



# TRANSATLANTIC PARTNERSHIP – POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE NEW GEOSTRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

*Ilinca-Smaranda CIOATĂ\**

*Considering a series of events from the last ten years, politically and militarily relevant, International Relations scholars are questioning the robustness of the Euro-Atlantic relations. However, such a cooperation, that started decades ago, does not end without serious consequences that can go beyond the area of the involved parties. The main assumption of this article is that, for the short term, no serious transformation – such as a division between the European and the American parties, be it political, military, or economic – can take place in the present security framework – without severe implications for the global order. However, in the longer term, the cooperation can find a rather independent European Union – thought not entirely, capable of defending itself and projecting its military power beyond its borders (European Parliament 2022, 1). For the purpose of this article, there will be analysed the relationship between the European Union and NATO, based on the latest strategic documents adopted in 2022 by the two organizations – EU’s Strategic Compass and NATO’s Strategic Concept, as well as the most recent Joint Declaration signed by the two partners in January 2023. The latter provides common responses to new challenges and joint efforts to promote an international environment based on stability and prosperity, and the condemnation of the actors who cause instability affecting peace and security. The overall objective is to present the ability of the two organisations to adapt to the new challenges and threats in order to achieve their common objectives. The expected outcome of the analysis is to position the Transatlantic Partnership as a fundamental element of stability in the transatlantic area through the implementation of agreed security and defence strategies and objectives.*

**Keywords:** *European Union (EU); The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); cooperation; partnership; security; defence; crisis management.*

---

*\* Ilinca-Smaranda CIOATĂ is a PhD Student in the field of Political Science University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, România. E-mail: [ilincacioata@gmail.com](mailto:ilincacioata@gmail.com)*



## Introduction

The European Union (EU) works together with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to prevent and resolve crises and conflicts in the Euro-Atlantic area. Sharing common interests and strategies, the two organizations cooperate on the basis of the principles of complementarity and partnership. Joint efforts to combat security challenges are key priorities set out in jointly adopted documents and strategies. Collaboration in different areas of common interest between NATO and the EU is therefore an important element of a comprehensive approach to international crisis and conflict management, drawing on both civilian and military means.

NATO-EU cooperation is, in fact, an essential pillar for strengthening security and defence in the transatlantic area, at the same time contributing to global stability. A strong European Union is complementary to a strong NATO and therefore mutually reinforcing.

Cooperation between NATO and the EU has been strengthened by the most recent Joint Declaration signed on 10 January 2023 in Brussels. The document sets out the common vision of how NATO and the European Union will act against challenges and threats to Euro-Atlantic security. In brief, the two organizations will intensify their collaboration in areas such as growing geostrategic competition, resilience issues, protection of critical infrastructures, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, security implications of climate change, foreign information manipulation and interference (European Council 2024).

Therefore, the Partnership was created as an expression of the shared principles that stability and security in the transatlantic area can only be achieved through cooperation and joint action. Promoting human rights and freedoms, peace and security are some of the Partnership's fundamental shared values. Both NATO and the EU will continue to cooperate in the future, as they are aware that only together they can have a unified voice on issues arising from the dynamics of the geostrategic environment. Moreover, sharing the same values and strategic interests provides a basis for partnership.

### 1. Crisis Management from NATO and EU Perspective

In contemporary international relations, crises and conflicts are becoming more complex. Both states and international organisations are actors involved in the process of conflict and crisis management and their main goal is to ensure peace and security. For the international relations field, crisis management and conflict solution is a relatively recent field, having developed since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.



In academia, crisis is defined as “a change in the course of an event, activity or relationship due to a complex of causes from economic to psychological” (Dușu 2013, 9). In practice, crises and conflicts are realities, in fact situations that the international environment will always face. Preventing and anticipating them requires, first, knowledge and study, and an appropriate strategy to manage them effectively. In this respect, crisis and conflict management plays the most important role. In fact, crisis management involves a set of measures and actions aimed at stopping the evolution of a crisis into a violent course, or to stop the escalation of aggressions into an armed conflict. The response of actors involved in crisis management must be prompt, the goal being to prevent escalation into armed conflict whether intra- or inter-state. Crisis management has developed gradually by using civilian and military capabilities in crises before they turn into armed conflicts, but especially by enhancing security and stability in post-conflict situations.

Sharing the same strategic interests and principles and facing similar challenges and threats, NATO and the European Union have decided to join forces in cooperating on issues of common interest, becoming increasingly involved in crisis management and international conflict resolution. In order to understand the role played by the two organisations in crisis management, we will try to briefly highlight the perception of security threats and challenges, by analysing the strategies adopted in recent times.

Crisis management manifests itself differently depending on the nature of the organisation involved. As a military-political organisation, NATO uses both military and civilian instruments to solve international crises. For NATO, crisis management has been a constant concern and has been on the agenda since the organisation’s formation under the Washington Treaty signed in 1949. In the Treaty, we find in Article 4 and Article 5 concepts such as *joint consultations*, *attack against all*. There are three phases in NATO’s strategic thinking on crisis management: the Cold War phase, the period after the end of the ideological confrontation between East and West, and the period after the attacks of 11 September 2001. Crisis management at NATO level is defined as those coordinated actions taken with the aim of defusing crises, preventing their escalation into armed conflict and at the same time limiting hostilities if they should result (Groșeanu 2013, 13).

