

# Farewell to EU peace illusions:

## (In)securitization and militarization of the European Union as a key project of masculine authoritarian transformations of the EU

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### Introduction

This article focusses on the developments in the military policies at EU level, as one core project of a fundamental restructuring of the EU towards a masculinized and authoritarian transformation. The EU has entered a new phase with the reconfiguration of (in)security and military governance and policies at its core focusing on militarization, the police state, building a fortress Europe and shifts in migration policies. This (in)securitization goes hand in hand with a weakening of the hegemony and ideological power of the neoliberal modes of European integration, which is – among others – interrelated with the dynamics of the economic governance transformation and its tightening of the neoliberal authoritarian model of integration.

Since 2016 a remarkable acceleration of militarization of the EU is taking place. The defense architecture has been introduced in a shock-therapy like way, using the opportunity of the Brexit vote, events of terrorist attacks, migration and Donald Trump as US president as pretext to push forward the militarization governance of the EU and obtain far-reaching commitments. “After one year and a half, ... we have achieved now more than we have achieved ever in our history on security and defence. And just a few months ago everybody was saying this was not happening.” (Mogherini 2017a, 1).

The purpose of the militarization and the interlinkage between the interests of protecting the neoliberal economic model and militarization is explained in surprisingly open language: “strengthening Europe and protecting its citizens through effective measures to fight terrorism and develop its common security and defence, to ensure its economic development in a globalized world ... It will also help *shape globalization in order to reap the benefits of open markets while protecting against unfair practices ...*” (European Council 2017, 1, emphasis by author). The EU global strategy on foreign and security policy presented in June 2016 is also very clear on the point that militarization serves the interests of the economic elite in securing access to resources and global trade routes: “Connected to the EU’s interest in an open and fair economic system is the need for global maritime growth and security, ensuring open and protected ocean and sea routes critical for trade and access to natural resources” (Council of the European Union 2016, 41).

By mid-2018, “the building blocks of a European Security and Defence Union have been laid down” (HR 2018, 17), it only remains “to ensure coherence between the different initiatives launched, credibility by delivering on the commitments made, and concrete action stemming from the steps forward made” (ibid.). In the following section a brief overview of these building blocks, the key elements of the (in)security and military policy of the EU is presented to serve as a basis for subsequent discussions from a feminist perspective.

## Key Building-Blocks of EU (In)Security Policies

While the legal basis for defense policies in the EU has already been laid out in the EU treaty reform in 2009, the so-called “Lisbon Treaty”, significant progress has been achieved since 2016. The “Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy” (EEAS 2016a) set the frame for accelerated militarization of the EU: “In particular, investment in security and defence is a matter of urgency. Full spectrum defence European Union Global Strategy capabilities are necessary ... The EU will systematically encourage defence cooperation and strive to create a solid European defence industry ...” (HR 2017, 10f). Full militarization across all combat groups is stressed in the global strategy: “regarding high-end military capabilities, Member States need all major equipment to respond to external crises and keep Europe safe. This means having full-spectrum land, air, space and maritime capabilities, including strategic enablers.” (EEAS 2016a, 51).

Far from adequate attention to and apprehension of developments by the public, militarization of the EU has been pushed ahead. In December 2017, the EU launched the *Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defence* (PESCO). Twenty-five MS, all except the United Kingdom, Malta and Denmark, are part of it. Thus, even though it is a form of reinforced cooperation of a part of MS, as it comprises – after the exit of UK – all but two smaller member states (MS), the significance and perception of militarization involves the EU as a whole. The High Representative of the Union for foreign affairs and security policy (HR) Mogherini was very euphoric about it: “Technically it is called PESCO, in practice it is the foundation of a future European defence” (Mogherini 2017b, 1). Unlike previous proposals for EU joint defense, PESCO comes with regular assessments to make sure countries are hitting their pledged goals for investments in capability or capacity. Countries that fail to meet their commitments could be removed from the group. “The deal fulfills a 70-year-old ambition among European nations to integrate their defenses and marks the biggest move in two decades to help match the EU’s economic and trade process with a more powerful military.” (DW 2017, 1).

