



REPORT CGI 3:

THE DEBATE ABOUT THE EUROPEAN UNION'S STRATEGIC AUTONOMY, A VIEW FROM CATALONIA.

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The debate about the European Union's strategic autonomy, a view from Catalonia.

By Catalonia Global Institute

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Executive summary.

- Despite Brussels' rhetoric, EU countries have little common interest in military affairs and foreign policy, which explains the inviability of the EU's "strategic autonomy"
- Russia, Turkey, and the focus of attention of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy priorities are the major lines of division between France, Germany, and Poland.
- As the existing military cooperation structure on European soil, and due to the involvement of the US, NATO is the most likely framework for deepening defense cooperation among EU countries.
- It is not at present in Catalonia's interest for the EU to further integration in military affairs that would consolidate Spain as a valuable partner for EU members.
- Catalan leaders should bear in mind the different national interests at play, and not let themselves be driven by recurrent PR campaigns about EU "strategic autonomy"
- Catalonia should welcome further cooperation among European nations as long it is not done under an autonomous European Union umbrella.
- Catalonia should portray itself as a valuable, reliable, and conscious actor willing to assume security responsibilities and take into consideration the interest of potential European allies.



Introduction:

Lately, we have witnessed an intensification of the debate about the need to provide the European Union with strategic autonomy in defense. Although this debate is not new, the fact is that it is now being discussed in the EU institutions, by member states and by public opinion in general, with a degree of attention never seen before.

Two recent events have played a key role in understanding why the EU's strategic autonomy has come into the public agenda: first, the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan by the United States in August, without consulting the EU and without taking into account European countries' needs and interests. Second, the unilateral end of the deal between Australia and France to purchase submarines. Canberra preferred to enter into a new agreement, the AUKUS, a tripartite partnership with the US and the UK, purchasing the submarines from them and reinforcing coordination with them in the Indo-Pacific.

Those events had an important impact on how US foreign policy is understood in Europe. Biden has certified that the doctrine of "America First" inaugurated by Donald Trump, has not only not been reverted but it has been deepened more than ever. In this way, another element of continuity in American foreign policy confirmed by Biden is the focus of attention and resources towards the Indo-Pacific to contain China.

This reality causes dependence on the US as a security provider for EU countries within the framework of NATO to be questioned. As a consequence, does the EU need to think about increasing its military cooperation to compensate for this situation? And which position should Catalonia take in this debate?



Evolution of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy

Firstly, we need to bear in mind that Article 42 of the Treaty of the EU already contemplates a mutual assistance and collective defense clause, in similar terms as those of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Besides, the Treaty on EU has several articles devoted to the establishment of the “Common security and defense policy”¹. Thus, the obligation of the EU member states to assist each other in case of attack is already there. Nonetheless, in no case has this clause been translated into the establishment of a structure of military cooperation like NATO’s in the European continent. Consequently, the EU is still a largely irrelevant actor in the military field.

In accordance with the guidelines set out in Article 42 of the Treaty on European Union, the missions of the Common Defense and Security Policy, have to date been limited to conducting conflict prevention operations, stabilizing post-conflict scenarios, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian interventions and border security assistance in those third countries requesting EU assistance in these matters. In short, the Common Security and Defense Policy was not meant for conducting combat operations. This means that all military cooperation between most EU member states and the United States continues to be channeled through NATO.

That is not to say that in recent years there has been no significant progress in the development of the EU’s Common Defense and Security Policy. As an example, we could highlight the establishment in 2017 of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (known as PESCO)², which brings together 25 of the 27 EU member states with the aim of funding various

¹ European Parliament “Common security and defence policy Fact Sheets”. September 2021. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/159/common-security-and-defence-policy#_ftn1 (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

² Official Journal on the European Union “COUNCIL DECISION (CFSP) 2017/2315 of 11 December 2017 establishing permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and determining the list of participating Member States” Desembre 2017. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017D2315&from=EN> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



military cooperation projects that increase the investment, planning, development and operational capacity of Member States' defense capabilities so that they are prepared to participate in international missions, either within the framework of the EU itself or other relevant international organizations, as in the participation in NATO military operations or in UN Peacekeeping Missions for example.