Over time, more precisely after the end of the ideological confrontation between the US and the USSR, NATO, through the Strategic Concepts adopted, tried to adapt to the new security environment by developing a Non-Article 5 dimension to crisis management. This dimension also refers to situations where conflicts erupt outside the transatlantic area and the aggression does not directly target a NATO member state, “when these have the potential to affect Allied security” (NATO 2022, art. 35). Therefore, each Strategic Concept has developed the crisis management concept at NATO level, but the purpose remains unchanged, that is to prevent international conflicts and crises through a controlled response (D. Ghiba 2014, 51).



The Alliance's vision of crisis management changes considerably with the adoption of *The 1999 Strategic Concept*. According to this new document, crisis management is much more clearly defined and included in the main tasks of the organisation. The Alliance's fundamental tasks are security through cooperation, consultation, and dissuasion and defence. In practical terms, the concept includes for the first time the possibility of consultation/cooperation between NATO member states and other international actors, such as the European Union. With this NATO concept, it is also decided to strengthen relations with the European Union, an aspect that is pursued in every strategy adopted subsequently.

Crisis management takes on a new form with the adoption of the 2010 Lisbon Strategic Concept. The signing of the new concept was triggered simultaneously by the process of reforming and transforming NATO, its command and control structure, resources, etc., while strengthening the Alliance's role in the international system with new capabilities and new partners. In view of the new challenges to the transatlantic security environment (migration, terrorism, inter-ethnic conflicts, etc.), greater emphasis is being placed on crisis management as one of the Alliance's core tasks, thus moving from being an instrument for ensuring international stability and peace to an end in itself. Thus, international crisis and conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction are NATO priorities achieved mainly through cooperation among Allies, as well as with external partners such as the EU, engaging when the circumstances demand it.

Responding to the threats and vulnerabilities of the international security environment, in 2022 NATO decided that it was time for new internal reforms, and the Madrid Summit reaffirmed the Alliance's main purpose of ensuring collective security by resorting this time to a 360-degree posture: "We will employ military and non-military tools in a proportionate, coherent and integrated way to respond to all threats to our security in the manner, timing and in the domain of our choosing" (NATO 2022, 6).

Regarding to crisis management, the Alliance expresses its desire to improve the effectiveness of the crisis response system by stepping up planning activities and thus continuing to "work to prevent and respond to crises when these have the potential to affect Allied security", and to "invest in crisis response, preparedness and management, through regular exercises and leverage our ability to coordinate, conduct sustain and support multinational crisis response operations" (NATO 2022, 9).

Crisis management has become the Alliance's only operational mechanism for maintaining and promoting stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, comprising two strands of action: conflict prevention and Crisis Response operations. Crisis management operations in which NATO is involved "are centred on the use of military force to resolve a conflict or crisis involving actors outside its borders" (Bogzeanu 2011, 7-10). In other words, NATO is an organisation with a strong military character,



which, of course, also defines the approach to crisis management in which it is involved. NATO has the capability to undertake a wide range of military operations and missions including peacekeeping operations, peace-making, conflict prevention, disaster relief operations and missions in response to natural disasters, maritime security missions, air policing missions (NATO 2023). The accent on the hard power is predominantly felt in every mission in which NATO engages.

Compared to NATO, which is a military-political organisation, the approach to the concept of crisis management in the European Union is a slightly different. Being a political and economic organisation, the security and defence dimension has developed recently, in the context of the failed management of the Western Balkans crisis that led to the break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The Union's particularity in terms of crisis and conflict management consists in the common effort to increase CFSP/CSDP coherence in such a way as to allow it, through the mechanisms and instruments adopted, to perform missions and operations in the international arena. Even if the European Union has not developed a crisis management framework as consistent and coherent as NATO, this does not mean that it does not have a strong voice in this area. The continued development of the CSDP denotes the Union's efforts to become an important and influential strategic actor at global level. The missions and operations in which the EU engages intensify its role in the field of crisis management and conflict resolution.

The European Union does not offer a precise and clear conceptualisation of the term crisis management. It takes the form of an integrated mechanism that allows the Union to intervene in major and complex crises situations with the intention of preventing an escalation of the crises and with the aim to deliver aid and resolve the situation. Another explanation of the term can be summarised as - a set of all non-military/military instruments and EU policies that are mainly used in crisis management process according to CSDP and the strategies adopted at the level of the Union (European Council 2024). Moreover, for accomplishing its operations, the EU relies on NATO capabilities, according to the "Berlin Plus" arrangements.