The euphoria of militarists about PESCO as “a crucial political framework for all Member States to improve their respective military assets and defence capabilities ... based on more binding commitments” (PESCO 2017, 3) is well founded: not only is there a new set of scenarios added, the defense of EU territory and its citizens (Fiott 2018, 4), which allows for fueling a new level of armament – called capability development – of the military forces, but there is also an elaborate process of ensuring the armament spiral keeps going upwards. It is a threefold process: the basis is the definition of armament objectives in the frame of an updated capability development plan (CDP). Based on the CDP, MS have to present an annual national Implementation Plan outlining their strategy of how to meet the binding commitments. These binding commitments of MS include to regularly increase defense budgets in real terms; successive medium-term increase in defense investment expenditure to 20% of total defense spending (collective benchmark) in order to fill strategic capability gaps by participating in defense capabilities projects; increasing joint and „collaborative” strategic defense capabilities projects and increasing the share of expenditure allocated to defense research and technology with a view to nearing the 2% of total defense spending (collective benchmark); as well as a binding commitment to “the intensive involvement of a future EDF in multinational procurement” (PESCO 2017, 2). The Coordinated Annual Review (CARD) – a surveillance procedure of how MS

fulfill the agreed commitments – will be carried out annually and shall ensure implementation and regular updates of commitments.

Very interesting to note in the (in)security governance is the strong involvement of an EU Agency, the European Defense Agency (EDA) in key areas of decision making, e.g. the elaboration of the CDP and the surveillance process of MS commitments. The EDA doesn't hide that defense industry interests and lobbying are one fundamental basis of its establishment (EDA oJ). Much more so, it seems to be proud – “this bold move from industry” (ebd.) – and presents how strong industry lobbying was instrumental to “the birth of an agency”; which formerly was discussed under the more precise but publicly less appealing name of armament agency.<sup>1</sup> Under the lead of EADS (now Airbus), major aerospace and defense companies successfully lobbied for an agency to reverse the trend of “European defense budgets declining, especially in the research & technology area” (ebd.), prevent pull-out of countries from armament projects – a senior EADS manager is cited with “*We said to ourselves: never again!*” (ebd.) – and to boost business for defense industry: “if real progress is to be possible in terms of military capabilities, efforts must be made not only at defense budget level, but also at the level of procurement so as to achieve economies of scale, and at the level of arms research and development” (EDA o.J.).

Further commitments in the frame of PESCO are participation in EU battle groups (BG) as a binding commitment with contributions confirmed at least four years in advance, promotion of cross border military mobility and an ambitious approach to common funding of military operations and missions, as well as promoting the European defense technological and industrial base (Roithner 2018). PESCO commitments shall be implemented and driven forward by joint projects, 34 projects have already been initiated (Council of the European Union. 2018b), including a Eurodrone project (European MALE (sic!) RPAS), European attack helicopters (TIGER Mark III), Land Battlefield Missile Systems, Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle and Amphibious Assault Vehicle, joint EU intelligence school, Electronic Warfare Capability, a pan-European military training center, and submarine drones (EEAS 2018). More projects are to follow, it seems that the intention is to make swiftly use of the favorable political climate for pouring public funds in militarization.

Overall, PESCO and the continuous efforts of the EC have led to a swift and tremendous increase in funding for defense: Creative strategies for mobilizing additional resources for armament and militarization of the EU characterize recent developments, in spite of a prohibition of funding for military and defense in the Treaty (Art. 41(2)). A European Defense Fund (EDF) is on its way under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) amounting to 13 bn euro, of which a new European defense industrial development program (EDIDP) is part. Additionally, a European Peace Facility (EPF), with 10.5 bn outside of the MFF to “finance our defense work: military operations, but also support for partners and also the possibility to finance military equipment of partners” (Mogherini 2018). Also, another 6.5 bn euro is earmarked for strategic infrastructure for military mobility in the Connecting Europe program. The sum of 30 bn euro of the above mentioned, by far underestimates public expenses mobilized at the EU level. There are other programs within the MFF to which the defense industry will have access, especially in research and innovation: the European structural and investment funds (ESIF), the fund for competitiveness and SMEs (COSME) and others (EDA 2018b). Also, the budget for migration and border control – with an increase from 13 bn in the current MFF period

