Military Cooperation in a time of COVID-19
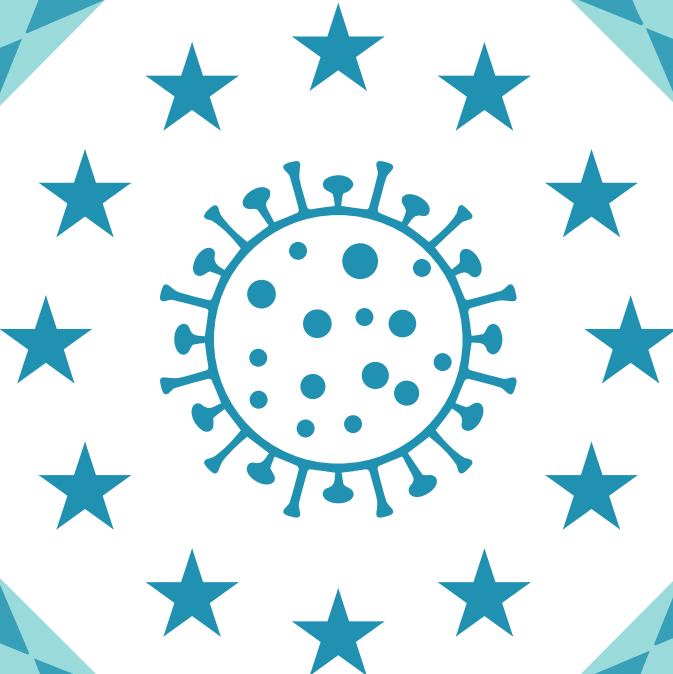
Patrick Keatinge

The first part of the paper is an analysis of the patterns of military cooperation in Europe, reflecting variations in the **security and defence policies of European states**. It examines the different composition and roles of the European Union and NATO, as well as the more recent European Intervention Initiative. European governments at present show little appetite to bear the material or political costs of creating a single "European Army". The second part of the paper examines the initial **impact of the coronavirus pandemic** on this policy area, and argues that future patterns of cooperation will depend on how the pandemic affects the evolution of immediate threats in the European region, changes in military technology, and geopolitical rivalry in the multipolar world order.

28th April 2020

1. Introduction: on the cusp

In recent months we have been living in the shadow of existential doom on a global scale. An increased concern with the consequences of climate change has been overtaken by the sudden actuality of the coronavirus pandemic. It is all too easy, in these circumstances, to overlook the existence of what might now seem to be less urgent threats – the breakdown of trust between the West and Russia, the random violence of jihadist terrorists, the dark side of technological innovation, and the increasingly combative nature of geopolitical rivalry between the major powers. The emergence of these challenges over the last two decades has disappointed the expectations of a harmonious world order following the end of the Cold War thirty years ago and has raised the profile of military cooperation in Europe.

The first part of this paper (sections 2-7) was written as an introduction to the principal structures of military cooperation in Europe as they faced this agenda, describing their different roles and political tensions between their member states. It reflects matters as they stood at the middle of January 2020, just before the coronavirus pandemic emerged as a crisis for European countries.

The extraordinary disruption that has since ensued has generally been seen as "transformative", though to what extent for good or ill it is impossible to say at this stage. The second part of the paper (sections 8-10), which considers the impact of the pandemic on the security and defence agenda of European states, is thus necessarily speculative, raising difficult questions for the European Union and its Member States.

2. The way we were - searching for the European Army

One of the more curious sideshows of the campaign for the most recent European Parliament elections (May 2019) was the issue of the "European Army". When their views were sought, most Irish candidates reacted with surprise and, more often than not, negativity.

In the event, the issue was indeed marginal in Ireland, but it is worth asking why it arose in the first place, and what it meant.

The debate about this elusive military formation in effect pits a broad but controversial idea against the reality of military cooperation in the EU, the role of NATO, and a recent French initiative in this field. This search for a European army is without a final resolution – there is no such thing. Nonetheless it reveals the major political variations in the security and defence policies of European states, as they face the challenges of an increasingly fragmented and mistrustful world order.

