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# The defence of Europe before European Defence

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## RETURNING TO THE SCHUMAN METHOD

*"A constructive, valid European task undoubtedly comprises ensuring collective defence against all types of possible attack. Like peace, security is now indivisible"*

**Robert Schuman [1]**

It would be an understatement to say that Europe is facing a new strategic context that calls for response. The influx of refugees caused by increasing instability on its borders, the terrorist acts undertaken within its territory, the increasing number of global threats, are all leading to an unprecedented demand for security and stability on the part of the citizens of Europe.

In Central and Eastern Europe the conflict in Ukraine has awakened fears which find their source as much in the historical experience of the countries in this region, as in the powerful feeling of popular resentment produced as a result. The unending conflict in the Middle East has worsened with civil war in Syria, power struggles within Muslim countries, along with radicalised Islamic contestation. Terrorism has become a daily occurrence across an entire swath of Africa and unfortunately in some of the Union's countries as well. None of the States of Europe is now exempt of the threat of fanaticised nationals who are making direct attacks on the population. There is a rising fear of a "European 9/11", which in the turmoil could sweep away many beliefs and reason.

Finally the world's geopolitical situation is not very encouraging either. Asia is being disrupted by further power struggles and potential conflicts are great in number. Faced with the exhaustion of natural resources, environmental change and the quest for zones of influence, the oceans are now the areas at stake, reviving the race for naval armament. The Arctic is coveted, the China Sea is being fought over, the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian Oceans are more frequented than ever before by powers which are determined to carve out a territory for themselves in

contempt of international law and especially of the freedom of navigation.

The Union, which for a long time focused on its internal organisation, convinced that it should spread the message resulting from its own recent past to the outside world, now seems powerless indeed.

Without promising uncertain stability, Europe must guarantee real security otherwise the very essence of the project to unify the continent will be brought into question. Robert Schuman wrote that "Europeans will be saved if they realise they must stand together before a common danger. [2]" This is not the case at present.

Firstly regarding terrorism; are Europeans prepared to tackle it head on, in other words are they prepared to accept that it is a kind of war that is now affecting them directly, whilst for three generations people have become accustomed to peace?

The magnitude of the challenge is indeed great. It will not be won using traditional methods alone. Of course, it is first and foremost the responsibility of the national governments and is not a competence of the common institutions provided for by the treaties. But we would be wrong to underestimate the impact of the outcome of the battle over the European project itself, i.e. over cooperation and solidarity between Member States, which are the "nuclear heart" of European integration.

A wave of terrorist attacks in Europe would be deadly and would accentuate the trend towards national withdrawal, which is already underway, shaking the foundations of the entire community

1. For Europe, Nagel éditions.  
5ème édition, Paris, Robert  
Schuman Foundation, 2010,  
p.27.

2. For Europe, op. cit.

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structure, which is now accused, rightly or wrongly, of not having been able to contribute to finding a solution to a situation that is seen by the Europe's citizens as a state of war.

It is difficult for the European institutions to adapt to this new situation. They must, for example, revise their priorities, relativize certain ongoing tasks or work and endeavour to go even further in the reform of their communication policy, to show that they are really taking part, in their way and at their level, to eliminating this threat.

Whether we like them or not there are still borders in Europe. 2015 was the year of a return to walls and barbed wire, highlighting the inadequacy of the Dublin Agreements which entrusted the States on Europe's edge with the protection of the common border and therefore of the Schengen Area. An unprecedented wave of refugees began its path to Europe and mainly targeted Germany. The Commission responded accordingly to the challenge and we must pay tribute to its President, who again showed his experience and awareness vis-à-vis an inherently political question. But we cannot be content with the Union's collective response, too diplomatic and technical, too slow in deciding and unaware of its common capabilities. The blame lies mainly with the Member States and their leaders, who were more concerned with domestic considerations than by a global solution to the problem. Europe will take too much time to respond, because everyone decides according to his own interests without taking on board the long term collective interest. Frontex will be much more effective in this and will perhaps show that the common path is the only one that is effective.

From an external point of view, which is linked to these internal challenges, the defence of Europe has not really moved forward; quite the contrary, it has made its failings even more obvious.