Another important innovation in the framework of the EU's Common Defense and Security Policy is the establishment, also in 2017, of the European Defense Fund³. This fund is dedicated to promoting research and development in the military field through cooperation between companies of various EU member states, dedicating a budget of 1.2 billion euros for the 23 project lines that have been published in 2021. While this is a significantly greater investment in military R&D, it should be noted that this figure is still far from the 59 billion dollars that the United States invests annually in this field.

Also noteworthy is the recent establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF)⁴, an EU extra-budgetary mechanism that will cover all external military action undertaken within the framework of the Common Defense and Security Policy. The main novelty of this instrument is the ability to complement the capacity of the armed forces of countries hosting EU Common Defense and Security Policy operations with more active military assistance, including the direct provision of arms, military infrastructure and military advice on the ground. This measure has not been without controversy, as several non-governmental organizations have warned⁵ that this could aggravate certain conflicts and lead to serious human rights violations in third countries.

³ European Commission "The European Defence Fund (EDF)". 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/defence-industry-space/eu-defence-industry/european-defence-fund-edf_en (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

⁴ European Commission "European Peace Facility". 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/fpi/what-we-do/european-peace-facility_en (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

⁵ OXFAM International "€5bn European 'Peace' Facility risks fuelling conflict and human rights violations – joint statement". November 2020 Available at: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/eu5bn-european-peace-facility-risks-fuelling-conflict-and-human-rights-violations> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



The debate on the evolution of the Common Security and Defense Policy currently focuses on the possibility of establishing, two decades after the first attempt, a European rapid response force that would be able to immediately deploy a brigade of 5,000 soldiers to any country in need of urgent assistance. This option has once again been put on the table following the difficulties that EU member states encountered when evacuating their staff and collaborators from Kabul airport in August 2021, to the point that many of them could not finally be pulled out of Afghanistan. However, as pointed out in this note from the Catalan Society for Military Studies (SEM)⁶, it is highly doubtful that such a brigade could successfully complete missions similar to the evacuation of Kabul airport.

The current Member States' discussion on the level of military cooperation within the EU is channeled through the Strategic Compass⁷, a process of analyzing the threats facing the EU, the conflicts in its immediate environment and the challenges posed by key state and non-state actors for EU security. It is expected that this procedure will culminate in March 2022 with the publication of a document that clearly analyzes what military missions the EU should aspire to undertake, what capabilities and instruments it needs to have to achieve its objectives, how it can increase its resilience, and what framework of cooperation it intends to establish with the states considered priority partners.

⁶ Societat d'Estudis Militars "Euroexèrcit, fum i omissions" September 2021. Available at: <https://www.estudismilitars.cat/2021/09/07/euroexercit-fum-i-omissions/> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

⁷ European Parliament "The European Union's 'Strategic Compass' process" April 2021. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/graphs/EPRS_Strategic_Compass_final.pdf (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



Structural difficulties for greater military integration within the EU

We must not forget our starting point: the EU is not a state, but an international organization made up of several states. This has two major implications: first, despite having achieved a very significant level of economic integration within the framework of the EU internal market, the truth is that there is a divergence of historical and geopolitical perspectives between the different Member States. For example, if we assess Russia's perception as a potential existential threat, we find that Poland, Sweden, Romania, Finland, and the Baltics see Moscow as a serious threat to its security, while states such as France and Germany are more open to maintaining lines of cooperation.

The second conclusion is that, should EU military cooperation be increased to the point of establishing a military alliance comparable to NATO, it would be impossible for member states to contribute to this defense effort on equal footings. Some states would have to take on more responsibilities than others. To this end, there is no doubt that the states that should play a leading role in this project because of their economic power, political weight and military spending are France and Germany. However, the different geopolitical interests present within the EU create strong distrust about ceding leadership to another state in a matter as delicate as defense.