The European Union's crisis management efforts in recent years have been crystallised in the formation of the following mechanisms (European Peace Facility, EU Rapid Development Capability, Crisis Response Coordination Centre) that respond to the new challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while ensuring that it can intervene to deliver aid. For example, European Peace Facility (EPF) was created at the initiative of the HR/VP Federica Mogherini with the support of the European Commission. In essence, the EPF is a European off-budget tool that helps "enhancing the Union's ability to prevent conflicts, build peace and strengthen international security, by enabling the financing of operational actions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) that have military or defence implications" ( Federal Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Austria 2021, 103). Thus, the EPF aims to



develop the application sector of common costs by financing essential capacities for EU operations and missions. As for the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EU RDC), it was established by the proposal of the HR/VP Josep Borrell, one of the main military outcomes of the Strategic Compass of the European Union. The EU RDC will improve the EU's ability to react effectively in crisis situations, and will allow to swiftly deploy a modular force of up to 5000 troops, including land, air and maritime components, as well as strategic enablers (European Union External Action 2023). Last but not least, Crisis Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) was launched in 2013 with the objective of providing aid to countries affected by disasters. The ERCC is considered the heart of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and “acts as a coordination hub between all EU Member States, the 10 additional participating states, the affected country, and civil protection and humanitarian experts” (European Commission 2023). In crisis situations, rapid and coordinated response is vital to save lives and minimize damage. This is where the EU ERCC comes into play.

The Union's approach to crisis management is closely connected to its strategic partnership with NATO: its cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance, has contributed significantly over the years both to the development of the security and defence dimension at Union level and to the conduct of EU-led missions using Alliance capabilities and resources under the provisions of the “Berlin Plus” agreements (Ghiba and Pleşanu 2018, 88). The difference between the two organizations is seen in the way they engage in crisis situations. More specifically, the EU authorities approach crisis management from a non-military perspective, using peaceful and civilian means, a strategy which gives it a special status in the field of international relations. The approach is also different from the point that this whole crisis management process takes place within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. This means that any intervention, whether military or civilian, can be influenced by the fact that the Member States' interests must also be taken into account, which makes it difficult to create a united, common and coherent vision (Ghiba and Pleşanu 2018, 89). Moreover, the EU has a different approach regarding two important security concepts, namely *conflict prevention*, which includes activities carried out before a crisis escalates into hostile action, and *crisis management*, which involves intervention after violent action. The process of post-conflict reconstruction is understood at European level as a means of preventing the outbreak of a future crisis.

In the case of the European Union, missions deployed using civilian capabilities – humanitarian aid, post-conflict reconstruction, development aid, etc. – give it a different voice in international crisis management. The crisis management missions and operations conducted by the Union on three continents, of which nine are currently military (such as *EUMAM* - Ukraine, Central African Republic - *EUTM*





CAR, Operation Sophia - *EUNAVFOR MED*, Somalia - *EU NAVFOR*), and 12 civilian (among which Georgia - *EUMM*, Iraq - *EUAM*, Kosovo - *EULEX*, Libya - *EUBAM*, Mali - *EUCAP SAHEL*) show that the Union is prepared to take risks for peace and responsibilities in international security (European Union External Action 2023). The greater focus on the civilian component of crisis management is determined both by the absence of a permanent European command and control structure and by the budget allocated to this area. For example, civilian missions are financed from the EU budget, while military operations are supported from the national budget of the state/states that decide to take part in the mission (85%-95% national funding, 5%-15% European funding, on the basis of Athena mechanism) (Curtea de Conturi Europeană 2019, 23-24).

Although the European authorities have developed more the civilian side of crisis management and less the military one, there is nevertheless a mutual clause in the Lisbon Treaty between Member States allowing them to act militarily. The mutual assistance clause in Article 42 (7) of the Treaty states that if a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall be obliged to provide aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations (EUR-Lex 2023). This clause has not been used since 2015. This may raise many questions about the unity and vision of the European Union, especially in the context of an armed conflict on the eastern border, which inevitably affects security and stability within the European Union. For example, in the case of Ukraine, the European Union has been put in the position of acting on the principle of unity in terms of economic and military aid, but especially in terms of accession to the EU. This has sparked disputes and contradictions between Member States. Hungary's adverse offensive position in this case is well known. Even more, the Member States are vigilant to this case, as the presidency of the EU Council has been taken over by Hungary in the second semester of 2024.

The last few years are proof that the European Union has made efforts through the strategies adopted (Global Strategy in 2016 and the Strategic Compass in 2022) to reform the Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the Common Security and Defence Policy, in order to guarantee its status as a strong international power. Under these circumstances, the EU is increasingly becoming a global player, which is also involved in resolving international crises, with the aim of maintaining international peace and security. This new role that the Union wants to take on needs to be much more clearly defined, and when it decides to engage in conflict resolution, it needs to take a firm position, a point also made in the strategy paper adopted in March 2022: "We have to be bolder in how we combine our diplomatic and economic instruments, including our sanctions regimes, with civil and military assets to prevent conflict, respond to crises, contribute to peacebuilding and support partners. We will



also strengthen our cooperation with bilateral, regional and multilateral European security and defence initiatives that contribute to Europe’s security” (Council of the European Union 2022, 12). Only under these conditions can the European Union assume its role as a stabilizing factor in Europe and beyond.

