

Relaunching Europe's Security and Defence Policy

INCREASING SECURITY THREATS, DECREASING SECURITY CAPABILITIES

Over the last years, the European Union's relevance as a foreign policy player has suffered from the indecisiveness of national heads of state and government in tackling external challenges, the lack of alignment among different actual or perceived national security interests and the absence of an autonomous truly European foreign, security and defence policy. Moreover, the eurozone crisis has substantially reduced attention on the EU foreign policy and also worsened the poor status and the inefficiencies of defence in EU member states.

The war in Ukraine, the conflict in Syria and Iraq, the crisis in Libya, and terrorist threats have shown how European security is at risk due to the increasingly unstable environment surrounding the continent. On the one hand, neither the EU member states nor the EU as such are able to guarantee the security of the European citizens and counter the threats to European security, and they still need to deeply rely on the United States. On the other hand, the shifts in US strategic interests away from Europe is increasingly, which should force the EU to take more responsibility for defence and security. However, the EU's response

to the different external crises, mainly in its Southern and Eastern neighbourhood, has proven in many cases to be slow, uncoordinated and inadequate. This inability to act is largely due to a substantial lack of political will among national decision makers in foreign policy and the refusal of member states to empower the EU institutions with the competences and capabilities to assume a leading role in European security and defence. Furthermore, the lack of mutual trust and solidarity persists among member states, together with their differences in strategic cultures and in perceptions of threats. What is needed is a unified and robust European foreign and defence policy in order to guarantee peace and security and to enable the EU to play a pivotal role in international affairs.

In 2012, the European Union won and deserved the Nobel Peace Prize mainly for its past, as it was founded to preserve and promote of peace in Europe, a title which it struggles to merit it in the present and the future if European leaders do not decide to move more resolutely toward a strengthening of the EU's Foreign, Security and Defence Policy.

EU SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY: SHORT-TERM STEPS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE LISBON TREATY

The European Parliamentary Research Service has calculated the cost of non-Europe in defence to be at least €26 billion per year. Furthermore, European countries could save up to €13 billion per year if Europeans worked more closely together in weapons procurement, as highlighted by a study conducted by McKinsey for the Munich Security Conference. Therefore, **the pooling of military capabilities** at the EU level would allow to both increase the efficiency of European defence and bring about savings to the national budgets by exploiting the effects of economies of scale.

The current fragmentation of defence in Europe not only makes European governments' defence expensive and ineffective but also irrelevant to respond to international crisis. There is the **urgent need for a more integrated European defence** industry that could enhance the EU's strategic autonomy. Considering that the EU is called upon in the Treaty (art. 42) to work on the progressive framing of a common Union defence policy, different steps are possible within the Lisbon Treaty in order to reach further integration and to re-launch European defence as a priority for the Union:

THE PERMANENT STRUCTURED COOPERATION

EU member states should establish a permanent **EU Operational Headquarters** and achieve a Permanent Structured Cooperation (Art. 42.6, 46 TEU and Protocol 10) as the first nucleus of a European Defence Union, which would remain open to any other member state that wishes to join at a later stage.

THE ROLE OF THE HR/VP

In the coming years, the role and substance of the EU's foreign policy, which inevitably will be anchored on and driven by its fundamental values of peace, democracy, the rule of law and human rights, needs to be addressed as a priority for the Union.

The role of the HR/VP and of the EEAS should be guaranteed the necessary means to conduct an effective foreign policy, in the framework of a new global strategy which sets up priorities and highlights values and interests to guide the EU's action in the world.

An effective European foreign policy should be based on the comprehensive approach and ensure the coherent use of all tools available at European level in these fields.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament should present bold proposals to build on the momentum and move forward with EU integration in defence. As the democratically elected institution of the EU representing its citizens, it is important that the **European Parliament's role in foreign policy is enhanced by giving it full legitimacy** in shaping the strategic level decisions of the EU in the field of foreign affairs.

The role of the European Parliament can be enhanced in three ways through the treaties:

- 1** By upgrading the subcommittee for **Security and Defence** to a **fully-fledged Committee**.
- 2** By **strengthening the consultation procedures** with the national parliaments.
- 3** By creating a **Council of Defence Ministers**, on the model of the Eurogroup.

THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY

The European Defence Agency should become one of the key institutions leading EU defence cooperation efforts by being the supervisor of **a solid implementation of pooling and sharing of resources at European level** and, alongside with the European Commission, foster a truly European defence industry. National protectionism of the defence and security industry is incompatible with both the economic

and the political union. The EU internal market rules should apply to military procurement, in order to create a competitive, strong and efficient European defence industrial and technological base.

Furthermore, the European Defence Agency should also enhance the development of **EU research programmes** in the military field and **regional key-capabilities development plans**. Moreover, it is important to advance the development of shared threat assessment at the EU level, which can provide the framework for analysis conducted at the national level.

THE TRAINING DIMENSION

There should be further strengthening of the training dimension in military CSDP with **the goal of common training standards** for all military personnel in the Union based on work done in the framework of the **European Security and Defence College (ESDC)**, which includes projects such as the European initiative for the exchange of young officers inspired by Erasmus to complement similar efforts in the field of civilian crisis management and conflict prevention, which are more advanced.

FUNDING CSDP

It is fundamental to create a European security investment fund, by **pooling resources of the national defence budgets**, and the revision of financing mechanisms for EU operations, including the creation of a common funding of rapid reaction operations using EU battlegroups. On this note, it is essential to reach the operationalisation of the EU battlegroups as they could become a European rapid reaction force capable of intervening for defusing escalating crisis.

THE EU'S RELATIONS WITH NATO

The EU's relation with NATO and its role within NATO should be strengthened. Although not all EU member states and candidates are or wish to become members of NATO, it is undeniable that NATO continues to be the essential pillar of security for most EU member states.

It is essential to **reinforce the EU's role as the European pillar of NATO**, based on an equal partnership, with a renewal of the commitments made in the comprehensive framework for NATO-EU relations set out in the Berlin Plus agreement in 2003, and the launch of a strategic debate on burden sharing. Both sides should identify common threats to redefine their approach, especially in the light of the multiple crisis in Europe's neighbourhood.

With such goals in mind, the EU should start working on reinforcing its CFSP and CSDP, as **the strengthening of European military capabilities can only benefit NATO** and are essential to a more prominent role of EU within NATO. The establishment of permanent EU military headquarters in Brussels would enable the EU to respond to a crisis without having to rely on assets structures provided by NATO or EU member states. Moreover, **EU member states should better coordinate inside NATO** in order to harmonise their positions and finally be able to speak with a single voice. ■

TOWARDS A SINGLE EUROPEAN FOREIGN, SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY: BEYOND THE CURRENT TREATIES

The European Foreign, Security and Defence Policy can only make limited progress as long as it remains essentially intergovernmental and depending on the political will, funds and availability to act of the member states. Member states and EU institutions should develop a plan, similar to the plan that led the EU from economic integration to a single currency, to progressively pool foreign, security and defence means and capabilities, including military capabilities (and the relative funding) to the European level. This means that the EU should move to a progressively Europeanisation of Foreign, Security and Defence Policy such that eventually European policies, initiatives and actions can be decided by the European institutions, implemented through European capabilities and funded through an adequate European budget.

President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, German Minister of Defence, Ursula Von der Leyen, and other European politicians have recently advocated the idea of a common European army as an ultimate goal of European integration. According to the Eurobarometer, a poll conducted in 2014 stated that over 70% of the European public would be in favour of a broad European project in the area of defence (Eurobarometer 82/2014). This should pave the way for the promotion of initiatives to mobilize the public opinion and make pressure on the political classes and leaders to establish a European defence which be credible, supranational, and able to contribute to build a more peaceful and just world.

However, the establishment of an effective European army would imply three steps:

- 1 The creation of a federal union. A European army can exist only with the establishment of a political union, a State that can command the army with democratic legitimacy, as the capacity to make decisions is not divorced from the power to implement them.
- 2 The establishment of a command of a European General Staff, which would respond to a European authority subject to parliamentary control.
- 3 Pooling of at least part of national defence budgets into a common European/ad hoc budget.

Although the realisation of an EU army is still a distant goal, the Permanent Structured Cooperation, possible within the treaties, can only be considered a temporary solution. It is time for Heads of State and Governments to launch a roadmap towards a European Defence Union as a new field of EU integration, on the model of the European and Monetary Union, sixty-five years after the Pleven Plan for a European Defence Community. ■

REFERENCES

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