The role of Germany

The role of Berlin generates strong, not unfounded antibodies in several member states. First of all, Germany has to deal with the historical burden of having invaded some of these states in the recent past, a circumstance that for obvious reasons still generates mistrust today. We must not forget that the history of Germany is important not only for its neighbors but also for itself. Far from being willing to play an active role in the Common Security and Defense Policy, Germany has traditionally been among the member states with the lowest percentage of its GDP spent on defense and has reiterated in recent years that it does not want the EU to have a



stronger and more autonomous defense policy. An example of this is the statements made by Defense Minister Anegret Krampf-Karrenbauer in November 2020, when she stated⁸ that *"Europe remains dependent on the United States for military protection"* and that *"the hopes of a European strategic autonomy must end because Europeans will not be able to replace the crucial role of the United States as a security provider on the continent"*.

Secondly, the Eastern European member states show special reluctance about Germany because it tends to pursue a foreign policy towards Russia aimed at reaching points of understanding. The Merkel-era leadership, as she herself has acknowledged⁹, has always sought to protect German national interests rather than a common EU interest. An example of this would be the construction of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, which will dramatically increase the supply of Russian gas to Germany directly through the Baltic Sea, thus responding to the growing demand for gas from German industry. Berlin has been adamant in defending this project, despite the deep concern it has raised in the Eastern European states. There are fears that the Russian government could use the energy supply as a weapon to advance its agenda, in connection with the conflict in Ukraine for example. Thus, to the extent that their vital interests have at some point been ignored, the Eastern states have not been very enthusiastic about European strategic autonomy and the possible leadership role that Berlin could play in a more militarily integrated EU.

For their part, Greece and Cyprus also have deep doubts about the leadership that Germany could exercise in an EU with more robust military cooperation given its relationship with Turkey. Berlin has tended to seek a good understanding with Ankara in order to keep migratory flows coming from that country under control, not to alienate the large Turkish community living in Germany, and to protect the profitable economic relations between the two countries. Greece and Cyprus perceive Turkey as the main threat to their security and territorial integrity, so they are doubtful that their interests can be effectively protected by Berlin.

⁸ POLITICO "Europe still needs America" November 2020. Available at: <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-still-needs-america/> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

⁹ Deutsche Welle "Angela Merkel — The legacy interview". November 2021. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/angela-merkel-the-legacy-interview/av-59747807> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



In fact, when Turkey violated Greek territorial waters in the summer of 2020, Greece saw very little support from the EU and its demand for economic sanctions was flatly rejected by Germany¹⁰. However, the unease with the conciliatory approach with Turkey in Berlin is not only shared by Athens and Nicosia but also clashes with one of the countries that has given most support to Greece and which aspires to play a leading role in European defense: France.

French aspirations

Unlike Germany, France has been in favor of deepening the EU's strategic autonomy in defense and playing a leading role¹¹. Regardless of its role in the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, France has always tried to maintain a certain role as a regional power and project its interests abroad with a more ambitious use of its defense capabilities, especially in areas such as the Maghreb or the Sahel. Macron has made these ambitions clear in his proposal for strategic European autonomy. However, is the French understanding of "strategic autonomy" able to generate a minimum common denominator among EU member states?

The geopolitical interests of France focus primarily on the Mediterranean, West Africa, and the Middle East. In addition, France also has ambitions in the Indo-Pacific due to the presence of its overseas territories in that area. Despite this, Macron has so far not been able to articulate a coherent position regarding the main player in the region, China. In general, the priorities of France are far from shared by most Member States, such as those in Eastern Europe and Germany.

¹⁰ EURACTIVE "Merkel and Borissov blocked EU sanctions against Turkey at summit: sources" Desembre 2020. Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/merkel-and-borissov-blocked-eu-sanctions-against-turkey-at-summit-sources/> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

¹¹ USNI News "French President Macron Calls For European 'Strategic Autonomy'" February 2021. Available at: <https://news.usni.org/2021/02/08/french-president-macron-calls-for-european-strategic-autonomy> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



President Macron has not hesitated to step up military assistance to Greece and Cyprus¹². in the face of the conflict that these countries have with Turkey as a result of the exploration of gas reserves by the Turkish side in the exclusive Greek and Cypriot economic zones in the Eastern Mediterranean. Macron presented this as an act of solidarity derived from the EU membership of these states. Nevertheless, this increase in military cooperation has not occurred within the framework of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy, but through a trilateral agreement between the states involved due to the lack of consensus within the EU on how to deal with Turkey.