The different nature promoted by NATO and the EU on security and defence issues inevitably leads to complementary views that can essentially facilitate a comprehensive approach to security in terms of its military and civilian dimensions.

## **2. Strengthening the Partnership**

The time of instability in the Euro-Atlantic area caused by the conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine has pushed NATO and EU partners to take the initiative to adopt new strategies to respond to common threats and challenges in a united way.

The adoption in 2022 of the EU’s Strategic Compass and NATO’s Strategic Concept gave a new impulse to the transatlantic partnership, confirming the importance of strategic unity. Both documents highlight the need for closer transatlantic cooperation on common security threats: “The EU and NATO remain firmly committed to further strengthen, deepen and expand their mutually reinforcing and beneficial cooperation by exploring avenues for further collaboration across all existing work strands, as well as in new areas such as climate and defence, space and emerging and disruptive technologies, in full respect of the agreed guiding principles (mutual openness and transparency, inclusiveness and reciprocity, and decision-making autonomy of both organisations)” (European Council 2024).

In the context of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine, the transatlantic partnership is more than essential. As highlighted in both NATO and EU strategic documents, the international environment is at a critical moment affecting Euro-Atlantic security and stability, demonstrating the importance of the transatlantic partnership. Only through a strong and closer cooperation can security and stability be maintained within the organisations.

The transatlantic partnership is stronger and more relevant than ever, and political dialogue, intelligence sharing, military mobility and the development of military capabilities are actions taken by the two organisations in recent times. Constantly adapting to the threats and challenges that arise in the security environment is the prompt and effective response provided by NATO and the European Union.

In the Strategic Compass it is underlined the need to strengthen cooperation with NATO in order to be able to meet new security threats and challenges. Strengthening the strategic partnership with NATO goes hand in hand with the strengthening of CSDP civilian and military missions through which the Union can provide a more rapid and comprehensive response in crisis management: “We need to be able to act





quickly and robustly whenever a crisis erupts, with partners if possible and alone when necessary” (Council of the European Union 2022, 3). The Strategic Concept actually complements the EU position and vision on common threats. NATO and the EU thus have complementary and coherent roles in preserving international peace and security.

As a unique and essential partner for the Alliance, the European Union is developing civilian and military capabilities that strengthen its security and defence role. A stronger and more capable Union strengthens the transatlantic partnership and also contributes to stability in the area: “NATO recognises the value of a stronger and more capable European defence that contributes positively to transatlantic and global security and is complementary to, and interoperable with NATO” (NATO 2022, 10).

Periodic meetings between NATO and the EU are aimed at improving political dialogue, and with it the exchange of classified and unclassified information. A common awareness of situations and factors affecting the stability of the transatlantic area and constant adaptation to the current security environment enhances EU-NATO collaboration and cooperation at the highest level. In order to improve the political dialogue, the transatlantic partners should organize more frequent and inclusive joint meetings, focusing on strategically relevant issues (Council of the European Union 2022, 39). Moreover, the full involvement of non-EU Allies in the development of the security and defence component of the Union is essential to strengthen the NATO-EU partnership, and joint exercises would enhance NATO-EU cooperation at all levels, while strengthening mutual confidence. This would allow for a strengthening of the partnership through an appropriate exchange of information leading to improved NATO-EU interoperability. The key to improving transatlantic cooperation lies in the strength and capacity of both partners to constantly adapt to new international security challenges and threats. Joint efforts to secure the Euro-Atlantic area must therefore also include an increase in defence spending, thereby improving existing capabilities while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

Thus, starting with 2023, the NATO-EU partnership has moved to a new phase of evolution and political dialogue and cooperation will be the instruments used in all areas of interaction, from resilience, technologies, climate, to defence and security.

### **3. Strategic Challenges and Limitations**

Cooperation between the two organisations can be traced back in the 1990s. This cooperation has taken the shape of a natural relation between the actors who share the same goal: achieving and maintaining security, stability, and prosperity. Thus, the efforts made by the two international actors, in the field of security and



defence, have been contributing to the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic area. It can hardly be argued that Europe and North America would look the same without this strong transatlantic connection.

Starting as a traditional relationship based on diplomatic exchanges, shared values and common interests, transatlantic relations have gradually evolved into a continuing relationship of cooperation on security and defence. However, there are also areas (such as funding, namely the percentage allocated by Member States who takes the lead of a future mission) that generate strong contradictions in the partnership, threatening the cohesion of the EU-NATO relationship, turning it from a state of cooperation into a state of competition.