3. A big idea - dreams and nightmares

Dreams. Nearly 70 years ago, the French government proposed a European Defence Community (EDC), with a fully integrated defence force. In the context of the confrontation with the Soviet Union, this was designed to make the rearmament of West Germany acceptable a bare five years after the defeat of the Third Reich. The EDC treaty was agreed in 1952 but was rejected by the French parliament two years later. The big idea of a European army (as a component of the broader North Atlantic alliance) was abandoned.

In November 2018, during the centenary commemorations of the end of the First World War, both the French President and the German Chancellor raised this big idea again, though in the form of cryptic rhetorical musings without clear elaboration of what precisely they had in mind. Was it a "European Army" or an "army of Europeans"? Whatever it was to be, it was presented as a desirable objective.

Nightmares. Yet it is often as a nightmare that the "European Army" has been deployed in political debate. In the United Kingdom, the hardcore advocates of Brexit have long presented it as the harbinger and inevitable corollary of a federalist superstate, a mainly French plot to counter the dominance of the Anglo-Saxons" in terms of geopolitical entitlement.

In Ireland, the anxiety is based on a similar outcome – the federalist superstate – but a different sensibility. For the defenders of the untrammelled national sovereignty of a small state it represents a return to the multinational imperialism of the past. In addition, for peace activists in a society with limited military ambitions, any military project is bound to be suspect, particularly one which is envisaged on a continental scale.

Negative images of the phantom "European Army" in this country have led to a determined resistance, driven by a deterministic way of thinking. This resistance has its battle honours, in the four referendums on the Treaty of Nice (2001-2002) and the Treaty of Lisbon (2008 -2009). As a consequence, given its policy of military neutrality, the participation of the state in a future EU common defence now requires the endorsement of a referendum (Article 29. 9). Ideas matter, but slogans have wings.

4. Military cooperation in the European Union

Largely unnoticed by those outside the military profession, Europe is indeed awash with varied forms of military cooperation between national forces. The example of the Netherlands is striking, with many units from its land, sea and air forces closely integrated with those of Germany and its Benelux partners. Collaboration on newer types of threat is also evident; for example, the Hungarian defence forces work on cyber defence in a partnership outside Europe with the Ohio National Guard. Nevertheless, the sum of all these and many other cooperative activities does not make a European Army.

The European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). However, there is an overarching framework of military cooperation among Member States in the European Union. "Defence" has been on the table since the Treaty of Maastricht came into force in 1993, though agreement on what it involved and how it might be implemented was delayed until the turn of the century. A confused debate about

the EU's claim to "strategic autonomy" ensued. What was its role to be – alongside or instead of the already existing NATO[1]?

In the event, the EU policy took the form of civilian missions and military operations, in an "international crisis management" role outside the EU. These have been deployed since 2003. Although a system of rotating standby forces - the so-called "Battlegroups" – was established for this purpose they have never yet been used. In practice each military operation has been a coalition of forces of those Member States which were willing and able to serve.

The desire to reform these makeshift arrangements was reflected in the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force in 2009, and provided for a commitment to enhanced cooperation, labelled "Permanent Structured Cooperation" (now commonly known as "Pesco"). Again, it took time to reach agreement on the substance of this concept. After the formulation of the European Global Strategy in 2016, which took up the aim of strategic autonomy as the ambition to give the EU the capacity to act independently, especially in its own neighbourhood, agreement on Pesco was reached at the end of the year[2]. Have we found the European Army at last?

Pesco - what's new? Pesco consists of a complex type of cooperation whereby the 25 Member States which have subscribed to it agree to a more binding commitment to participate in at least some of a list of specific projects, mainly in order to generate the relevant capabilities for its operations. This approach is largely motivated by a wish to avoid the considerable waste incurred in the existing practice of relying on uncoordinated national procurement policies.

The discipline required in this new process is supplemented by a greater transparency of national defence planning, and, for the first time, a financial incentive from the European Commission in the form of a European Defence Fund, as part of the EU's overall budget.