Both the European treaties, as well as their implementation, seem to have ignored one of the main lessons given by the Union's Founding Father: "Europe (...) will be built through concrete

achievements first creating de facto? Solidarity". In terms of European defence this advice has been forgotten; it is one of the reasons for the repeated failure of "European Defence".

The defence of Europe is not guaranteed, solidarity between its members is, to say the least, imperfect and the continent has been caught out by strategic developments which could place it in serious danger. Is it too late already?

### MISCONCEPTIONS, WRONG PATH

Since the end of the Cold War, Europeans have disarmed on a constant basis. Between 1991 and 2013 their military spending decreased on a regularly to reach the threshold of 175 billion € (-1.3% since 2010). At this rate in 2019 NATO's defence spending, which still represented 2/3 of world spending in 2010 will be below that of the rest of the world, whilst the USA takes on 75% of the Alliance's spending. In 2016, no Member State (except for Estonia) is due to devote more than 2% of this GDP to military appropriations – pensions and internal spending excepted, contrary to the commitments made at the NATO summit on 5th September 2014. In reality this is an overall weakening, which in view of the present circumstances, is a serious historical mistake that is endangering Europe's security. Indeed military spending across the world (1,650 billion \$ in 2015) continues to grow notably under the influence of China, Russia and the emerging countries. The first two of these States increased their spending by 9% and 21% in 2015 [3] /2014. The share of European spending in terms of world military spending, which lay at more than 30% in 2001, now lies below 15%. Hence the first misconception was that the international situation at the beginning of the 1990's led to these cuts.

The second misconception follows on from this: the economic and budgetary crisis caused it. But the figures speak for themselves. The reduction in appropriations devoted to defence started a long time before the crisis. Europeans thought that peace on the continent was spreading to the rest of the world. Now deadly conflicts have reached their doorstep.

3. Source Jane's IHS  
Defence Budget FY 2016.  
Communication of 17.12.2015

The third misconception is that this situation can be compensated by Europe and represents an opportunity to integrate European military tools. In the history of nations, never has the sum of a lack of will led to a positive result. There will never be European defence without a major effort in military spending, implying difficult political and social choices. Guaranteeing security certainly requires a review of the priority given to comfort spending.

These misconceptions have led to poor choices in terms of taking the cause of common defence forward.

Although the treaties mention the final goal of building a common foreign and security policy [4], they did not choose the best means, since they aimed to reach it "from the top", before the completion of political Europe provided with democratic institutions, thereby ignoring the lesson provided by Robert Schuman. The provisions devoted to defence in the Lisbon Treaty are intergovernmental but aim to be part of a community framework. The European Union's Court of Justice is excluded from it, the European Parliament and the Commission are attributed limited roles. What interest is there then in including such a text in a community framework, which obliges the Member States to act as 28, whilst at the same time they do not agree either on the strategy, or the use of military force? This condemned any idea of common defence from the very start. The proof of this is that the treaty is not being implemented. The goal whereby "*Member States shall undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities*" (art.42-3), but also most of the "operational" provisions in this text, notably those pertaining to "permanent structured cooperation" (art.42-6) or to the implementation of tasks for the Union (art.44-1), have not given rise to any commencement of implementation. The treaty's only achievements involve the creation of new institutions (High Representative, European Defence Agency and Diplomatic Service) which do involve the Commission, the Parliament, but which have no decision making power over policy content. We could not have done worse! The military

interventions (Libya, Mali, Syria) that have taken place since the entry into force of the treaty have incidentally ignored it.

This poor choice has led the Union onto the slippery path of its worst propensities. The European Parliament has examined the foreign policy with the means available to it – budgetary and supervision of the institutions created, and via initiative reports which have not all illustrated its know-how...

In the name of the development of the internal market the Commission has interfered in the defence markets as if it were a question of normal manufacturing industries, committing an extremely serious analytical mistake, as it privileged supply over demand.

The Member States for their part have been reticent about exploring more ambitious paths other than simple cooperation.

#### SERIOUS ERRORS OF ANALYSIS

The two directives (defence package) regarding the defence markets have clearly failed because it could not be any otherwise. Justified by the incorrect observation whereby the defence industries of Europe are not competitive; they aim to ensure the transparency of the internal arms market, the clients of which are only the States themselves.