The high-level cooperation between the two organizations has certainly also influenced the way they relate and approach to the challenges, threats and risks of the security environment. Once the partnership is created, it is understood that the challenges and threats faced by the EU (terrorism, organized crime, corruption, interstate conflicts, and cybersecurity) are equally threats and challenges to NATO and vice versa. That is why cooperation must cover as many areas of common interest as possible and aim at a single goal: creating a stable transatlantic environment for the long term. Moreover, the similar perception of the international security environment also implies a complementary approach by the two partners. Due to the duplication of Member States (a major part of the EU Member States are also part of NATO) security and defence interests often overlap, which seems to limit the partnership. Continuing on this note, we can state that one of the greatest strategic limitations of the partnership is closely linked to the cooperation and collaboration between the US and the EU. Depending on the interests and policies adopted by Washington, the EU-NATO relationship is either cooperative or competitive (Joja, Iulia-Sabina 2021). Donald Trump's coming to power implies, among other things, a change in the approach to transatlantic cooperation. The policy adopted by the Republican President has inevitably diminished the credibility of the EU Member States in the American guarantee and NATO alike. Trump's unpredictable policy has contributed to deepening already existing divergences within the partnership, generating new ones, in terms of defence spending and the percentage allocated by European allies (Sloan 2021, 8). Despite the policy pursued by Trump, relations between the partners started to return to normal with the change of the US administration with the election of Joe Biden in 2021. His pro-European speech gave the EU a new security and defence guarantee.

Looking at these aspects, we can easily see a major risk in EU-NATO relations. When transatlantic relations are on an ascendant trend (as in the case of the Biden administration), cooperation among EU Member States on security and defence is strained, while when the divergences in the partnership are increasingly accentuated (in the case of the Trump administration), the EU focuses on developing its own



strategies to ensure its security and defence interests – developing CSDP and its instruments, as for instance when elaborating and adopting the Strategic Compass (Romanyshyn 2021, 1).

Relaxation of the EU risks compromising, to a greater or lesser extent, the process of developing its own strategic mechanism, which would inevitably also lead to a weakening of the preconditions for a more balanced and effective transatlantic link. In the context of the new security challenges – Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the conflict situation in the Middle East – this risk becomes even more pronounced, and the decision by the EU to allocate a smaller budget to security and defence may have far deeper implications.

Many times the question arises whether NATO defence is enough, or should the European Union be more active in the field of security and defence? Perhaps one of the most common answers would be that NATO would be sufficient to provide security for both the transatlantic area and even for the world. However, we should not forget that the best security and defence can be achieved collectively. Therefore, the fundamental principle of any collective defence organisation and beyond should be to combine the military and civilian power of its members in such a way as to discourage any potential attack against any ally (Ghincea 2017, actualizat 2022). In addition, to become an influential voice on security matters, the EU needs to overcome its military weakness, and create a fully operational armed instrument as a result of European defence cooperation efforts, even though Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) has been established since June 2017 (Council of the European Union 2019, 6). When it engages in operations and missions, it needs to take a firm stance to help end hostilities, not just to ease the situation.

To manage crises efficiently, the two organizations need, first and foremost, a common strategy, but above all joint action. To this end, the Union must increasingly develop its capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military and civilian forces and the necessary means. What is more, in order to have a concrete security response, I believe that the European Union needs to transform its security policy in such a way that it becomes more active and better connected to the threats and challenges generated by the current security environment. When deciding to intervene in certain conflicts, the EU has a rather palliative approach - it intervenes, often with ineffective methods that only seem to ameliorate differences and less to resolve the situation itself. A first look at the EU’s intervention initially reveals an inability to react quickly due to both internal misunderstandings and the complexity of the decision-making process that underlies the launching of a mission. In addition, European missions should have a more scrutinized mandate, with clearly set and well-defined objectives from the outset that meet the needs on the ground. Therefore, the EU’s security policy must be balanced and realistic in order to face current and future challenges and threats.



On the other hand, NATO should commit itself to addressing security threats and challenges by developing a strategy that emphasizes greater levels of deterrence against unconventional and hybrid attacks. The adoption of such a strategy should aim at a more targeted and efficient allocation of resources and instruments in such a way as to avoid the escalation of a conflict by using as little armed force as possible. In addition, consideration should be given to the development of additional complex defensive tools such as the simultaneous deployment of multiple defence systems, investments in anti-missile systems and the drone wall. Finally, the allies must realize that one of the most important deterrence methods is also the most feasible at this moment, namely the collective deployment of military training and capabilities in areas of greatest interest, such as the Eastern Flank and the Black Sea area. It is time for NATO to move to the next level and to realize the importance of developing a strategy for the Black Sea region as well, especially in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. Strengthening regional and transatlantic security requires NATO to shape new goals, committing collective resources to help develop more coherent defence and deterrence systems. Such a strategy should pursue several fundamental objectives, namely: constantly improving the security environment of NATO members, but especially those in the Black Sea area; limiting Russian aggression against allies; and granting membership to those states that can guarantee the creation of a more secure environment for the transatlantic space (Joja, Iulia Sabina 2024).

Although the strategies of the two organizations cover issues related to security threats and challenges, there seems to be a lack of a specific chapter that defines the concrete way to manage and engage in crisis situations. The reality often differs greatly from the aspirations and objectives set by allies. The failure of NATO and the EU to induce Russia's renunciation of hostilities against Ukraine through the sanctions imposed raises many questions concerning the role of the two partners as a *stabilizing factor* in the transatlantic area and beyond.

