [Blockmans 2018]. Former Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło stated that 'we want the EU to act effectively in the EU neighbourhood crisis events. However, strategic autonomy should not mean weakening Europe's contribution to NATO's defence and deterrence capabilities' [Drent 2018]. Romania and the Baltic countries share similar doubts.

The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, which do not feel a direct military threat from Russia, view PESCO for their part as a tool which allows them not to conflict with Paris and Berlin, despite their opposition to French and German initiatives to the EU's migration policies. They also fear of the duplication with the NATO and the Western defence companies' dominance in the EU military-industrial complex [Gotkowska 2018].

In this day, Poland has become the centre of the US Army activity throughout the EU's and NATO's eastern flank. There are about 5,000 US soldiers in the country. The US military presence in Poland includes the Armored Brigade and the Combat Aviation Brigade rotary units, which is a part of the US-led European Deterrence Initiative and the US-led military group as a part of NATO's deterrence policy. Relations with the US have never been so intense, and are primarily viewed through the Eastern European countries' security and energy policy perspective (due to the liquefied gas supply from the US and Washington's opposition to North Stream 2). Thus, discussions on the EU's 'strategic autonomy' in the Western European countries, for this reason, are often incomprehensible to the Eastern European countries [Gotkowska 2018].

Moreover, the Eastern European countries' emphasis on collective defence does not mean that they do not recognize the need to participate in crisis management operations in the south. However, the formula issue of this involvement is often raised. Both Poland and the Baltic States are increasing their presence in the Middle

East within the global US-led coalition against ISIS and are supporting NATO's efforts in this area. For example, Poland has participated in the global coalition against ISIS since July 2016. Four Polish F-16 aircraft (about 150 soldiers) reconnaissance over Syria and Iraq from bases in Kuwait; Polish special forces (about 60 soldiers) trained military personnel in Iraq, and Polish logistics officers team (about 20 soldiers) trained Iraqi technical personnel to support their post-Soviet military equipment. This team (which is likely to be expanded) is to be part of a planned NATO training mission in Iraq [Gotkowska 2018]. It should be noted Poland continues to support NATO and the US. The Polish defence concept 2017 establishes, "All EU actions in the security domain should complement and enrich NATO operations in a non-competitive manner". This document states the NATO's key importance to Poland, "which is the key to our collective defence policy" [Keohane 2017].

Poland, despite ongoing discussions, will participate in the Dutch project to make troops' cross-border movement within the Union more effective along with other PESCO members (a cross-border military transport procedures simplification and standardization). The project will help to reduce the offensive forces deployment time at the active war theatre in the East after NATO's response forces initial use. Besides, Poland and Hungary also want to join the medical project and the French initiative on European security software [Boháček 2018].

Thus, PESCO should not be interpreted merely stereotyped as the EU's 'military might', or the 'EU army' opposing NATO. PESCO potential in the current circumstances is specifically focused on improving and adapting co-operation between the EU countries military systems. Also, the military capabilities developed and enhanced by PESCO (for example, cybersecurity and hybrid threats issues) can be used by the EU member states in other contexts and formats, such as NATO or the UN. For example, Germany can implement PESCO projects which are more in line with NATO's strategic goals. NATO is interested in projects enhancing interoperability, digitization and joint training of troops. This means participation in PESCO shortly will be a part of member states national effort to support NATO's defence projects [Apetroe, Gheorghe 2018]. According to Dick Zandee, the European military-strategic autonomy strengthening is a solution aimed at the equitable burdens sharing within NATO, which the United States has been demanded since Kennedy's presidency. It does not harm NATO, it is in NATO's interest [Camporini, Hartley, Maulny, Zandee 2017].

CONCLUSIONS: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

The increasing complexity of security threats and the emergence of the new ones in combination with existing ones (terrorism, hybrids and cyber threats, etc.) require a new approach to guaranteeing European and global security. Such security initiative as PESCO is often seen as a great success because it is about overcoming the EU defence stagnation, the most EU member states readiness to step up their efforts in political, economic, technical and financial aspects. The countries' readiness to join PESCO is truly impressive, and this is what gives hope for a common European vision in the defence field by converging the different countries views on international security issues [Permanent Structured Cooperation – PESCO. Deepening Defence Cooperation among EU Member States 2019].