The European defence industry is competitive and there is no problem with supply. What it needs is demand, orders.

Amongst the world's ten biggest companies in the sector four are European. Five European States [5] feature amongst the 10 leading arms export businesses. Are these not competitive? A B2 bomber (Northrop) costs 2.14 billion \$ per unit; the 187 F22 Raptors (Lockheed Martin) cost the American taxpayer 51 billion € and the flagship programme, the F35 Lightning, should cost a total of more than 1000 billion over 30 years, i.e. 407 million \$ per machine, which is a record.

No European country has ever reached the astronomic costs of American defence equipment, which is paid for by the taxpayer. The European industry is rather more involved in exports and often develops defence equipment to the best technological level, mainly

4. § 10 of the Preamble of the Treaty on European Union: (The Member States...): "RESOLVED to implement a common foreign and security policy including the progressive framing of a common defence policy, which might lead to a common defence in accordance with the provisions of Article 42, thereby reinforcing the European identity and its independence in order to promote peace, security and progress in Europe and in the world."

5. SIPRI YearBook 2015. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and Groupe de Recherche et d'Information sur la Paix et la sécurité (GRIP).

with its own funds. BAE, Airbus, Finmeccanica, Rolls-Royce, MBDA, MTU, Thales, Safran, Thyssen-Krupp, Dassault, Klaus-Maffei, Rhein Metall, TKNS, Agusta, etc. are amongst the biggest world manufacturers and are all reputed export companies. It does this and damages its competitiveness, notably in the face of an American industry whose programmes are totally financed by the Defence Department. The real issues here are the worrying decrease in defence research appropriations (-40% between 2006 and 2015) and the lack of strong European demand, the only constituent element in an internal market, which is pushing our major industrialists progressively to set up business in the USA.

Since 2007 the Commission has aimed to make the European defence industry "more competitive". We have lost count of the communications on this issue [6]. It is preparing to release another one in the spring of 2016.

Moreover, the two directives in the "defence package" have produced poor results. According to a European Parliament study [7], only 5% of the State equipment contracts were concluded via the 2009/81 directive and in 2014 94% of the supply companies on the State markets were national industrialists. Between 2011 and 2014, only 6% of contract winners came from another Member State and 4%, of which 62% were American, were non-EU businesses.

One could object that the principles of the common market oppose the creation of a single market via orders and protection. However since 1958 [8], it has been agreed that Defence was not part of the community sphere! And this is totally justified. Orders, public appropriations and protection, that is what the USA have set in place, notably through the "Buy American Act" and this is especially the practice of States the world over if they want to develop an autonomous and technologically advanced defence industry. It is vital to put an end to the present community action in the arms industry, which seems more justified by the usual power struggles between European institutions than by general interest. Poorly adapted to markets, which only involve the States as clients, since it proscribes the idea of "European preference", this is leading to the loss of

European industrialists to real continental markets and it is exposing them to dismantlement.

### SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES...

"Minilateralism" has been preferred by the Member States to European multilateralism. Regional defence agreements have multiplied in Europe outside of the treaties. The Nordic and Baltic Defence cooperation agreement [9], the Benelux, Visegrad [10] and even the Lancaster House [11] agreements have shown both the futility of the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty in view of military realities, and the aptitude of the armies of Europe to work together, developed in all likelihood under NATO. Interoperability has progressed, but overall strategy has regressed.

NATO is still the continent's territorial defence framework, but its level of readiness, as well as its capabilities continue to decline, in comparison with its main world competitors. And its "big brother", the USA, whose preoccupations push them increasingly towards the Pacific, is growing weary of Europe's laxity. Europe is in danger of appearing greatly disarmed in the face of new geopolitical challenges.

### ...AND A FEW STEPS FORWARD

Progress has however been made, but this is part of a new long term outlook and does not correspond to urgent challenges. The Union was able to deploy 28 external missions involving 20,000 staff including 8 which were strictly military. Some have clearly been successful such as the Atalanta Operation off the coasts of Somalia, which took the lead in eradicating piracy from this area. It led to global awareness, sanctioned by a UN resolution and was followed by involvement in the area by all of the world's major navies.