France is highly motivated to actively confront Turkey since Turkish foreign policy negatively affects its interests in various theatres beyond the Eastern Mediterranean, such as Libya or the Sahel region. However, this predisposition is not shared by states such as Spain and Germany, which see the maintenance of good relations with Turkey as an essential element both for the geostrategic value of the country – for instance, that the air base Incirlik is a major military asset for the transatlantic alliance¹³ – and for its necessary cooperation in regulating migratory flows from the Middle East – which is why the EU established the Facility for Refugees in Turkey with a budget of 6 billion euros¹⁴. In addition, in the case of Spain, there are common economic and military interests, taking into account the large revenues obtained from the arms trade with that country and the considerable exposure of Spanish banks to Turkish debt.

Disagreements over Turkey's challenges are not the only difficulty in setting the strategic interests of France in line with those of other EU member states. After pointing out above that Germany avoids a strategy of active confrontation with Russia, it should be noted that the case of France is quite similar. President Macron has repeatedly reiterated the need to

¹² Sotiris Nikas “Macron Back With Greek Defense Pact After Submarine Crisis” *Bloomberg*. September 2021. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-09-28/greece-buys-warships-from-france-signs-major-defense-pact>. (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

¹³ TRT World “Why are US military bases in Turkey so crucial for Washington?”. Desembre 2019 Available at: <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/why-are-us-military-bases-in-turkey-so-crucial-for-washington-32243> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

¹⁴ European Comission “The EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey”. 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/negotiations-status/turkey/eu-facility-refugees-turkey_en. (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



maintain a strategic dialogue with the Russian Federation¹⁵ in order to ensure a lasting framework for peace in Europe. It is therefore not surprising that the Baltic states are also wary of a possible leading role on the part of France in heading a stronger military alliance within the EU.

In the context of the crisis on the border between Poland and Belarus, in which Minsk has pushed migrants and refugees from the Middle East to enter Polish territory illegally, the limits of Paris and Berlin's attempts at sidelining the Eastern countries have been exposed. Both Angela Merkel's telephone conversations with Vladimir Putin on the one hand and Victor Lukashenko on the other (the first European leader to do so since the beginning of the political crisis in Belarus in August 2020), as well as that of Macron with Putin, were seen by Poland and the Baltic countries as an attempt at unilateral action outside the EU framework to protect the interests of Germany and France in exchange for eastern border security.

Poland, a rising power in Europe

As has been laid out in this report, Eastern Europe is today one of the regions hosting most hotspots in the European continent. This trend has increased since the 2014 crisis in Ukraine, the ensuing Russian annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbass region. Many of the countries in Central Europe have suffered from various periods of conflict with and/or occupation by Russia throughout history. However, due to the historical ambitions of Germany in that region and the memory of the Second World War, they do not trust Berlin with their security.

Among the countries grouped in the well-known "Visegrad Group" (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary), Poland is by far the most important economically and demographically. Moreover, it plays the most active military role at present. In this regard, Poland recently announced its intention to increase the number of troops in its armed forces to around

¹⁵ Robert Parsons "Macron calls for better long-term relations with Russia" *France 24*. February 2021. Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/20200215-macron-calls-for-better-long-term-relations-with-russia> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



300,000¹⁶. This would make the Polish army the largest in the European Union, bigger than France's. In addition, Warsaw has also pushed for the purchase of Turkish and Israeli weapons, including the famous Bayraktar TB2 drones that were so decisive in the second Nagorno-Karabakh war in the autumn of 2020.

