

# Our Future is a choice

Reassessment, risks, readiness



éditions de l'école de guerre

honni soit qui mal y pense



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Collection  
*Honni soit qui mal y pense*

## NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Ecole de guerre –the French War College– is a place of study and reflection that shapes tomorrow’s leaders for the next Trojan War or the next Hundred, Thirty or Seven Years’ Wars. Our battles no longer take place in an arena within the palisades of an enclosed ground; and they concern not just those in uniform serving their country, soulless mercenaries or the lost child-soldiers of the melancholic tropics. These combats are the common responsibility of our democracies. Study and reflection cannot be the only outcome from officers developing their thinking in this timeless quadrangle that the Ecole Militaire would be if it did not open up to the world.

Herein lies the vocation of the Ecole de Guerre Publications: to spark intelligence, foster writing and publish for the benefit of reflection and dialogue for all, civilian or military.

This publishing house does not disseminate official doxa – other channels exist for that; it does not even represent War College doctrine. It simply wishes to

make public works which, controversial or not, are the opinion only of their authors yet will contribute to French military, geopolitical and strategic thinking.

For that it is based on six collections:

- “*Champs de bataille*” deals with history, geopolitics and strategy;
- “*Ligne de front*” illustrates this need to think differently, a leitmotif of the French War College;
- “*Feux croisés*” addresses realities and parallel or indeed divergent issues;
- “*Honni soit qui mal y pense*” publishes texts written in English with a French way of thinking;
- “*Citadelle*” aims at republishing great texts of the military literature;
- “*Quartier libre*” is a new literary series looking into the military profession via detours through outside sources.



The opinions expressed in this work are those of the author. They neither commit nor reflect those of the French or European authorities.



## FOREWORD

This is one of three books\* that constitute the second collection of papers in English from the Ecole de Guerre, the French War College in Paris. They are written by Class 26 of 2019-2020. The topics originated with partners and other institutions in the United Kingdom and the United States that wanted to explore specific aspects of security and defense in order to stimulate and enrich their thinking. The aim was not to find answers but to probe the topics, some of the biggest facing western democratic nations.

Each topic was tackled by a team of student-officers within two Academic Writing Groups. They collaborated with RUSI (Royal United Services Institute) in London, and in Washington DC with CNN, the Department of State, The National Defense University, and the Institute for State Effectiveness.

The experience has been enormously rewarding. Our partners and collaborating organizations were without exception deeply appreciative of the results, of the energetic liaison of the English Department,

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\* the other books are *Clear and present danger*, and *Space*.

the quality of the papers, and the enthusiasm of the officers when interacting with their American and British counterparts.

## PREFACE

Coined after violent political upheavals throughout Europe in 1848 and 49, *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose* suggests that change is not inherent to answers on the big questions confronting our societies. Today, however, we face challenges whose complexity and stakes require active engagement with the idea of change, while their urgency mocks half-measures. The buck, as Harry Truman said, stops here, with our choices. These concern how to prioritise the challenges – economic, technological, human, institutional, political – then how to mobilize resources and set directions. The military is evolving to serve this process. Yet the networks of power, within property-digital economies supported by the affluent and the fearful, still focus on conserving their own wealth and lifestyle. Populist politics have been one outcome of this. But these are dangerous times that demand new thinking.

The topics in this book mirror the military aspects of some major issues, with the stakes and options: building up national fighting capability and recruitment, social resilience, peace keeping, and alliances. All involve holistic and far-reaching choices. The good

news is that young people today have few illusions about the challenges that have been left to them. They are responding by asserting that solutions must include and reinforce values such as social equity and dignity, creativity and solidarity, courage and responsibility. They will be on the front line of future conflicts - as anonymous targets, conscientious citizens, or as those serving in uniform. And they in their turn will have choices to make.

# I. THE FUTURE OF NATO

*“Nations do not have friends, only interests” –  
Charles de Gaulle<sup>1</sup>*

## ABSTRACT

Europe is facing challenges, among which defense, and hence the future of NATO, is likely to be the most critical. And it seems unavoidable that the Alliance must undergo internal change. In its current form, NATO “2.0” – the outward-looking successor to the original post-war defensive alliance – it faces inherent challenges due to its nature, commitment, and size – in a word, its purpose. Internal political changes within several member states also pose questions. And, externally, NATO co-exists with the EU CSDP within a Europe that is facing a resurgent Russia, Islamic terrorism, massive immigration and economic difficulties. Together these are generating severe politico-economic stress, which sharpens the internal

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1. Paraphrasing Lord Palmerston who stated: “Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests”.

challenges. Enter Turkey which seems to catalyze NATO's challenges: as NATO member, as EU applicant, and as a suddenly-changed authoritarian neighbor – and all this in an increasingly incendiary part of the world. The Alliance will have to embrace how successfully it can manage the political challenge illustrated by Turkey. To accomplish this, it will need to define itself: is NATO more an alliance or a military and political organization? Four scenarios for change are proposed: Status quo, Global, Restricted, and Flexible. Not all are very likely, not all are very desirable. But they try to point out four possible directions. Finally, NATO's future is closely linked to how Europe and the USA perceive and will redefine its political nature.