to 34.9 bn euro in the next MFF – is available for “security” and militarization expenditure. Furthermore, funding is available via the different EU agencies, from increased MS commitments and common projects in the PESCO frame, and from the European Investment Bank. Overall, the current shifts involve major shifts of public funds from other purposes to military and defense spending. The argument to justify enormous public resource transfers to powerful defense corporate interests is that the EU needs to catch up in armament and in military technology, and that industry needs to be bolstered to increase its competitiveness at the international scale. It again is reminiscent of Hirsop and Jessop’s (2002) competitive state concept.

### **Dimensions of Feminist Analysis of the EU (In)Security Regime in the Making**

Regarding current trends of militarization of the EU, from an emancipatory perspective it is important to stress how the current developments influence the structural power relations between women and men. This involves analyzing how women’s subordination to men and major dimensions of the structural inequality of gendered power relations are reproduced and changed by ongoing transformations. Some of these key dimensions of structural inequalities and power relations relate to access to and ownership of resources, influence on decision-making, sexual violence, and distribution of unpaid work among genders as well as the social imaginary of gender relations. Among all these dimensions, feminist and gender research so far has mainly focused on interpretations and gender identity constructions in the context of the – marginal – integration of gender dimensions in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Especially questions of structural power relations are largely omitted in current research.

### **Gendered Actors: Male Military Bodies as the norm**

While the European Commission and HR keep repeating speeches about “equality between women and men as one of the fundamental values of the EU” and the target of 40% women in managerial positions in the Commission, the area of CSDP remains a predominantly male arena. As regards the EEAS as a whole, only the High Representative and the secretary-general are women, but apart from these two women in top leadership, there is rather low representation of women and little progress. As of March 1, 2019, all deputy secretary generals are men, and at director level (including general, managing and deputy directors), the share of women is 18% (European Union 2019).

“The dominance of male bodies in the organizational landscape of the military dimension of CSDP is noticeable. Yet, it is rarely discussed or raised as an issue.” (Kronsell 2015, 7). This continues to be the case. As regards the EC structure, in the area of security and military policy, both, the deputy Secretary General for CSDP and the chair of the European Military Staff (EUMS) are men. Apart from one female head of division, all 42 leadership positions are filled with men. Thus, in spite of a woman at the top and numerous verbal commitments to increasing the share of women, leadership overwhelmingly continues to be dominated by men (European Union 2019). It is important to note that not only

military dimensions of CSDP, but also crisis management and civilian dimensions, as well as CSDP missions (European Parliament 2017), are dominated by men.

Also, the EU agencies in the area of (in)security and defense policy, above all the European Defense Agency, which has a very strong role in the implementation of PESCO (PESCO 2017), is dominated by men. Apart from the HR, who is formally the head of the EDA, top management is exclusively male.<sup>2</sup> This is not only the case for the Commission services, but also the bodies representing MS. The European Union Military Committee (EUMC), which is the highest military body set up within the Council in 2001, is exclusively composed of men.<sup>3</sup> For other groups, such as the highly influential Politico-Military Group carrying out preparatory work for the Council and monitoring implementation in the field of CSDP membership is not publicly available (Council of the European Union 2018a).

With a transfer of strong preparatory roles to the military groups in EEAS and MS and to the EDA, all of which are dominated by male military bodies, as well as a strong rule based commitment with a surveillance procedure and no involvement of the EP, there is an erosion of democratic spaces. Also, the new structures are not open to broader democratic deliberations and at the same time open exclusive spaces for military and defense industry interests (CEO 2011, EDA 0J, 2018a, Vranken 2017).