Pesco - what's not new? For all the novelty in the Pesco process, the scope of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy has not

[1] For the varied meanings of "strategic autonomy", see Jolyon Howoth, "Strategic Autonomy; Why It's Not About Europe Going it Alone", Martens Centre, 2019.
[2] See ref. Global Strategy.

changed. Military operations are still deployed only outside the EU, not in defence of its territory. Participation in specific operations is not obligatory; it remains at the discretion of national governments, according to their own rules of deployment.

All of this reflects the hybrid nature of the EU's system of governance. Decisions on, for example, the Common Agricultural Policy, are made by qualified majority voting – the "supranational" method – but that is not the case with regard to security and defence. Pulled into the Pesco orbit by virtue of the new European Defence Fund, a recent review of the EU's Court of Auditors puts it thus: "Defence is a specific domain, at the heart of Member States' national sovereignty"; the policy's "unique nature, [enshrines] the Member States' leading role and [contains] several limitations on the EU's action in this area"[3]. Thus the Court's review sees the success of the Pesco programme itself as depending on the Member States' continuing willingness to pay for the level of ambition they have agreed.

Furthermore, the Court of Auditors argues that the necessary requirements of a "real and credible army" are lacking and unlikely to be created in the near future. In particular, "building a so-called European army entails transferring national sovereign powers to the EU supranational level, which several Member States are opposed to"[4].

"Several Member States" is arguably a heroic understatement, but there is another serious bar to the EU presenting itself as a suitable home for a European Army. It is not accepted by 22 of the EU Member States as the primary framework for their collective defence - the provision of military deterrence and defence of their territory. For the last seventy-one years that has been the role of NATO.

5. NATO in question

The market leader in military matters. Given its historic role during the Cold War, can we now see NATO as a sort of proxy candidate for the European Army? The obvious objection is that NATO, even with an enlarged European membership including former adversaries, is not exclusively European. It does what it says on the tin – it protects the North Atlantic region, frequently if loosely known as "the West".

NATO is usually justified in ideological terms, upholding broad values such as democracy and the rule of law. Its political credibility rests on the "all for one, one for all" commitment in Article Five of the Washington Treaty of 1949, a mystique that owes as much to its psychological effect as its military capacity.

The Alliance's original mission was expressed in the well-worn statement that it existed to "keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down". Allowing for minor adjustment to the language, this still applies even without the Cold War ideology. The solidarity of values sits uneasily with a difficult search to reconcile the different interests and power relationships of its members.

In terms of military capacity, the United States is by a long way the dominant partner in NATO, but for all its dominance, as well as the Alliance's integrated command structures and military interoperability, NATO remains an Alliance of sovereign states.

Trump versus NATO. Not for the first time, the transatlantic Alliance is now mired in controversy, on two fundamental and related issues, burden-sharing and political solidarity. Burden-sharing is bound to be in question in any collective activity, from waging cold war to washing the dishes, and the failure of most Member States to live up to the agreed level of defence expenditure of 2% of GDP has been a running sore for years. President Trump's distinctive contribution to this debate has been to conduct it in a way that shows little regard for the claims of solidarity. His cavalier attitude to solidarity in NATO is reflected in the unhinged nature of current American foreign policy across the board. Over the last three years there has been clear evidence that the president neither understands the value of international cooperation, nor respects his allies.

[3] European Court of Auditors, Review No. 09, European Defence, p.4. For more detailed information on Pesco see Clodagh Quain, "EU Strategic Autonomy: Filling the Gaps", Institute for International and European Affairs, Dublin February 2019.
[4] Ibid, p. 29.

It is tempting to treat this situation as a passing storm, after which normal service will be resumed, but that would be to discount a much more broadly based and closely reasoned debate on the nature and conduct of American foreign policy. This includes the argument for a general retrenchment of American involvement in international conflicts and a more hands-off approach to the leadership of their alliances, including NATO.