There are some lessons that the West should learn from Russia's action against Ukraine, namely that history can repeat itself. So, how are allied states preparing to respond to a new threat from Russia? At the moment, we see more rhetoric and ultimatums, and less concrete actions. The European Union in particular must keep in mind that this conflict could essentially affect the entire European security architecture, given Russia's position vis-à-vis the ex-communist states. Future steps taken by the allies must include aspects of long-term investment in European security and the security of the Eastern flank of the partnership; increased investment in the security of strategic partners; strengthening strategic partnerships; and ad hoc consultations and dialogues with states of strategic interest (Joja, Iulia Sabina 2022). What the two partners can do is invest more in their partnership, especially those states that serve as bastions against Russian aggression. NATO and the EU must also



continue the *policy of containment* and not relax the sanctions imposed so far on Russia. Moreover, you cannot expect a state like Russia to stop its aggression against Ukraine as long as there is no unity in decision-making within the partnership, and moreover, within each of the two organisations. It is well known that Hungary has a different position on the war in Ukraine, but especially on the economic and military aid provided by NATO and the EU. Hungarian Prime Minister Orbán has often declared that the aid provided to Ukraine only brings Europe, and therefore NATO, closer to a conflict with Russia, even though the intention is to prevent the escalation of Russian aggression and not to get involved in a war with Russia.

It is our belief that the transatlantic relationship needs to move to the next level in order to succeed in fulfilling the objectives set out in their joint declarations. This stage must take into account two essential directions: military mobility and defence capabilities, and security on the Black Sea. Military mobility is an absolute priority for the EU, NATO and their member states. Military mobility combines all activities undertaken for the rapid movement of armed forces and military equipment and beyond. Also, military mobility is an essential and credible action in the process of deterring a potential adversary taking military action, such as Russia (Chihai 2024). When NATO and the EU include these two aspects as a fundamental priority in their strategies, then surely the partnership will move to another level. Moreover, the common voice will be heard globally, which would make crisis management much more effective than at present. As long as the constant development of the CSDP allowing the Union to become an influential security power is often understood as an attempt to weaken EU-NATO cooperation, things will remain at the same stage, more of trying and less of resolving crisis situations, as is the case in Ukraine. On the contrary, the assumption of a global role by the EU should be seen as complementarity and less in terms of competition, since the EU has developed its civilian component more. In reality, things are slightly different. In the ambitions for international domination, it is frequently overlooked that a joint force can have a stronger effect in restoring international order and security when needed. However, it seems that the NATO Summit in Washington in 2024 went in the same direction that we have become accustomed to so far – theoretical and conceptual deterrence, but with a different twist – the realization that transatlantic problems are not only external in nature, but also arise from internal vulnerabilities of member states' democracies (such as the rise of extremism). Things are not simple, and the current situation is reminiscent of entering a new era of the long war, in which it seems that NATO deterrence and the economic sanctions imposed by the EU are no longer sufficient or credible to stop the Kremlin's aggression. The continuation of the war is a wake-up call for the Occident that it is time to act, and why not, if attacked, to be ready to fight in the near future (Naumescu 2024).



## Conclusions

Today's crises do not stop at the external borders of a state or region, moreover, they are becoming more complex and interconnected, with the effect often being felt globally. A good example of this is the COVID-19 pandemic, or the crisis generated by the war between Russia and Ukraine. In these circumstances, NATO needs a strong partner, and this can only be achieved by the European Union assuming a greater global role regarding defence. The Union must therefore increasingly strengthen its security and defence policy if it wants to succeed in meeting reasonable expectations as a credible and equal transatlantic partner able and willing to manage crises effectively, taking the lead when necessary but in close coordination with NATO.

The idea of developing a European pillar within the North Atlantic Alliance has been readily accepted and even encouraged by the Allies, and is known as the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI). It was created with the aim of strengthening European participation in security matters while enhancing transatlantic cooperation (EUR-Lex 2021). In a first formulation, the ESDI involves a process that should lead over time to an increase in the role and capabilities of the European Community in managing its own security and beyond. The launch and development of the concept has led to the strengthening of relations between NATO and the EU, which have gradually developed into a partnership with a strong global impact in security and defence matters. The affirmation of the Union in security and defence matters is also seen as a pillar of integrity and effectiveness within NATO. The EU's growing role will not only serve the interests of the Community states, but will strengthen and reinforce transatlantic security and interests over time.

The formation of the transatlantic partnership was a milestone in the evolution of the two entities, but it must be highlighted that despite the efforts of European leaders, the EU's role in crisis management from military perspective remains a minor one. This is due to EU's limited capabilities in terms of armed intervention. Being more dependent on the military capabilities of NATO, the EU should focus more on the soft security component of crisis management, thus becoming a complementary voice for the partnership. Complementarity should not be understood in terms of interoperability, but in terms of complementing the military dimension with what can be post-conflict reconstruction or even conflict prevention through civilian measures. At the same time, the different tools and means they possess can be complementary as long as the two partners aim to ensure collective security by eliminating divergence and duplication of military capabilities. Cooperation is a necessity in these critical times, but especially in the unpredictable future of the international environment: closer cooperation, concerted and joint use and an efficient and transparent European defence sector also strengthen the capabilities available to NATO (European Parliament 2021).