As for the idea of a joint European defense project, neither Poland, nor its Visegrad partners or the Baltic states have ever been too enthusiastic because of the reasons explained above¹⁷. In addition, these countries have no major interests in the Middle East, North Africa or the Indo-Pacific. This makes them wary of French ambitions in these regions, which could entail a diversion of their military resources to those scenarios to the detriment of the Russian front.

It is important to note the special geopolitical relationship that this region thus has with the Anglosphere, especially with the United States and the United Kingdom. These two countries make the largest contribution of troops and armaments to the NATO Enhanced Forward Presence (VET) mission¹⁸, deployed in Poland and the three Baltic countries in 2017 to deal with the Russian threat, and play a key role in the NATO Air Police mission in Romania and the Black Sea area. In November 2021, albeit symbolically, Britain sent a dozen military engineers to help Poland plan to defend its border against Lukashenko's use of migrant and refugee flows against Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. It is noteworthy that neither France nor Germany, supposedly much closer countries consistent with their EU membership status, did not offer to send any military personnel.

¹⁶ Reuters "Poland to upgrade army using funding methods first deployed to fight COVID" October 2021. Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-upgrade-army-using-funding-methods-first-deployed-fight-covid-2021-10-26/> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

¹⁷ Justyna Gotkowska "Poland and the Baltic States: A Preference for a Renewed West". January 2021. Available at: <https://www.boell.de/en/2021/01/08/poland-and-baltic-states-preference-renewed-west> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

¹⁸ NATO "Enhanced forward presence (EFP)". Available at: <https://lc.nato.int/operations/enhanced-forward-presence-efp> (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



Persistent lack of European military capabilities

Another important factor to bear in mind is that the military capability of the EU states in this alliance led by France and Germany would be much smaller than the current NATO capability under the leadership of the United States. Germany invests about 1.2% of GDP in military spending and France invests about 1.7%; in other words, neither of the two main EU states - and virtually no other member state - reaches the 2% minimum military spending currently set by NATO. In fact, one of the few member states to do so is precisely Poland, one of the new hubs poles of military power on the continent.

No need to say that for this group of countries that see Russia as their main existential menace, the prospects of joining a project of deep military integration within the EU are highly unlikely. Indeed, a transatlantic alliance with more commitment in terms of funding, equipment, and personnel by the US will remain the best option for the strategic goals of their defense policy.

Another major obstacle is those member states that, despite not perceiving this threat from Russia, understand the EU strictly as a project of economic integration. They are not receptive to the debate about more military cooperation. That is the case of Denmark, one of the two states that directly refused to participate in the PESCO project launched in 2017 and has an *opt-out*¹⁹ from the Common Security and Defense Policy recognized in the Treaties; or the Netherlands, whose Prime Minister, Mark Rutte, did not hesitate in maintaining his visit to the United Kingdom as scheduled, in the midst of the diplomatic crisis unleashed by Australia's cancellation of its purchase of diesel submarines from France and the announcement of the AUKUS agreement ²⁰.

¹⁹ Graham Butler "The European Defence Union and Denmark's Defence Opt-out: A Legal Appraisal" *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Volume 25, Issue 1, pp. 117-150, 2020. Available at: <https://kluwerlawonline.com/journalarticle/European+Foreign+Affairs+Review/25.1/EEER2020008>. (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

²⁰ Claire Mills, John Curtis, Louisa Brooke-Holland "The AUKUS agreement" October 2021 Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9335/>. (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



Indeed, despite AUKUS being criticized by French diplomacy as an aggression against European interests, the only ones harmed in fact are the interests of France and of the French military industry. The mission of AUKUS fits pretty well with the goals of the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy²¹. In point of fact, from the EU's angle, reaching a free trade agreement with Australia is far more important than boosting military links with them.

Therefore, despite the uncertainty posed by the US strategic shift towards the Indo-Pacific, prioritizing military and diplomatic resources, the truth is that the obstacles for deeper cooperation in military matters among EU states is the sole responsibility of the Europeans. The hard truth is that the common interest among EU members is more limited than Brussels is willing to acknowledge. The most optimistic scenario for the advocates of strategic autonomy is that any increased military cooperation in the EU will be destined not to develop a pole of power independent of the transatlantic alliance with the US, but to have more independent operative capabilities within the framework of NATO.