An example of this school of thought, published just before Donald Trump was elected in 2016, proposes an instructive scenario[5]. In a section titled "Cutting allies loose", the author, Andrew J. Bacevich, argues that the European members of NATO can pay their dues and should do so, thereby earning greater responsibilities in the Alliance's command structures. Allowing time for their populations time to adjust, the umbilical cord with the US would then be cut by mutual consent in 2025, leaving a European military alliance responsible for the protection of its own territory.

The resilience of NATO, so far. As of now, however, this option does not fly. On the ground the Alliance's forces are still deployed in order to reassure their members and deter their adversary, on the lines agreed before President Trump's election. That is particularly important for those countries most exposed to possible Russian revanchism. Institutional officials, inured to the tradition of coping with NATO's internal dissent, invoke its common values, and try to play down the deviant antics, not just of President Trump but also his Turkish counterpart, who buys Russian arms and acts unilaterally in Syria. Meanwhile most of its member governments work through their links with Congress and career officials in the Departments of State and Defence. In the short term at least there is more to American government than a disconnected White House.

6. The French connection

The European Intervention Initiative (E2I). The French promoted the idea of the European Army 70 years ago, and it is no surprise that they have returned to the question of military cooperation more recently. The then newly elected president, Emmanuel Macron, raised the topic in one of his first major speeches on 26 September 2017, and followed through with the launch of the European Intervention Initiative (E2I) nine months later.

The E2I, as it is known in the acronym-happy world of military organisations, is a group of 13 (originally nine) European states, most of which belong to both the EU and NATO. It is one element in a broader French strategy to mobilise the EU's response to the challenges of geopolitical competition, alongside the evolving potential in industrial and monetary policy. "European sovereignty," in this view, is necessary to avoid "a kind of vassalage" in the increasingly antagonistic relationship between the United States and China[6].

Membership and Mission of the European Intervention Initiative[7]. The informal structure of the E2I – a network rather than a legally-defined bureaucratic institution – allows for an unusually varied membership. Anomalies abound. Denmark, with the only defence opt-out in the EU, but a firm member of NATO, is there. So are Norway (in NATO, but not in the EU), Finland and Sweden, members of the EU but not quite in NATO (they are "enhanced partners").

But the most interesting case is that of the United Kingdom, on the cusp of its exit from the EU, where it had acquired the reputation of being a significantly limiting factor in the development of EU security and defence policy. But as a European military power, the United Kingdom is one of two heavyweights, along with France, with which it enjoys an unusually strong bilateral military relationship.

[5] Andrew J. Bacevich, "Ending Endless War: a Pragmatic Military Strategy, Foreign Affairs, Vol. 95, No. 5, September-October 2016, pp.42-43.

[6] For an overview of French policy, see Ronan le Guelt and Helene Conway-Mouret, "The challenge of Strategic Autonomy", report of the French senate, www.senat.fr, July-August 2019.

[7] Members of the E2I include: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norwat, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

Of the absentees, Poland is the most obvious, putting its money in what is the sometimes oddly named "Fort Trump" concept, of permanent American bases on its territory. Indeed, Estonia is the only representative of the central and east European states in the E2I, which has a decidedly west European character.

The question of what political authority the E2I might "intervene" under does not seem very clear at this stage, but its stated mission is to prepare what is clearly lacking in Europe - a shared strategic culture. Different perceptions of threat (Russia in the east, jihadist terrorism in the south), different historical experiences and different decision-making styles make this mission a significant one, but by the same token one which can hardly be achieved overnight.

Like Pesco, with its emphasis on capabilities, the French initiative, with its emphasis on how to deploy them, is a project for the long haul[8]. A key factor in its development is likely to be the influence of Germany, a country with a military culture noted for its restraint but which nevertheless has a considerable presence in international crisis management. A Franco-German convergence on how – and where – common interests may be pursued is a necessary prerequisite of a future European strategic culture.

France ups the ante? Twelve months after resurrecting the idea of an European Army, President Macron returned to the theme. In an interview in The Economist on 7 November 2019, reacting to the recent abrupt abandonment of their Kurdish allies in Syria by the United States, he claimed that NATO was suffering "brain death". There had been no consultation with other NATO allies which had forces on the ground.