## **Introduction**

Seventy years after twelve states signed the Washington Treaty to forge the basis of a defensive alliance, NATO has grown to 29 members. And it has become a political and military organization which promotes democratic values, guarantees the cooperative security of Europe, and has the military power to go beyond defense and undertake crisis-management operations.

The principle of collective defense is at the very heart of NATO's founding treaty. According to the organization website, *«it remains a unique and enduring principle that binds its members together, committing them*



*to protect each other and setting a spirit of solidarity within the Alliance».*

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2018, the Turkish Army attacked the Kurdish-held city of Afrin in Syria. In so doing, Turkey was attacking the US supported YPG, one of the main allies of Western countries in their fight against ISIS since 2014. NATO reacted discretely while the situation was critical for the Alliance: one member had attacked the main ally of many other members in their fight against ISIS. Moreover, while NATO was engaged in a deterrence policy against Moscow in the Baltic States, Turkey was getting closer to Russia day by day to serve its own interests.

This singular path that Ankara is now following throws light on the challenges NATO is facing, and the most critical one is probably the solidarity of the Alliance. It has to transform or collapse.

The current direction of NATO raises many questions: would the weakening of NATO be a critical threat to the defense of Europe? Would Europe be able to defend itself without NATO? Is NATO still able to perform its original purpose? And the critical question: what is the future for NATO?

### **The defense of Europe: NATO and EU CSDP**

Both NATO and the European Union Common Security and Defense Policy (EU CSDP) are alliances, formed to defend Europe after WWII. The Lisbon Treaty states that

NATO and EU security and defense policy are compatible. The two organizations are similar in size, while 22 states are members of both. A solidarity clause is included in each treaty: article 5 for NATO and article 42-7. Both organizations have implemented these articles once<sup>2</sup>.

Over time they have become more specialised. NATO has come to oversee defense in a transatlantic framework and particularly for deterrence against Russia, while the EU is more focused on security and civilian-military missions, especially civilian missions.

### *Hope and obstacles*

Things are slowly evolving in the EU. For the first time since the Lisbon Treaty, a PESCO<sup>3</sup> was implemented in December 2017, gathering 25 nations. A European Defense Fund was created to help EU members boost their defense capabilities. The “Initiative for Europe” was created in June 2018.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, defense spending has grown in Europe (Figure 1). Even if NATO standards are not met, this is a hope for broader burden-sharing.

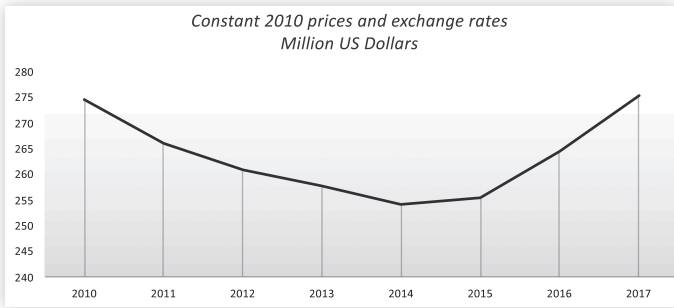
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2. NATO: the US in 2001 following 9/11; EU: France in the aftermath of the attacks in Paris the 11/13.

3. Permanent Structured Cooperation.

4. In September 2017, French President Emmanuel Macron called for this initiative. He stated in November 2018: “In defense matters, our aim should be the capacity of autonomous action of Europe, in addition to NATO.”

**Figure 1 – Defense Expenditures of NATO Europe**



But the obstacles on the path to a European defense are serious. The first is the competition between NATO and CSDP. For many European countries, NATO ensures the defense of Europe. This weakens any attempts to implement a pragmatic and concrete structure for military operation within the Union. The second is the differing capacities of European countries. In February 2018, Slovenia was denied a NATO qualification due to a lack of equipment and adequate skills. Germany is facing huge concerns with the availability of critical units: at the end of the year 2017, 6 out of 6 submarines were not in use, while not one of the 14 Airbus A-400M could fly. And in 2018, a NATO diplomat told Reuters news agency that “German readiness levels are a serious concern”<sup>5</sup>.

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5. BBC news – 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

## *CSDP not fit for the job*

Current CSDP is not sufficient to defend Europe. Even if it has carried out many operations, mainly civilian, it does not have the means for intensive expeditionary interventions. It lacks command structures (operational headquarters - OHQ - and force commander headquarters - FHQ -) and planners. Thanks to the Berlin plus agreement, the EU is supposed to rely on NATO HQ for its own operations. But since 2004, when Cyprus joined the EU, Turkey has refused any EU request.

Moreover, CSDP lacks military power. It has become specialized in the comprehensive approach but mainly on the civilian side of operations. And this is surely due to the lack of both interest in military operations within the EU and of military power. Only two countries are currently able to conduct high spectrum operations: the UK and France, and France will soon be alone.

Finally, Europe needs US military support in most expeditionary interventions (ISR for instance). In the short to mid-term, NATO is a central factor in the future of alliances in Europe. But the North Atlantic organization is facing its own challenges.