Actually, the US, Canada, and Norway were invited to the military exercises held this year as part of the mobility project of PESCO. It must be highlighted that precisely in the field of military mobility is where the EU countries members of NATO are most dependent on the contribution of the US. That is why the American participation in these exercises clearly shows the complementarity between PESCO and the transatlantic alliance.

Catalonia's position in the debate about the EU's defense policy.

For Catalonia's national interest, more military cooperation within the framework of the EU may have a side-effect that is difficult to swallow. The point of departure to understand those complexities is that Spain, besides being the 4th largest economy in the EU, has an important geopolitical weight for the EU and NATO due to its strategic geographical location in the

²¹ European Commission "Questions and Answers: EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific" September 2021. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/QANDA_21_4709. (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



Western Mediterranean. It is not a coincidence that the US has two important military bases in Rota and Morón. To these structural factors must be added that Spain's military involvement in NATO missions has grown remarkably in the last few years, for instance, participating in missions in Romania and the Baltics states, which disincentivizes any favorable position of those countries towards Catalonia's secessionism²².

In the same fashion, in the last few months, Pedro Sanchez's administration has been one of the more active EU governments in advocating progress towards the creation of an EU army in the framework of so-called "strategic autonomy", even announcing an agreement with Mario Draghi's government to promote that project²³.

If the EU's military cooperation were to substantially increase, Spain would doubtlessly be involved, which would reduce other EU member states' incentives to question Spanish territorial integrity. Moreover, in this scenario, there would be greater cohesion of the strategic interests of all the EU members, a situation that would further limit the possibilities of Catalonia finding complicities within the EU.

On the other hand, we should not ignore that this hypothetical increase in military cooperation among EU member states would not occur in a scenario of integration that would mean relinquishing sovereignty to the EU, but in a context of solely intergovernmental cooperation. Moreover, it needs to be noticed that the EU institution that has taken the most active role in tackling the Catalan question, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), has no competence over the Common Security and Defense Policy – as stressed by Art. 275 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. As a consequence, the participation of Spain in deeper military cooperation within the EU, would not mean in any case a more energetic accountability of Spanish defense policy and its relation with the repressive policy against Catalonia before the CJEU.

²² NATO "Spain leads NATO's Baltic Air Policing mission". May 2020. Available at: <https://www.natomultimedia.tv/app/asset/636294>. (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)

²³ The News 24 "Sánchez informs NATO that he has an agreement with Italy to promote a European Army" October 2021. Available at: <https://then24.com/2021/10/08/sanchez-informs-nato-that-he-has-an-agreement-with-italy-to-promote-a-european-army/>. (Accessed on: December 10th 2021)



Thus Catalonia, as a territory that aspires to become an independent state seceding from an established EU member, must conclude that the project of EU's strategic autonomy in military affairs to a certain degree goes against Catalan national interest. In addition, as seen above, the likelihood that there might be any real steps forward towards a European Army – beyond the recurrent PR campaigns of the Commission – is indeed pretty poor. We are closer to a scenario where, on the one hand, the role of nation-states will be reinforced, and their cooperation and foreign policy will grow more autonomous from the EU, and on the other hand, geopolitical divergences between the member states will grow more incompatible.

Yet that does not mean that Catalonia should have an openly hostile discourse against greater cooperation among European nations, especially if that happens outside of the institutional framework of the Common Security and Defense Policy, and as long as it does not reinforce Spain's strategic interests. For instance, more cooperation between France, Greece, and Cyprus to contain the assertive policy in the Eastern Mediterranean of Turkey – a key ally of Spain – should be welcomed by Catalonia and identified as an opportunity.

Beyond these considerations, it is of utmost importance that Catalonia portrays itself as a valuable, reliable, and conscientious partner in the case of becoming a sovereign nation, one that projects credibility when presenting a model of defense policy that might answer the needs of its potential allies. Only in this way can Catalonia aspire to be considered a trustworthy actor and gain international recognition in the future.