### Limited Gender Rules and Narrow Gender Conceptualizations

While there have been repeated political commitments to at least some integration of gender perspectives in CSDP, implementation remains fragmented (see e.g. McDonagh and Deiana 2017; Kronsell 2016). In the last decade, EU institutions have repeatedly adopted texts and conclusions on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in CSDP, most notably related to the United National Security Council (UNSC) resolutions on women, peace and security. In 2008, the Council adopted the “Comprehensive approach to the EU implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security” (Council of the European Union 2008) which called for a “gender perspective, encompassing both women and men, should inform EU external actions in order to achieve a comprehensive response to the threats faced by the civilian population in times of conflict and in its aftermath” (ebd., 4).

However, even more than 10 years later, the EU keeps repeating the same plans and very tentative approaches, while implementation remains severely limited. The Global Strategy, the key strategic document, mentions “[f]inally, we will systematically mainstream human rights and gender issues ... Greater awareness and expertise on such issues is needed within the EEAS and the Commission. Better coordination between institutions would also add consistency and spread best practices” (EEAS 2016b, 51). The “EU will also foster inclusive governance at all levels through mediation and facilitation. At the same time, we will develop more creative approaches to diplomacy. This also means promoting the role of women in peace efforts – from implementing the UNSC Resolution on Women, Peace and Security to improving the EU’s internal gender balance.” (ebd., 31). In practice, implementation remains weak, and does not get any particular attention in the course of renewed militarization efforts. Many areas and actors of current (in)security and militarization policies remain outside of these tentative gender mainstreaming

efforts. Recent studies conclude that “[m]ore needs to be done by both member states and the EU to fulfill promises to implement the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.” (European Parliament 2017, 1). In a review of EU common security and defense policy missions, McDonagh and Deiana (2017, 3) conclude that “gender is still seen as something that only women or gender advisors need to deal with. Gender is seen as a ‘secondary’ issue to (mostly male) EU security officials. In effect lip service is paid to UNSCR 1325 but without real engagement, and frequent misinterpretation of the true scope and objectives of the WPS agenda.” (McDonagh and Deiana 2017, 3). Notably, gender – or more precisely women’s issues – are mainly addressed in missions and conflict areas outside the EU. Gender has been conceptualized in the CSDP as mainly “vulnerable women in faraway places” (Kronsell 2012, 137).

While “gender identity constructs – masculinities and femininities – rely on difference and are shifting across time, levels and sectors, the variations of identity constructs are limited by well-established ideas – gender binaries – providing continuity and path dependences to maintain the gender system, for example through the ‘EU protector masculinity’ in the EU CSDP. European integration thus is a process whereby EU masculinities and femininities are constructed through EU relations to other states in the global context and in EU policy-making and institution-building.” (Kronsell 2016, 104). Also, as Muehlenhoff (2017, 159) highlights in her analysis, the EU sees women as victims of conflict and better peacemakers than men and constitutes women in both traditional and neoliberal ways, “emphasizing their empowerment and resources to take care of themselves and contribute to peace, development and EU missions” and constitutes women as human rights defenders. Women’s self-responsibility and their responsibility as mothers is stressed, thus women are more likely to fulfill these roles if they have better human capital potential, including education, health and economic security, so that they are more likely to fulfill these roles. Such a conception transfers part of the responsibility to solve conflicts and protection to women. “It constructs women’s rights as a resource for peace and security, instead of considering them a goal in themselves and directing attention to the broader structural causes of women’s marginalization” (Muehlenhoff 2017, 161).

Women are integrated into the system in the name of increasing effectiveness. This is in line with neoliberal economic rationalities. “The language of exploiting women undermines the broader goals of the EU’s security agenda, namely preventing the gender-based exploitation of women.” Women become part of an economic equation and are expected to be the better peacemakers. (Muehlenhoff 2017). As already problematized elsewhere, the feminist theorizing and call for attention to gender in military systems and conflict (Konsell and Svendberg 2011, 243) has been coopted in the case of the EU as well. GM is not seen as a practice to advance the ability of women to enjoy their human rights, “but rather to harness and exploit capabilities and qualities associated with women, so as to improve the operational effectiveness” (ebd.).