The French President then drew a more general lesson from that crisis. "Europe", he said, "must become autonomous in terms of military strategy and capability"[9]. However, if he was attempting to speak truth to his peers, the French President's peers were not inclined to listen. Their pushback was immediate and wide ranging: for them the common interest and supreme priority lay in the preservation of NATO.

At a meeting of NATO leaders on 3-4 December 2019 there was no clear resolution of the several serious tensions between the allies, but the cracks were papered over by a renewed commitment to Article Five and agreement to increase the scope of the Alliance to deal with the issues of security in space and the rise of China. The vexed question of political consultation was reserved for another day. The "enduring alliance", as it is often called, still endures[10].

7. The European Army: a mirage, for now

The mirage and the reality. The military manoeuvres in Europe described above do not amount to a European Army. That remains a mirage, whether enticing or repellent.

The facts on the ground consist of more than thirty sovereign but interdependent states, acknowledging broad common values but acting according to their own view of where their security interests lie.

The nature of cooperation between such a large group of states is nevertheless unprecedented in historical terms, reflecting a response to the horrendous costs of conflict in the previous century. It has taken the form of two different "clubs", with overlapping membership. Their legal bases and bureaucratic structures are complex and opaque and their different roles (international crisis management outside Europe and territorial protection of Europe) can be confusing.

It is not surprising, therefore, if their public profile is patchy and their dependence on public support more precarious than might seem at first sight. After all, for most of us their existence is not a matter of everyday concern, and who likes to pay a premium on policies to insure against what seem to be remote contingencies? Governments may have to rely on a "permissive consensus" to justify public expenditure on security and defence policy.

---

[8] A detailed analysis is Dick Zandee and Kimberley Kruijver, "The European Intervention Initiative: Developing a shared strategic culture for European defence", Clingendael Report, September-October 2019.
[9] The Economist, 7 November 2019.
[10] See the "London Declaration", 3-4 December 2019.

For those directly concerned, the political and military officials, the management of the broad division of labour between the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy and NATO has become a major preoccupation in recent years[11]. The 22 states which are members of both clubs continue to frame their national defence policies with a view to deployment in both formations. But some form of comprehensive merger between the two clubs, owing to the political tensions referred to above, seems unlikely for now.

The obstacles to change in the EU. So far as the EU is concerned, there are two obstacles to the creation of a future European Army in the foreseeable future.

The first is the question of the cost of replacing American capabilities and rebuilding NATO's command structure. A recent analysis concludes that "it would not be done in a couple of years, but rather over the course of one or two decades"[12]. So much for the completion date of 2025, suggested by Professor Bacevich. After all, we have to factor in the fluctuating budgetary politics of each of the Member States.

Arguably a more fundamental difficulty is the absence of a single legitimate political authority capable of deploying such a force. Nowhere in the European Union of today, facing several existential challenges, is there a serious move to create a federal superstate, the necessary prerequisite for a European Army.

If NATO were to implode, the most that could be envisaged, possibly along the lines argued by President Macron, is an all-purpose European alliance between the existing national armies of European sovereign states. And if it is to include Iceland, Norway, the United Kingdom and even Turkey, it would have to be agreed outside the legal framework of the European Union.

8. What now for the military in Europe?

Now the analysis above seems to refer to another age. In the struggle to stem the coronavirus pandemic, European states are deploying their military forces in a humanitarian role which may be rare in their own countries but is often exercised abroad. As highly disciplined organisations, possessing a wide range of technical skills, able to provide logistic capacity and field hospitals, national armed forces are an integral part of the response to the crisis of health policy. Military cooperation now takes the form of NATO's organisation of military flights to carry medical supplies. This is a matter of "security" in the broadest sense of the word.

However, when the impact of the pandemic is followed by that of economic recovery from a very low base, the security and defence policies of European states will face the challenge of the transformation of budgetary priorities. Ministers of Defence will not be encouraged by the memory of the massive cuts which followed the financial crisis in 2008. And they will again face challenges which are not related to public health.

