EU's PESCO: A NEW FOREIGN POLICY INSTRUMENT OR THE SAME OLD STORY?

Ahmet Cemal Ertürk[1]

Since the end of World War II, foreign policy and security issues have haunted the European dreams of complete integration in terms of alignment in a highly challenging field, which is also constantly interrupted by sovereignty concerns of member states. Within today's changing dynamics, the EU's current instruments seem to fall short of preventing terrorism or providing a meaningful answer to the problems in the Middle East. The EU's capacity to act in this field needs to be strengthened. The newest approach presented by the European External Action Service (EEAS) is called PESCO (the Permanent Structured Cooperation) and aims to change this current structure of "inactivity". This short paper will briefly analyze this new instrument.

Historical Background

In order to understand the question of "What is new with PESCO?", a journey trough the past is essential. "EU as a security actor" has been an old debate, which started at the very early days of the European integration. Although the EU was formed as an economic cooperation, defence and security concerns were always in the agenda. Right after the World War II, the problem of German re-armament produced the proposed and later failed solution called the European Defence Community (EDC). The deal fell through because of the French Parliament disapproval of a European army. Nevertheless, this rejection brought two outcomes for the Europeans. First, NATO came up with the idea of Western European Union (WEU) as the European wing of the security bloc to contain Germany. Secondly, the

[1] Research Assistant at Istanbul Kultur University.

rejected proposal flamed a new separation of thought in Europe between Europeanists and Atlanticists on security.

The unsuccessful EDC experience generated a "cool down" period on foreign policy issues but this lasted only until the 70s. Against Communism, the Western world expected much more from the EU, which was growing as an economic powerhouse at that time. The rising expectations coupled with ignored European interests on Vietnam and Middle East (Peterson, 2012: 205) was more than enough for European leaders to start once again for the search of a "common will" on foreign issues. Their answer was the European Political Cooperation (EPC). However, like its predecessor, the EPC was not something more than a series of intergovernmental meeting of foreign ministers. The loose character of the unit made it too hard to get a decision or a consensus on issues (Peterson, 2012: 205). Some successful sanction policies against Argentina on Falklands War shifted the EU's "actorness" structure from being a defence partnership to a more "civilian power" compared to NATO and the United States (Peterson, 2012: 205).

At the end of the 80s, the European leaders were aware that a loose cooperation on security was simply not enough. The outbreak of war in Yugoslavia was an absolute horror for the EU decision makers and inability to act was costly this time. It was the moment to include security into the heart of the EU policy making. The Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as the second pillar of the EU. New instruments such as the systematic cooperation aims and common positions were intriguing but the decision making/consensus building again tackled with the problem of "sovereignty". According to Desmond Dinan (2008: 313), there was no will to share the sovereignty between the member states. The pillar stayed intergovernmental and unanimity was the only option to get a consensus. Especially on defence matters, the CFSP mechanisms were too far to help. Everything leading to security re-opened the old argument of Europeanism vs. Atlanticism since the US and the UK were not eager to accept a separate European security approach (Dinan, 2008: 315).

Slow steps were taken in the CFSP but the Europeanists were hoping that the policy might evolve into a real military partnership in the future. No significant evolution happened during the 90s but attempts continued to create instruments for conflict prevention and management. After what happened in the Balkans, conflict prevention became more of a necessity than a simple need (EEAS, 2016). In this sense, the inclusion of Petersberg Tasks to the EU agenda was an important step. The addition of the tasks

opened the gate for the member states to identify the type of military action that they can undertake such as humanitarian tasks, peacekeeping and policing missions (EEAS, 2016). The tasks became an integral part of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which then transformed into Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in Lisbon for creating a defence wing to the CFSP. In addition to these developments, the EU created the position of High Representative to defend common European positions in abroad and started to work with NATO to increase capabilities under certain conditions (EEAS, 2016).