## Institutions of Hegemonic Masculinity and Re-Masculinization of Discourses and Symbolic Arenas

As pointed out earlier, the EU can be widely seen as set of institutions of particular hegemonic masculinity privileging norms that are representative of masculine and heterosexual attributes that shape the agendas, politics and policies of institutions). With the shift towards prioritizing militarization – adding to earlier shifts towards male-dominated and masculine structured economic and finance institutions – the hegemonic masculinity of EU institutions is strengthened. “A dominant EU hierarchical military masculinity is institutionalized in the EU’s military committee, combat heterosexual masculinity in the Battle groups, and EU protector masculinity in the EU training missions. ... While women’s bodies are written out of the CSDP, the construction of femininity in relation to the protector/protected binary is central to it.” (Kronsell 2015, 1). EU military institutions such as the EUMC and the EUMS represent a specific masculinity associated with rank, discipline and hierarchy.

When PESCO was adopted, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker was euphoric and made a quite revealing remark: “She is awake, the Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty: Permanent Structured Cooperation is happening, I welcome the operational steps taken today by Member States to lay the foundations of a European #Defence-Union. ...” (Twitter, 21.12.2017, 23:59)- The wording is remarkable. To use “sleeping beauty” as a metaphor for a military structure (in the making) is revealing about how deeply masculine imaginary is connected to militarization. The story only leaves room for a competition among males about who performs the wake-up kiss.

## Towards a Masculine Authoritarian Securitized State and EU

Rule-based developments and built-in momentum for keeping up dynamics will support the transformation of the state: while the deficit and debt rules of the EU Economic Governance limit MS spending, which was used to put pressure on welfare state expenditures, new rules have been set up in the frame of the EU (in)security policy to make increases of MS spending on defense mandatory. As MS committed to regularly increasing defence budgets in real terms, funds for social spending will further be squeezed by increased amounts going to militarization. The CARD mechanism is designed to ensure a mechanism of continuous exchange and verification by institutions with inherent masculinity, intended to ensure compliance and keep up dynamics of continuous progress in military spending and involvement. Currently, shifts in budget priorities do not only occur at MS level, but also within the EU budget. In this context, the high influence of the defense industry further asserts pressure on securitized state transformations.

According to Eurostat, expenses for military systems are considered investments, while social investments are classified as public consumption (Eurostat 2013). This definition embodies a deeply male bias on what is considered a “superior” public investment.

There are several strong dimensions of *weakening of democratic decision-making processes*: In all processes of EU foreign and (in)security policy the role of the European Parliament (EP) is very weak. The EP does not have a role of co-decision, at most it is informed, and can put forward questions according to Art. 36 EU Treaty. It is not only the legislative

power of the EP which is disregarded, there is also no judicial control, as the treaty specifies that the European Court of Justice shall not have jurisdiction of common foreign and security policy. Given the male dominance of the CSDP institutions, this involves a shift towards weakening women's participation in a key area of decision-making as well as a transfer of power to a masculine military bureaucracy at MS and EU level which involves a high degree of secrecy and openness to defense industry interests.

MS are committing to weaken national democratic decision-making procedures, the PESCO includes a binding commitment of MS "aiming for fast-tracked political commitment at national level, including possibly reviewing their national decision-making procedures" with regard to availability and deployability of their forces (PESCO 2017, 3).

### **Towards an emancipatory feminist research agenda**

Most importantly, in the course of integrating gender perspectives into CSDP, "the concept of gender has been emptied of politics and power" (Kronsell 2012, 137). The EU gender agenda "does not question dominant peace and security practices and discourses and does not politicize the issue of war" (Muehlenhoff 2017 162f), it just adds gender to its neoliberal conception of security in the name of increasing efficiency. While it has been important to highlight these shortcomings, which show that "gender mainstreaming and equality measures have had next to no impact" (Kronsell 2015, 19), large gaps in feminist research become apparent.

Broader structures of inequality contributing to conflicts and wars are not part of the considerations, neither are interrelations between economic, trade and foreign and military policy agendas and their contribution to reinforcing and strengthening structures of gendered inequalities. The challenges for further research are manifold. Key dimensions of structural inequalities and power relations, especially those related to access to and ownership of resources, influence in decision-making, and distribution of unpaid work among genders have not been in the focus of feminist research in this context.