Faced with the same security challenges and threats, NATO and the EU will always look to develop their partnership further with a view to increasing collaboration through continued harmonization of the Euro-Atlantic agenda. Regional instability in the East and South has pushed the EU and NATO to take the initiative to strengthen the partnership, and the 2023 Joint Declaration attests this fact. Only through cooperation and political dialogue can security challenges and threats be limited. Despite this, there are various obstacles of political nature, generated by national interests, public opinion or economic issues concerning defence investment, and the difference in allies' views on global threats and challenges. In addition, these obstacles can also be perceived as elements that may limit the functioning of the partnership as a whole. Perhaps one of the most contentious discussions at the partnership level is around financial issues. The way in which NATO and the EU contribute and allocate their share of GDP to defence and security has been and continues to be a major source of disagreement in the NATO-EU relationship. The United States believes that NATO's functionality also depends on how European states develop their own military capabilities, but especially on their contribution to the Alliance's budget. Continued investment by the Union in particular in strong military capabilities and increased defence funding will not only strengthen the EU, but at the same time the transatlantic alliance, making it a single pole of international power.

The attempt to provide a common response to Russian aggression against Ukraine is in fact a guarantee for strengthening security cooperation between NATO and the EU. The divergences in the partnership's position towards Ukraine, but especially in the economic and military aid offered, can be seen as progress towards a new stage of transatlantic cooperation. It should be noted that the unity of partnership often begins with different visions and contradictions. The best solutions on security and defence issues have been based on contradiction, which is, after all, a form of cooperation. The joint actions and measures taken by both organisations since the beginning of the conflict demonstrate the role that the EU and NATO play in global crisis and conflict management. The sanctions imposed on Russia have emphasised the strength of the partnership, but especially the importance of cooperation in times of maximum intensity. The political dialogue that followed this crisis was focused on restoring balance in Europe, and the assistance offered to Ukraine, both military and civilian, was to discourage escalation of the conflict. Cooperation between NATO and the EU is essential at this critical time for Euro-Atlantic security, and future measures and strategies must be geared towards strengthening the role that the two organisations have developed over time as a stabilising factor in the transatlantic area and beyond.

However, the partners' incapacity to succeed in putting an end to the hostilities between Russia and Ukraine shows that the two organizations need a new approach which includes those aspects that can lead a state to cease hostilities against another



state. As long as there are different positions within NATO and the EU on aid towards Ukraine, on the Russian threat, or even on future actions, or the future of the transatlantic cooperation itself, the actions taken by the two organizations will not stop Russian aggression, but rather it seems more likely that it will intensify it. When all the member states of the partnership, including Hungary – which is taking a stand against the aid actions offered to Ukraine, claiming that military and economic aid is amplifying tensions in the area, and even dragging NATO into a conflict with Russia – will have a unified voice, then there will be better chances for the conflict in Eastern Europe to be stopped. Thus, both NATO and the EU must show more unity on security and defence issues. Only then, will they increase their credibility and become an international force. It is time for the member states of the two organizations to act together and do more than just impose economic or political sanctions.

Comparing all presented aspects, we can strongly affirm that the Transatlantic Partnership is fundamental to stability in the Euro-Atlantic area, and that the strategies and objectives undertaken by both NATO and the EU enhance security at a global level, not just regional. Moreover, the NATO-EU partnership is possible despite political constraints, which means that the two organizations have moved from the discussion phase to working together, focusing on the common goal of security and stability in the transatlantic area. Despite the efforts made over the years to adapt to new security challenges, both NATO and the European Union need to be more assertive when engaging in crisis management.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

- Bogzeanu, Cristina. 2011. “Rolul NATO și al UE în managementul crizelor din Balcanii de Vest.” *Centrul de Studii Strategice de Apărare și Securitate*. [https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf\\_studii/rolul\\_nato\\_si\\_al\\_ue\\_in\\_managementul\\_crizelor\\_din\\_balcanii\\_de\\_vest.pdf](https://cssas.unap.ro/ro/pdf_studii/rolul_nato_si_al_ue_in_managementul_crizelor_din_balcanii_de_vest.pdf)
- Chihaia, Mihai. 2024. “Military Mobility: a Stepping Stone for European Defence and Deterrence.” *The 7Ds sustainability - Defence Extended, Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies*, July: 21-27.
- Council of the European Union. 2022. “A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security.” *europa.eu*. March 21. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7371-2022-INIT/en/pdf>
- Council of the European Union. 2019. “EU Concept for Military Command and Control - Rev 8.” *europa.eu, Brussels*. April 23. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8798-2019-INIT/en/pdf#:~:text=The%20EU%20does%20not%20have,missions%20and%20military%20CSDP%20operations>