9. What next for the "integrity of their quarrels"[13]?

At this point, speculation must be pinned down by all sorts of caveat, so vast is the range of possibilities we face. So far as security and defence policy is concerned, a preliminary focus on the impact of the pandemic may be grasped by examining how it is affecting four "quarrels" – negative trends in the security environment which preceded the pandemic. The first two concern the evolution of existing threats in the European region, Russian revanchism and jihadist terrorism. The others are of global significance – the military aspect of technological change and geopolitical competition in the multipolar world order. The

---

[11] See Gustav Lindstrom and Thierry Tardy (eds.), "The EU and NATO: The essential partners", European Institute for Security Studies, Paris 2019.

[12] See Douglas Barrie et al., "Defending Europe: scenario-based capability requirements for NATO's European members", International Institute for Security Studies, London April 2019.

[13] Winston Churchill's well-known phrase in 1922 referred to the narrow ground of the new border in Ireland and sectarian conflict amidst "the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone".

future is likely to lie in the interaction of these trends, and how they are transformed by the many other aspects of our current predicament.

Russia is back. After five years since Russia intervened in Ukraine it might be said that its policy is more about recovering its status as a "Great Power" than territorial reconquest, were it not for the fact that there was – and still is – evidence of a resort to force; moreover, the demonstration of military prowess remains a favoured response to status anxiety, as in other claimants to the rank of Great Power. Cyber interference and disinformation campaigns still serve to make Russia's neighbours nervous.

The recent resumption of diplomatic attempts to implement the agreements on a full ceasefire in Ukraine (originally made nearly five years ago) offered some encouragement but the hardening of borders, a general feature of the pandemic, has stalled the process. In any case, the repudiation of the annexation of Crimea is likely to be, literally, a bridge too far. At this stage, the impact of the pandemic could prove unsettling for some time, as Russia (a late starter in the coronavirus curve) seeks to make its own way. There is some suggestion that the Kremlin is seeking relief from economic sanctions in exchange for token humanitarian gestures to Italy and the United States.

Jihadist terrorism has lost ground? The so-called Islamic State, which also emerged five years ago, is no more, but the widespread phenomenon of jihadist terror is likely to persist in varying forms, including in Europe. In France, a state of severe lockdown, a lone wolf attack recently killed two people and wounded four. This type of threat will continue to demand both internal and external policy responses by all European states, particularly with regard to intelligence sharing and international crisis management.

Hopes for a concerted diplomatic approach in the latter context are bedevilled by the multiplicity of actors in the chaos of the Middle East and North Africa. An uneasy truce, agreed between Turkey and Russia, prevails in north west Syria, but what are the prospects for refugees clustered there and elsewhere in the region? Meanwhile, the Saudis shoot down a missile over Riyadh, and declare a ceasefire in the war in Yemen; the outcome is not clear. The Sahel is as unstable as ever, and the civil war in Libya has flared up, as Egypt, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates break the arms embargo.

On 23 March, the Secretary General of the United Nations appealed for a global truce in the face of the pandemic. The events referred to above were culled from media reports during the succeeding two weeks; the response hangs in the balance.

Military technology is changing. At a time of rapid technological change new possibilities in the use of force are changing the nature of threats. It is one thing to deal with hypersonic delivery systems for old-fashioned ordnance (conventional or nuclear), but we also face robotic warfare, threats to satellites in space, the wholesale paralysis of a society's nervous system in the form of cyberattacks, and psychological manipulation via disinformation campaigns.

All of this is challenging enough for military professionals. There is always the inherent risk of preparing for the possibility of the next war with the capabilities of the last one, given the long lead times associated with military procurement.

A particularly worrying feature of the current situation is the erosion of the existing arms control measures devised during the Cold War. Nuclear weapons, the outstanding existential threat of that period, have not gone away. The latest addition to the nuclear club, North Korea, continues to test missiles from its allegedly virus-free fortress. The possibility of biological warfare (including deliberately induced pandemics!) cannot be excluded, even if the current episode looks like sheer incompetence. Added to that, the formulation of regulations to control the new forms of digital warfare is in its infancy.