Also, the reconfiguration of interrelations between key institutions organizing power and gendered subordination, such as transnational corporations, military, states and the EU need to be part of future analysis. In this context, it is also key to understand how the current militarization at EU level influences the interlinkages between neoliberalism, militarism and right-wing extremism (Altvater et al., 2001) and its bearings on gender relations and structures of gendered oppression and subordination.

Another area of shifts is taking place in market-state relationships and privatization of securitization with increasing importance of private military and security companies. In times of "securitized and neoliberalized gender discourses" (Stachowitsch 2018, 16) and a "particular merger of 'market/business feminism' and securitized gender narratives in which gender facilitates the conceptualization of profit enhancement and effective security provision as mutually enhancing goals" (ebd.), the emancipatory potential of feminist knowledge is curtailed.

The declared goal of strengthening of the military industry, which has an oligopoly structure and is mostly in the hands of a small group of men, as regards both ownership and management, leads to further shifts in gendered power structures. The military industry has a large and increasing influence in EU and MS. Male profit-making in this



sector is boosted by EU policies and the new governance structure in the EU (in)security regime. Emancipatory feminist research and agency is needed to contribute towards counter-power dynamics.

## Conclusions

While the narrative of the EU bringing peace is still highly prevalent and only few focus on breaking these narratives (e.g. Attac 2018), the recent developments in the EU are not at the focus of public attention. It might be that feminist movements are again at the center of resistance movements yet to counter and undermine current militarized power shifts.

The analysis of the militarization highlights only one of the key building blocks of profound transformations and authoritarian (re)masculinizations of the EU, others are the fundamental shifts in EU economic governance in the aftermath of the financial crisis (see Klatzer and Schlager 2017), and the dwindling importance of gender equality (Klatzer and Schlager 2016). These trends are paradigmatic for the changing nature of EU. It highlights the regressive gendered nature of the intertwined systems of neoliberal capitalism, market compatible forms of patriarchy and militarism. Common tendencies are closing of democratic spaces, shifting of key public functions back to private spheres and moving towards increased power of male dominated masculine institutions, a revival of masculine imagery and trends of a re-essentialization of men's and women's roles. One of the key mechanisms used to propel state transformation via EU level is public budgets. – The french term *l'état* well reflects this key connection. – The mechanism is simple and effective: weakening, dismantling and privatizing the welfare state and funding for social rights via budget squeeze – and maintaining pressure on state finance via liberalized and oligopolized private financial “markets“ – and at the same time expanding resources for militarization, among others via obligations to expand military spending at MS level and mobilizing large amounts of funds at EU level.

Shifts in the economic, military and public-private spheres strengthen and constitutionalize neoliberal-authoritarian “HERRschaft” (Schlager/Klatzer 2017) – masculine structures of domination of the economic and bureaucratic elite situated in a web of gendered power relations – increasingly isolated from democratic spheres of influence.

Understanding the state – and the EU – as condensations of a relationship of social forces, the observed transformations of the state – mediated by the EU – reveal broader dynamics of changing power relations in society: a masculinistic „Herrschaftsverhältnis“. In times of increasing discontent with the EU and thus weakened ideological hegemony to legitimize, consolidate and strengthen the position of the ruling classes, we observe stronger masculine authoritarian reconfigurations in economic and military policies. The shifts in the economic and military sphere, as well as in the border regime, lay bare the interrelated structural violence embedded in the EU – and the state – and transnational corporations. We see the (re)emergence of financialized and highly weaponized, masculine elite capitalism. The EU as a key battle field needs to be shifted to the center of feminist research and social struggle.

## Anmerkungen

- 1 In German: Rüstungsagentur.
- 2 European Defense Agency (nd). <https://www.eda.europa.eu/Aboutus/who-we-are/Organisation>, accessed February 17, 2018.
- 3 As of February 2019, see: [https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/5428/european-union-military-committee-eumc\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/5428/european-union-military-committee-eumc_en)

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