The armies of Europe have learnt to work together [12], industrialists as well, if as they pool their know-how, notably industrial secrets, they have managed to escape the grip of the community rules. MBDA, the nEUROn, the pilotless fighter plane, are examples of this.

The post of High Representative for the Common

#### 6. 05/12/2007 :

Communication: "Strategy for a strong more competitive defence industry" 24/09/2013

Communication: "Towards a more competitive, more effective Defence and Security sector", 24/06/2014 "A new deal for European Defence" (COM(2014) 387

7. European Parliament. Study undertaken on request of the sub-Defence Committee by the DG for External Policy: "Impact of Defence Package directives on European Defence" June 2015.

8. Council decision of 15th April 1958

9. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Baltic countries

10. Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland

11. UK, France

12. The European Air Transport Command (EATC), launched in 2003 and operational in 2010 enabled the organisation by Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg of the pooling of their air transport and refuelling planes.

Foreign and Security Policy has taken on a new dimension with Federica Mogherini: a Union maritime strategy [13] finally recognises the operational complementarity of civilian and military tools in a prospective and global vision. The future European security strategy which is due to be adopted in June 2016 has been the focus of wide debate and major consultation. The Common Diplomatic Service (EEAS) was useful in concluding the agreement with Iran and is now involved in settling crises. The “Communiqué Champion” (one per day on average), is helping towards the Union’s voice being heard in the international arena and is fostering the emergence of a common diplomatic culture in Europe. In spite of systematic opposition on the part of the British, the European Defence Agency has produced some interesting ideas and concepts, and has helped open the way to the financing of dual use equipment (civilian and military). Under the influence of Jean-Claude Juncker the Commission has illustrated new flexibility. There is no doubt for example that the leniency it is showing to France, which is not respecting its budgetary commitments, is justified in its eyes because of its military engagements, both national and foreign.

As a matter of urgency and in view of the imperative of security, the European Union must take a qualitative leap forward that will enable it to respond to requirements. To do this several paths might be explored.

An increase in defence spending is an absolute priority. Several Member States have already announced that they are going to do this. The Baltic countries, Poland and Romania have increased their budgets significantly: France has decreed the stabilisation of its budget and the end of any reductions [14] ; after making some severe cuts the UK has promised to increase its defence appropriations [15].

The most advanced States in this domain could organise a privileged circle of pooling and sharing which is being argued for strongly in Europe. In the name of European solidarity that remains to be reinvented, the UK and France, the evident core

of this restricted cooperation should join forces, at least with Germany, where opinions are developing rapidly.

This circle might bring its members to conclude a Defence Solidarity Agreement, outside of the framework of the present European Treaties, with its own purely political and military governance. Existing cooperation activities might be included in this (terrorism, information, Lancaster House, occasional pooling of certain capabilities etc.), all compatible with NATO’s procedures, with decisions only being taken by the States. Isn’t this what is happening already though? Belgian, German and British frigates accompanied the French carrier battle group in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Gulf, maritime patrol aircraft are being lent to the UK to make good its temporary “capability gap”, transport aircraft are being deployed at the service of the French army operating in Sahel. If this cooperation were made official it would be provided with a strong political dimension, which might then be used as a framework for future developments and might prove useful to Germany, whose Constitution slows incentive to commit more resolutely in the field.

First of all the common institutions have only one urgent question to ask:

#### **WHAT CAN THE UNION BRING TO INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE SECURITY?**

The letter and spirit of the Treaties have to be respected, but ruling out defence, its economy and the way it operates from the internal market and community procedures. And the common institutions must feel that they are involved alongside the States, which want to improve their defence system. They are not responsible for the Union’s security but they can help to strengthen its defence.

The exemption of VAT on military equipment, although complicated, must be implemented at last, before any other initiative is taken. The same applies to the certification of equipment, for example in the aviation sector. The certification of Airbus’s gunship helicopter (NH 90) is said

13. Adopted in 2014

14. Declaration by the President of the French Republic to Parliament. Versailles 16th November 2015

15. National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, November 2015.

to have cost nearly one fifth of its development price (20 billion €)! The Union needs autonomous federal agencies that can compete with their grand world partners in terms of their competence and independence, and especially, so that they do not find themselves under the daily control of another administration, even of the European Commission. The financing of research must be open to defence industrialists who invest in technologies of the future, if they join forces with at least two companies from two different States, like the EUREKA project and the EU's Horizon 2020 programme. Also the principles of Defence should be taken on board: 100% public financing and intellectual property rules which prevent the undue dispersion of know-how.