Geopolitical competition is prevalent in a multipolar world order. We are already well advanced in the formation of a multipolar world order, in which geopolitical competition, based on power relations, an obsession with status, and a tendency to zero-sum thinking, have eroded the benign assumptions and multilateral institutions which seemed to prevail nearly thirty years ago. It is not just that the dominant state of that era, the United States, is reacting to the increasing influence of China; it is the way that reaction is being pursued. Across the board of its foreign policy (trade, development, climate change as well as security), the United States under its present president is a law unto itself, and often openly hostile to the values and procedures of multilateral cooperation.

This has been all too apparent in the opening months of the pandemic. Instead of taking the lead in responding to the crisis through pragmatic cooperation, US-China relations have been marked by a blame game and name-calling. It is business as usual in the White House. The American President loses few opportunities to belittle the value and institutions of multilateral cooperation. He recently announced the withdrawal of funding from the World Health Organisation. It is no accident that, three weeks after President Trump's threat to withdraw funding, the UN Secretary General made his appeal for a global truce, the UN Security Council has still not met.

At this early stage of the pandemic it is hard to be optimistic about its impact on security and defence policy in Europe. While it is obvious that in the short term the pandemic has drained much of the energy from the quarrels examined above, the will to conflict remains. The experience of previous pandemics is not encouraging either. The memory of the Spanish flu pandemic, just over 100 years ago, was obscured by that of the conflicts which prevailed during and after its course; twenty years after that pandemic Europe stood on the threshold of the Second World War. Our own memory of that event has been masked by the Calvary of our political revolution; twenty years after the Spanish Flu we faced our own four and a half years of "the Emergency". Not enough lessons learned then; better try harder this time.[14]

10. Questions for the European Union and its Member States

Now we have the European Union, a more substantial multilateral institution, for all its faults, than the old League of Nations in the previous century. But faults there are. Given the fact that public health is primarily the business of the Member States, the low profile of the EU in the early stage of the pandemic is perhaps understandable, but the painful delay in achieving solidarity on the approach to economic recovery, three months into the crisis, suggests it cannot be taken for granted. In a post-pandemic, bad-tempered, multipolar world order, the Member States will rely more than ever on their collective political will but will face many difficult questions to sustain it.

In a multipolar world, scale matters. The central rivalry between the United States and China is played out in the context of the competition between former or future not quite so big contenders – Russia, India, Brazil. Does Europe, in the form of the European Union, have the scale to protect its values and interests in this company? In terms of its economic weight (market size, technological capacity and adherence to agreed rules of the game), the answer is on balance positive. However, it is one thing to possess these assets, another to harness them.

In terms of the EU's political influence the answer begs more questions. Can a union of sovereign states match the centralised political authority of its competitors both in its overall foreign policy and the security and defence issues discussed above? Can the EU develop a collective foreign policy that is more than the sum of its parts? What is the relevance of the Union's military capacity in this context? How should the EU's relationship with the United States evolve? Has the West really passed its sell-by date? And if it has, what then for military cooperation in Europe?

Ultimately the answers will lie with national governments and their citizens and whether they have the will to provide the sort of solidarity which would allow the Union to take its place among the pillars of the multipolar world and counter its antagonistic aspects. Can they devise a strategy to this end[15]?

---

[14] For a detailed appraisal of the effects of the pandemic on conflicts, see 'Conoravirus in Conflict Zones: A Sobering Landscape'

[15] See Clodagh Quain and Ben Tonra, Strategy Building for Small States in European Security and Defence, the Institute of International and European Affairs, Dublin, 31 March 2020.

The Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) is Ireland's leading international affairs think tank. Founded in 1991, its mission is to foster and shape political, policy and public discourse in order to broaden awareness of international and European issues in Ireland and contribute to more informed strategic decisions by political, business and civil society leaders.

The IIEA is independent of government and all political parties and is a not-for profit organisation with charitable status. In January 2017, the Global Go To Think Tank Index ranked the IIEA as Ireland's top think tank.

IIEA
Sharing Ideas
Shaping Policy