Weighing up both sides of the argument, the researchers distinguish three key factors that will contribute to PESCO success: firstly, initiators should convey to everyone

the institutional structure and its future key ideas, given the fact that in the security and defence field, the institutions 'beauty' and integration as a goal are not the key value; secondly, PESCO should set a successful example, convincing sceptics that some member states can organize meaningful defence cooperation within, but not outside, the Union; and finally, PESCO should be open to third parties, principally for cooperation with NATO [France, Major, Sartori 2017]. Researchers also propound the view that it is important to ensure the high level of internal coherence and transparent governance, as well as effective links between EU countries and coordination with relevant existing initiatives and projects [France, Major, Sartori 2017]. Member States should understand that rival national interests should not adversely affect the EU's overall image as a regional and global leader. Therefore, PESCO can become a tool to ensure the EU member states' unified position on key issues, which will strengthen the EU's overall position in the international arena and the defence, economic and industrial sectors [Seitz 2018].

Due to geopolitical and institutional threats to the EU (Brexit and the actions of the Donald Trump administration), some researchers argue that PESCO is a security guarantee in the face of tough Brexit and the US refusal to support NATO. This situation certainly will have a negative impact on the EU's future and will also have other consequences, such as breaking the powers fine balance in the East (in particular, in the case of Ukraine), which will undoubtedly enable the Russian Federation to act more threateningly against the countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. PESCO in the worst-case scenario is seen as a "contingency plan" to ensure not only security within the EU but also the neighbouring countries' security from even greater threats. Several projects are already underway in this dimension (EU Neighborhood Policy and Eastern Partnership), which are specifically aimed at achieving a bilateral objective: (1) guaranteeing border security and security in case of the Russian threat increase, terrorist threats arising from migration flows, and other hybrid and cyber threats; (2) becoming the EU's regional leader [Apetroe, Gheorghe 2018].

However, whether PESCO will be able to provide additional impetus to the European security and defence policy development depends on the participating member states willingness to further initiative developing and the European Commission determination to meet PESCO commitments. On the other hand, PESCO initiative may just as well end up as the "Union and Exchange" initiative (since 2011), which has supported military co-operation in narrow areas but has not led to a breakthrough in the EU military capabilities [Gotkowska 2018]. According to experts, Poland has jumped into Europe's "defensive train" instead of staying at the station, expecting someday it will be able to slow it down or even change its direction [Blockmans 2018].

Furthermore, one should not forget about expanding cooperation with NATO. Possible options for cooperation between the EU member states in the security and defence field are analyzed in 'Reflection paper on the future of European defence' (2017) [Reflection paper on the future of European defence 2017]. Despite the French President E. Macron and German Chancellor A. Merkel initiative, this paper specifies further continuing cooperation to rely on the EU member states cooperation with NATO as the main continent security organization. The new European Defence Fund herewith will help to develop several new joint initiatives, but the EU member states will still control defence capabilities development and the major part of procurement. Instead, it does not exclude the possibility of creating, on some member states

initiative, based on Article 42 of the EU Treaty, moving to defence cooperation of higher level, assuming greater commitments to each other's security. The EU in this scenario will be able to carry out special security and defence operations backed by a certain level of the member states defence forces integration. The European Union will also support joint defence programs with the European Defence Fund and set up a dedicated European Defence Research Agency to help in European defence market development capable of protecting its core strategic interests from external influence. NATO leaders directly welcomed the EDF and PESCO initiatives in the EU-NATO Joint Declaration signed on 10 July 2018, deeming them crucial for the European defence capabilities development, which is also extremely important to NATO [Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2018].

To sum up, the cultural and strategic differences between the Western and Eastern European countries and their impact on the European defence system development should be considered extremely important in the long run. However, nowadays, the member states, according to PESCO initiators, should focus on addressing short-term technological and political issues and leave the “big debate” open. This pragmatic approach to PESCO is mainly focused on the rapid success of this project. Thus, the strategic rapprochement between Paris and Berlin makes it possible to move forward, focusing on specific ambitious projects whose successful implementation would be an impetus for the defence alliance development. The effective PESCO functioning will dramatically change some national security and defence policies towards common approach and, therefore, and towards more general defence and European future understanding. On the other hand, PESCO inability to deliver explicit results can slow the EU down for decades in defence integration, and significantly reduce the impact of other security initiatives within the EU.

The consensus view seems to be that there are many practical problems and challenges of PESCO successful implementation. Its successful overcoming will be facilitated by the initiating states' (France and Germany) ability to promptly address short-term issues, such as identifying projects to be implemented and monitoring countries' commitments, as well as their ability to focus on the initiative's specific military effects. On the other hand, it should be understood that important differences in the strategic culture and models of European defence, the long-term priorities of some member states, which are often underestimated in the current security environment, will be important for PESCO successful operation in the long run.

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