The Treaty of Lisbon came into force in 2009 and introduced mutual assistance clauses, solidarity clause and created the European External Action Service (EEAS) under the authority of High Representative, who also became the Vice President of the European Commission (EEAS, 2016). With a brand-new approach in Lisbon, and conditional shifts to qualified majority voting in the Council, the EU was able to carry out 30 civilian and military missions. Needless to say, the history making decisions stayed under unanimity and the missions were mostly done in civilian manners such as policing duties in Bosnia. However, the most critical provision in Lisbon was the "enhanced cooperation" clause. In the enhanced cooperation, at least nine member states got the ability to implement measures even if the others were unwilling to cooperate (European Commission, 2017). This paved the way for the formation of PESCO.

What is new with PESCO?

Before and after Lisbon, the criticisms were still heavy against the EU security policies. In terms of defence, the Western world shamed its limited capacity to act with and contribute to the NATO efforts in Afghanistan and overall reluctance of EU members to cooperate (Peterson, 2012). Battle groups were created for action but only designated under the rule of one "lead nation" and did not solve the problem of "will to initiate" when it comes to battle (Peterson, 2012). The European Defence Agency (EDA) was far from supporting the member states' capabilities since there was no agreed purpose to deploy a European army (Peterson, 2012). Even in civilian instruments such as the sanctions against Russia after the annexation of Crimea, the performance of the common positions was least than expected. The outbreak of Syrian Civil War and increasing terror threats led High Representative Federica Mogherini to present "Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy" aimed to give more responsibilities, new financial tools to member states in order to develop European defence industry (EEAS, 2016).

While dealing with turbulence, PESCO came into the agenda as a brand new security and defence instrument. It is a treaty based framework and an instrument to deepen the defence wing of the EU (EEAS, 2017). Besides the vision of enhanced cooperation on many levels, operational readiness and capacity development are the main discussion points for contributing states. The concept "contributing states" is now a reality when it comes to EU's security policy and this is actually what is new with PESCO. Cooperation in this field is now voluntary and up to the interests' of the member states but once a member state accepts a certain PESCO project, the commitments will be binding and evaluated by participatory states and the Council of the European Union (EEAS, 2017). This could be explained and identified as a new flexibility move by the EU after decades of deadlock on consensus building.

Currently, 25 member states have accepted to contribute to the mechanism including France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Greece (EEAS, 2017). On September 2017, the contributors agreed to have a list of commitments covering a range of security measures such as defence investment and capability development (EEAS, 2017). This was followed by a common notification on November 2017 and Council adoption of 17 different defence projects with its list of participants (EEAS, 2017). These projects include medical command, cyber rapid response, and mutual assistance in cyber security and military disaster relief (EEAS, 2017). The governance of the instrument contains a two layer structure involving the Council of the European Union and participating member states. The Council is the main EU institution responsible for the policy direction, decision-making and assessment of binding commitments proposed by members (EEAS, 2017). For decision-making, only contributing PESCO members are allowed to have a vote and this voting procedure for implementation is ruled by unanimity. The second layer starts once voting for a particular project gets an approval from the Council. In this "projects level", each PESCO project will be managed and evaluated by the participating states based on the general rules for assessment (EEAS, 2017).

The European External Action Service (2017) firmly believes that the new initiative will deepen the integration in the field of security and defence. After many failed attempts on searching a consensus, it seems that the EU shifted its axis to a voluntary approach. The EEAS identifies this as "a strategic autonomy to act alone" (2017). However, it is still early to talk about a fulfilled integration in this area after PESCO and the EU also seems to have given up on searching that. It is obvious that giving each member state a voluntary position to contribute and autonomy to plan their national contributions will make decision-making more flexible and may be even quicker on urgent security matters. Yet, the

question of sovereignty remains immune to any change. While advertising PESCO, the EEAS already closed the door for future criticisms on the issue of national sovereignty by claiming that military capacity development will be voluntary and a choice between the PESCO and NATO will remain in the hands of member states (2017). Once again in the history of European integration, the most confidential aspect remained untouched.