The present agreements, which burden the States with the financing of external operations must be relinquished, as difficult as this might seem. Some Member States expose themselves more than others, and furthermore, they pay for it. Seven million Europeans live beyond the Union's borders and are only protected, often including their evacuated diplomatic representations, by the armed forces of certain countries, which deserve compensation in virtue of this! Simple mechanisms might be implemented, which would enable certain Member States, which cannot intervene – either for political or legal reasons, to take part in the financing of external operations that support the Union's collective interests.

Regarding civil operations, their control by the common institutions clearly has to be reviewed. Often complementary to armed or diplomatic action, they must be managed on the ground, by a framework-nation which has the necessary prior financing and the freedom to act. In effect, the present regulations prevent complementarity, mobility and reactivity. They are cumbersome and extremely expensive. They could be replaced by *a posteriori* regulations which of course remain legitimate.

The complementarity between European civil operations, development aid, humanitarian aid and military operations has to be part of a

strategic vision. However, although the Union is good at designing strategies, it is not behind the incentives to develop them. Should we move towards offering budgetary "bonuses" for "model" States which implement strategies that have been adopted jointly? This would at least give rise to extremely relevant texts, which too often remain in the realm of the declaratory, and enable their implementation.

Finally the European Union must be aware that is now "member of the world". The completion of the unification of Europe will only be possible if future collective interests are taken on board and anticipated together. As an example of a common interest that must absolutely be part of a European strategy we might quote maritime security, i.e. the guarantee of the principle of the freedom of navigation [16] as defined by the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea [17], as well as the protection of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of all Member States, which should be made priorities by the European Union. Because it is on the high seas that future power struggles will be decided between the major powers. This is already happening. 90% of European trade goes by sea, including 40% of its internal trade. The exclusive economic zone of the States of Europe is the first in the world totalling 25 million km<sup>2</sup>.

The future of Europe "a small cape on the Asian continent" [18], is linked to the sea. 23 of the 28 Member States have a shoreline of 90,000 km and 3,800 harbour facilities, the European trade fleet is the first in the world and Europe has the biggest businesses involved in the protection and use of the seas, where mankind will soon set sail in quest of the new resources that it requires. In terms of the environment, economy, technology, research, and therefore in terms of protection, security and defence, maritime issues are vital to Europe.

Overly focused on its own efforts to achieve internal perfection, which are vital but insufficient for to guarantee its power, the European Union must strategically consider the way it thinks and acts in terms of security and defence without delay.

16. Which we owe to Hugo De Groot known as Grotius (1583-1645), defined in his work *Mare Liberum* (Freedom of the Seas) March 1609.

17. Signed at Montego Bay 10th December 1982

18. Paul Valéry (1871-1945) Conference at the University of Zürich: "Will Europe become what it is in reality i.e. a small cape of the Asian continent?" 1922. See also "Europe from Ancient Times to the 20th Century- Note (or European)" 1924 : "what is Europe in fact? It is a kind of cape on the old continent, a western appendage of Asia".

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Right now it is not a European army that Europe needs but solidarity between its members, including from a military point of view.

It is not competitiveness that the European defence industry requires to rearm a now complacent Europe, but a market, demand, equipment and materials of the best possible technological level.

It is not just a strategy that Europe requires, but true presence in all of the places where its interests are challenged, i.e. the world over and especially on the world's seas.

When Europe loses interest in the fate of the world the world struggles more and Europe along with it.

Let events enable strong response on our part to the demand for security by our fellow citizens i.e.

to guarantee our defence that Brussels will accept the temporary change of method in this area and for the member States to be aware of the dangers surrounding us; so that we as Europeans can respond together.

If we succeed, European unification, its institutions, our States, will all benefit greatly!

Since forgotten, this was indeed Robert Schuman's lesson in 1950!

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