

EU's PESCO defence pact

Why in news?

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- 25 'European Union' nations signed the landmark PESCO pact to establish closer defence ties.

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- The project is seen as a major step towards establishing the 'European Defence Union'.

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How is EU's security apparatus evolving?

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- Establishing a military headquarters for co-ordinating overseas European security operations was approved earlier this year.

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- This was followed by the announcement for setting up a 5.5-billion euro European Defence Fund. '

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- Currently, the **Permanent Structured Cooperation** (PESCO) has been signed.

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- This seeks to tighten defence & improve coordination in the development of new military hardware among signatory countries.

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- Notably, earlier efforts to deepen military links among EU members had failed for decades mainly due to Britain's opposition.

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- But Brexit and Russia's annexation of Crimea has brought the limelight back to the need for a strong European security treaty.

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What are the specifics of PESCO?

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- Touted as EU's most ambitious project, PESCO's primary focus is slated to be defending Europe and complementing NATO.

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- **Membership** - Participation in PESCO is voluntary and those opt out now can join later if all founding members approve of it.

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- Currently, Britain, Denmark, Malta & Ireland are the only EU members who haven't taken up the deal.

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- PESCO has provisions for non-member non-EU countries to take part in specific missions but without a role in decision making.

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- **Commitments** - A commitment to regularly increase defence budgets in real terms has been reached.

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- Countries have pledged to provide 'substantial support' in the form of personnel, equipment, training & infrastructure for joint European military missions.

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- Also, devoting 20% of defence spending to procurement and 2% on research and technology has been agreed upon.

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- Significantly, PESCO will subject member countries to an annual review and failure to meet commitments could lead to termination of membership.

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What are the expectations?

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- Crisis Response Core & Cyber Rapid Response Teams are to be developed under German & Lithuanian leadership respectively.

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- Harmonising weapons systems by developing new equipments such as tanks & submarine drones are expected to be taken up.

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- PESCO may also lead to the creation of a European military hospital or logistics hub in future.

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Source: Indian Express

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