Theorizing PESCO

Since the beginning of the European integration process, the EU constantly get criticized on two matters. First, the EU's security response to foreign policy issues was inadequate and slow. Even for the events that occurred in its backyard such as the crisis in the Balkans and Russian annexation of Crimea, the responses were somehow ineffective and late. Civilian measures like imposing sanctions on Russia seemed to have had no effect on the aggressive approach of Vladimir Putin. The border protection unit Frontex was far from any help to prevent the annexation. The effect of sanctions and their credibility is also a big question mark due to the fact that member states like Hungary were openly against these measures. This automatically leads us to the second critique: the EU's failure to create "common interest" on security and defence.

For many years, the EU's solution for these critiques was the eventual integration of foreign issues into the EU level and a gradual shift from intergovernmentalism to supranationalism. From EDC to Lisbon, constant attempts failed because of member states' stubbornness to share their authority at this level. In order words, sovereignty and national interest was not something to share for a higher cause or for a greater good. After years of failure, it was inevitable for the EU to lower their expectations on fulfilled integration and focus on continuation with the willing nations. That is why the concept of enhanced cooperation and an instrument like PESCO came into the agenda in such a turbulent time. While Trump challenging the place of NATO and the UN in world security and Russia/Iran axis started to call the cards in Syria, a chance once again was given to the EU to show itself as a military power. The future will tell us how much PESCO can achieve this aim. Though, the current trend shows that the EU is now trying to be more flexible and sustainable to become a player in this game, decades long wait for the automatic spill over from economy to political area is not a reality any more.

This could be evaluated as another damage to the neo-functionalist argument that integration will be automatic and eventually spill over from economic areas to security and defence. Evidence shows that

integration in this field is neither automatic nor desirable by all of the member states. Against this proposal, Andrew Moravcsik (1993) introduced the idea of "liberal intergovernmentalism" in 1993 to define European integration as a process where nation-states are the ones who decide on the faith of integration depending on their national interests. On a specific policy area, if the common purpose is fitting the cost-benefit analysis of member states, then there is a possibility for integration to thrive (Moravcsik, 1993). PESCO and the idea of enhanced cooperation clearly fits into the liberal intergovernmentalist principles. It has the flexibility, an opt-out option for unwilling states, a chance for bargaining in the lower levels and it is again the contributing states that will shape the future of the security and defence on EU level. The existence of unanimity for the implementation of PESCO is a clear-cut evidence for that. Even within the contributing countries, a particular defence project only checks out if the benefits are exceeding the cost of opting out. In other words, contributing states will only be able to deploy defence mechanisms when it is not a threat to state sovereignty.

PESCO again gives a hint about the faith of the Europeanist vs. Atlanticist debate within the EU. Changing the perspective on security integration clearly shows that the EU is still willing to be an actor outside of NATO and the US. Of course, cooperation with NATO will be essential but introducing projects like capability development and cyber security indicates enthusiasm rather than stalemate. It is still early to claim that the new mechanism will be an alternative to NATO for European countries. However, the UK's vote to withdraw from the EU is the breakdown of Atlanticist wing of the EU. Now, it is up to Europeanists such as Germany and France to use this new initiative wisely and come up with real solutions to the problems in the Middle East, Ukraine and fight against terrorism. Eventually, another history making decision will knock the doors of Europe and the real effectiveness of PESCO will be under scrutiny. Yet, history tells us that NATO is much more effective when it comes to these types of actions. Only time will tell the performance of PESCO.

Energizing EU-Turkey Relations with PESCO

It is not a secret that the EU-Turkey relations are having turbulent times. After nearly 20 years of candidacy, Turkey is still far away from realizing a full membership prospect. Both sides should be held accountable for this topsy-turvy outcome after the chain of difficult events that have happened in the last decade. The EU's inside problems coupled with Turkey's lost of enthusiasm have produced a somewhat ambiguous future for the mutual interests. Since social and political debates are apparently in a deadlock,

finding a new partnership on security and defence seems to be the only plausible option for energizing the EU-Turkey relations. PESCO might be a good help in this endeavour.

