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Keynote lecture da Secretária de Estado da Defesa Nacional, Ana Isabel Xavier, por ocasião do curso *EU history and core values*, organizado pelo *European Security and Defence College*

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Honorable Ambassador of the Cyprus Republic in Portugal

Major General, Director of Education of the Portuguese Army

Colonel, Director of Colégio Militar

Dear Members of the European Security and Defence College

Distinguished Academic, Military and Civil Entities

Dear Distinguished Course Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am deeply honoured to give the opening lecture, once again, in the course “EU history and core values,” organized by the European Security and Defence College in the context of the European Union Military Secondary Schools Forum.

Allow me to begin by thanking Ms. Maria do Rosário Penedos for the invitation to speak today and for all the work she and the ESDC team have been doing to ensure the success of this pioneer initiative.

I also take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Director of the Military College, Coronel Santos Moura, for hosting this course for the third year in a row, and to welcome its 32 participants coming from Italy, Belgium, Lithuania, Romania, the Netherlands, Ukraine, and, of course, Portugal.

I sincerely hope this initiative and this Military College and ESDC partnership' endures for years to come.

I think you already noted that I've been involved in this course since the beginning, first and foremost as an academic. Since last year I am participating as Secretary of State for National Defence, which gives me the opportunity to share with you all a more policy-oriented perspective on the topic "Unity in Diversity: The Evolution of the European Union and Its Core Values".

Naturally, I will be looking at this topic from a defence perspective around three key points: the core European values, their relationship with defence, and how this relates to the current geopolitical environment.

So, let's start with the basics and a question - What exactly are the core European values, and where do they come from? Believe it

or not, there isn't a straightforward answer, which shows the complexity of the EU and of its development.

Values and principles are an essential part of the system that guides our behaviour as citizens and as a society. There are some subtle differences between the two, with values usually being deemed more personal and subjective and principles more objective and factual. However, in the EU's discourse there seems to be some convergence between the two. So, don't be alarmed if you read in EU documents "values" and "principles" being used interchangeably.

When we are studying any facet of the European Union, the best place to start is to look at the treaties.

The Lisbon Treaty, which was signed in 2007 and is still in force today, made a lot of changes to the previous treaties, including

providing the EU with legal personality and with its own External Action Service. It also made changes to the European Security and Defence Policy, making it more robust.

All the EU treaties, throughout time, have consistently referred to the Member States's attachment to the EU's principles of liberty, democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and of the rule of law.

In fact, there has always been a connection between the EU's values and principles and its foreign and security policy, whose purposes include safeguarding and promoting them. Throughout time, this came to comprise the EU's security and defence policy as well.

The Lisbon Treaty also introduced a new article clearly listing the EU's core values, giving them a more central role than before.

These are the respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

This brings me to my second point: the Lisbon Treaty also strengthens the link between the EU's values and EU defence. So, what exactly does defence have to do with European values?

Well, peace and defence are two sides of the same coin, in the sense that the purpose of defence is not war, as some may think, but peace.

There is a clear convergence between the EU's nature and its purpose as a democratic peace project. The foundation of the European Communities that preceded the EU was precisely the idea of preventing conflict in Europe. It is no coincidence that the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 for its work in

advancing peace, reconciliation, democracy, and human rights in Europe.

And this idea extended to the Common Security and Defence Policy, which aims to promote stability and peace globally.

Indeed, the EU's civilian and military missions under the CSDP have always emphasized the promotion of democratic governance and international law, as well as the protection of human rights and equality, ensuring a clear nexus between security and defence, and the EU's values and principles.

At the same time, the EU's preference for multilateralism and for collective and cooperative security, as seen through its partnership with NATO, the United Nations, and regional organizations, is also in line with this nexus. After all, these organizations are communities of values.

When Portuguese National Detached Forces participate in international military missions, either in the context of the EU, NATO, the UN, or through bilateral cooperation, they are promoting and protecting European values – our values.

This brings me to my third and final point. Again, with a question. How has the current geopolitical environment boosted the importance of safeguarding European values?

While the link between defence and values has always been clear, to a certain extent, the current geopolitical environment of insecurity and uncertainty has exacerbated this connection.

In the case of the European Union, this trend is even more obvious. While the Common Security and Defence Policy has been, since the beginning, mostly expeditionary crisis management, it has been changing, especially since Russia's full-

scale invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine, to include a more traditional territorial type of defence.

But that's not the most interesting part. The most interesting part, indeed, is that the EU's understanding of defence is not simply focused on ensuring physical security, but also the protection of the EU's values and principles, instead of just their promotion. In other words, there is an increasing link between EU defence and the protection of our European way of life.

Therefore, is the protection of our European way of life, as well as the protection of our common values that has motivated the EU's development of new tools to bolster its defence, such as the new ReArm Europe Plan and the White Paper on the future of European Defence, aiming to boost the rearmament of the Member States and the creation of European industrial defence capabilities around a financial package of 800 billion euros.

And where does Portugal stand in this debate? Our Prime Minister has always been very clear: we pursue for EU's strategic autonomy; we are committed to investing in defense, particularly in the industrial dimension; and we strive for collective, cooperative and multinational solutions where defence and values are deeply connected, now more than ever.

This is where, I think, being active citizens and learning about defence is crucial. This is where you come in. You need to know what world you want to be part of. You are already privileged both for studying in a military institution and for taking part of this exchange and course in Lisbon.

I trust you are committed. And I trust that this course will be very fruitful and thought-provoking in expanding your knowledge.

Muito obrigado. Thank you.