- Curtea de Conturi Europeană. 2019. “Document de analiză nr.09-Apărarea europeană.” *europa.eu*. [https://www.eca.europa.eu/lists/ecadocuments/rew19\\_09/rew\\_eu-defence\\_ro.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/lists/ecadocuments/rew19_09/rew_eu-defence_ro.pdf)
- Dungaciu Dan, Cincă Sanda. 2015. *NATO post-Lisabona și provocările regionale*. București: Institutul de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale.
- Duțu, Petre. 2013. *Managementul situațiilor de criză și prevenirea conflictelor armate*. București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare “Carol I”.
- EUR-Lex. 2021. *European security and defence identity*. 06 25. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Aeuropean\\_security\\_defence\\_identity](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Aeuropean_security_defence_identity)
- EUR-Lex. 2023. *Mutual defence clause*. [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Amutual\\_defence](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Amutual_defence).
- European Commission. 2023. *European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations – 10 years of the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC)*. [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/emergency-response-coordination-centre-ercc/10-years-emergency-response-coordination-centre-ercc\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/emergency-response-coordination-centre-ercc/10-years-emergency-response-coordination-centre-ercc_en)
- European Council. 2024. “EU-NATO cooperation.” *europa.eu*. September 2. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/defence-security/eu-nato-cooperation/>
- European Council. 2024. *How the Council coordinates the EU response to crises*. July 3. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/ipcr-response-to-crises/>
- European Council. 2024. *The EU and NATO have further deepened their strategic partnership by jointly responding to common threats and challenges*. 5 June. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/06/16/the-eu-and-nato-have-further-deepened-their-strategic-partnership-by-jointly-responding-to-common-threats-and-challenges/>
- European Parliament. 2022. “EU strategic autonomy 2013-2023. From concept to capacity.” *europa.eu*. July. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733589/EPRS\\_BRI\(2022\)733589\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/733589/EPRS_BRI(2022)733589_EN.pdf)
- European Parliament. 2021. *Report-A9-0250/2021 on the future of EU-US relations*. 07 26. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0250\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2021-0250_EN.html)
- European Union External Action. 2023. *Missions and Operations. working for a stable world and a safer Europe*. 01 23. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/missions-and-operations_en)
- Federal Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Austria. 2021. *Handbook on CSDP*. Viena: Armed Forces Printing Center, Volume 1, 4th edition.
- Ghiba, Daniel. 2014. *Studiu privind managementul crizelor politico-militare*. București: Editura Universității Naționale de Apărare “Carol I”.
- Ghiba, Daniela-Mădălina, and Toma Pleșanu. 2018. “Rolul Uniunii Europene în gestionarea crizelor în spațiul european.” *Buletinul Universității Naționale de Apărare “Carol I” București*, nr.2: 85-95.



- Ghincea, Marius. 2017, actualizat 2022. “Apărarea colectivă și iluzia securității.” *Adevărul.ro*. 07 13. [https://adevarul.ro/blogurile-adevarul/apararea-colectiva-si-iluzia-securitatii-1797935.html#google\\_vignette](https://adevarul.ro/blogurile-adevarul/apararea-colectiva-si-iluzia-securitatii-1797935.html#google_vignette)
- Groșeanu, Ion-Alexandru. 2013. *Studiu comparativ NATO-UE-OSCE-ONU privind managementul crizelor*. București.
- Joja, I. S. 2022. *In the face of Russian aggression, the West needs to strengthen European security and Black Sea partnerships*. January 11. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/face-russian-aggression-west-needs-strengthen-european-security-and-black-sea>
- Joja, I.S. 2021. *The EU's East: A way Forward* . March 1. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/eus-east-way-forward>
- Joja, I.S. 2024. *Toward a NATO Black Sea strategy*. July 2. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/toward-nato-black-sea-strategy>.
- NATO. 2022. “NATO 2022 Strategic Concept.” *nato.int*. June 29. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2022/6/pdf/290622-strategic-concept.pdf)
- NATO. 2023. “Operations and missions: past and present.” *nato.int*. July 10. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52060.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52060.htm)
- NATO. 2023. *Operations and missions: past and present*. July 10. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_52060.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52060.htm)
- Naumescu, Valentin. 2024. *Summit-ul NATO 75 și intrarea Occidentului în Era Războiului Lung*. 07 11. <https://www.contributors.ro/summit-ul-nato-75-si-intrarea-occidentului-in-era-razboiului-lung/>
- Romanyshyn, Iulian. 2021. “Breaking the Law of Opposite Effects: Europe’s Strategic Autonomy and the Revived Transatlantic Partnership.” *Security Policy Brief, Egmont Institute: Royal Institute for International Relations*, No.140, 1-6. <https://www.egmontinstitute.be/app/uploads/2021/03/spb-140-Iulian-Romanyshyn-final.pdf?type=pdf>
- Sloan, S. R. 2021. “Donald Trump and NATO: Historic Alliance Meet A-historic President.” *H-Diplo/ISSF Policy Series, America and the World - The Effects of the Trump Presidency, Middlebury College*. April 8. <https://issforum.org/ISSF/PDF/PS2021-20.pdf>