The EU's response to the US decision to relocate its Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was in accordance with Turkey's feelings about the problem. This silent consensus between the parties was a healthy sign but Turkey is expecting much more from the EU when its border security is concerned. On refugee crisis, the mutual agreement turned out to be not very efficient. Turkey still warns the EU for the promised financial aid. On Syria, the EU still do not hold a firm position against terrorist groups that Turkey is currently fighting against. PESCO could be the rightful instrument to change this.

First of all and after decades of time, the EU has the flexibility on security cooperation. This means that if particular group of countries wants to contribute a joint project with Turkey, decision-making would be much smoother compared to former initiatives. Especially on the areas of capacity building, military technology development and cyber security, PESCO might establish a ground for new cooperative schemes. Needless to say, these are the areas where both the EU and Turkey is desperately needed to fight against terrorism. For the protection of refugees, medical command projects might be strengthened. Before PESCO, it was unimaginable for the EU to reason with members like Cyprus and Austria for defence cooperation with Turkey. Now, with the new voluntary scheme, there is no obstacle left for willing states to include a third party. Yet, the regulations for the inclusion of third countries are not specified. It is again a huge responsibility for Federica Mogherini and the EEAS to specify this immediately and mediate with PESCO members and convince them for cooperation.

Secondly, in late December 2017, Turkey and Russia signed a deal on the supply of Russian made S-400 missiles (Gumrukcu and Toksabay, 2017). As a charter member of the NATO, this move of Turkey was evaluated as a shift of axis in a highly fragile security measure. Combining with Trump's latest criticisms about NATO commitments and rising populism in the Western world, Turkey's shift could be considered as a result of this ambiguity and lack of authority. This could be an opportunity for the EU to energize the EU-Turkey relations by using PESCO. With one initiative, the EU might achieve success on two grounds. A possible joint project on military technology development could help both sides' protective measures and shift Turkey back to the Western part of the debate. It is long known that technology development is important for Turkey and the EU's new instrument might create a win-win situation.

Last but not least, if the EU truly believes that the new mechanism will lead to a fast and efficient response, and then the current problems are an important testing ground. The EU was silent over the Syrian Civil War for a long time. Except Mogherini's comments, no concrete action was taken. Surely the EU knows how much the events in Syria are important for Turkey's security. In addition to that, Turkey's border protection is critical for the EU's own security measures after the refugee crisis. PESCO is much more efficient and flexible for a binding commitment. Today, there is no evidence available for us to argue that military capabilities will be deployed under PESCO in the near future. It is also a long shot to believe that the EU forces will make joint operations with Turkey in the Middle East. However, at least possible joint projects on border security might have the ability to create another mutual gain for the parties and an imperative for the revival of membership talks.

Conclusion

This short paper aimed to understand the EU's new political instrument PESCO. After years of stalemate on the integration process of foreign policy issues, the inclusion of "enhanced cooperation" measures welcomed the new game called flexibility over inactivity. PESCO and the new voluntary project making schemes is the direct result of this new initiative. With PESCO, the EU has clearly signaled the end of the search of establishing a "common foreign interest" at the EU level. The problem of sovereignty sharing once again indicated that it is there to stay. Indeed, PESCO gave another chance for the EU and established a ground for willing states that openly support European security and defence measures. Although it is still early, PESCO might also add a new dimension to EU-Turkey relations on the grounds for defence equipment, border protection and medical command. As a result, PESCO is not the same old story but only time will tell its efficiency on the given projects.

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CONTACT DETAILS
Global Political Trends (GPoT) Center
Istanbul Kültür University
Atakoy Campus, Bakirkoy
34 156 Istanbul, Turkey
www.gpotcenter.org
info@gpotcenter.org
Tel: +90 212 498 44 76/65
Fax: +90 212 498 44 05

GPOT
Global Political Trends Center
Istanbul Kültür University