

PROPOSALS FOR A EUROPEAN SECURITY AND DEFENCE

This document has been drafted by a think-tank brought together at the initiative of the European associations ARRI¹ and ELEC² and involving various personalities who have held top civilian and military posts (list in annex).

Introduction / summary and conclusions

European citizens feel, with a significant degree of justification, that their security - both collective and even personal - is increasingly under threat. They express this clearly, both by their votes and in opinion polls / surveys³. The defence and security of the European Union (EU) must stop being a pious aspiration. First of all, we must consider the need for an autonomous defence, the political will for such a defence and the means to be used to achieve this.

The need for a defence? The countries that have come together within the EU share "common values" that they wish to defend against possible aggression. What are our "common values"? While not exhaustive, we can mention the peace between the countries of old Europe, which was steeped in blood for centuries by fighting and destruction; democracy and how it is practised freely; free trade practised over the period since 1950; solidarity among peoples; a certain kind of humanism which involves, in addition to respect for human rights, equality for individuals, men and women, and freedom of conscience; the economic power of a market of 500 million consumers and a common currency, the euro.

The will to have a common defence policy. Firstly it will be necessary to establish a consensus among the member countries, to define how this defence policy can be autonomous. This raises the question of relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which, for some Member States, is still the only organisation capable of defending them.

The quest for strategic autonomy. The EU must acquire a solid common military structure in order to respond to such threats independently of having recourse to NATO. The current forces are limited and, in most cases, suited to actions from the strong to the weak, peacekeeping operations within the framework of the UN or limited engagements. Force projection for the benefit of non-EU countries should be envisaged, using the EU's own resources, which is still difficult.

¹ Association Réalités et Relations internationales (International Realities and Relations Association).

² European League for Economic Cooperation - French Section.

³ Security risks are now appearing at the forefront, often even ahead of concerns about healthcare or purchasing power.

These threats are described in the first chapter of this note:

- Threat of aggression or intrusion by conventional, or possibly nuclear, forces. This threat, which had seemed to have more or less disappeared following the end of the Cold War, is regaining some relevance with the resurgence of nationalist behaviours and assertions, from Putin's Russia to the assertion of Chinese nationalism, as well as the situation in other countries such as Iran, North Korea, etc.
- Significant and lasting destabilisation of our Mediterranean, African, Near and Middle Eastern neighbours, with its consequences including a possible economic downturn and waves of immigration.
- Acute danger, closely linked to the previous point, of terrorist attacks throughout Europe, with France unfortunately being at the forefront of the targets. The reactions of fear, isolationism and stigmatisation of others which then threaten the civilian cohesion of our society, even threatening to trigger community clashes, violent riots and a potential civil war.
- Risk of natural disasters (floods, fires) or industrial disasters (explosions, pollution).
- New technological risks, from space, surveillance or attack drones, as well as espionage and computer sabotage and cyber attacks such as those recently identified in Germany and the United States⁴.

The pathways for progressing towards the construction of a “European security” are presented in the second chapter. In response to significant levels of expectation from all European citizens, who are well aware of the issues involved, this approach can make people fully aware of the real and concrete contribution which European solidarity can make given the risks we are facing which, by their very nature, transcend national borders. In this way it can help to reinvigorate the European project and generate widespread popular support, which is so lacking in today's EU, considered to be too “technocratic”.

Furthermore, European security affects all of the member countries, even those who value their neutrality in military matters⁵; it must therefore be implemented now for twenty-seven - or at least for those of the 27 countries that are in the Schengen area (22 countries) - which presents difficulties in relation to the number and logistical complexities of the procedures⁶ but which will strengthen the image and the cohesion of the European Union.

⁴ Everyone remembers the Snowden affair and “Wikileaks”. People are also aware that Russian “hackers” have been accused by the CIA of having disseminated information for the purposes of influencing the 2016 US presidential campaign; Germany is fearful of a similar intervention in its legislative elections in the autumn of 2017, and was also very worried to learn of the extent to which its own leaders had been subject to surveillance by the American National Security Agency (NSA).

⁵ The relevant EU countries are Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden.

⁶ In particular, the fact that each country, even a small one, has a “right of veto” when decisions require unanimity, which will not necessarily be the case.

The priority issues in European security which need to be addressed are: common treatment of border problems, management of migration flows and treatment of economic immigration, around unified asylum rules⁷ and Community border guards and coastguards; fight against terrorism by the sharing of essential information and the strengthening of resources for joint action (cf. Europol, Eurojust); management by a European Agency for security and defence of the standards and means of action for civil security. We propose adding a "big idea" to this overview: to mobilise young people in a European Corps, based on the model of the American "Peace Corps", for the purposes of securing lawless or "no-go" areas but also including the integration of immigrants, as well as the securitisation of and development assistance for the departure areas.

The third chapter outlines a possible way forward towards a Common European Defence, which is a very topical issue, as illustrated by the decisions of the European Council on 15 December 2016 or the joint letter from the French and German defence ministers dated 11 September last year⁸.

This subject, which nevertheless was discussed at the outset of the European venture with the European Defence Community (EDC) project, has remained largely untouched since then, despite some areas of progress. The time has come to give it genuine substance by making progress towards a dual objective: the strategic autonomy (in conjunction with NATO, but being able to act independently) of European defence, linked to proper diplomacy; and the provision of a rapid external response capability⁹ to deal with crises in our neighbouring regions.

Given the reticence of some, this project can only be implemented initially within a limited framework of about half a dozen countries; the existing treaties do permit it, since they have provided for the possibility of a "permanent structured cooperation" (PESCO), which, in accordance with the treaties, can be introduced through a decision of the European Council by a qualified majority. This PESCO would remain open, so that other countries could join it in their own time.

It would include common and effective instruments:

- - a **strengthened joint staff headquarters**, working with autonomy / in cooperation with NATO, which could be achieved through adaptation of the current Eurocorps headquarters in Strasbourg, and which would be at the disposal of the EU for the conduct of its own operations;
- - a **heavy response force** and for a sustained time, a large European unit at army corps level, which could benefit from the (now partly theoretical) existence of the European army corps¹⁰; this revamped Eurocorps would be placed under the responsibility of an *ad hoc* Executive Council composed of ministers from the PESCO countries¹¹;
- a **rapid response capability** of five or six brigades or tactical groups, multinational units formed in advance and truly integrated, that is to say lodged in one place under unified command, in order to develop the spirit of a genuine European corps; their conditions of engagement would also be defined by the *ad hoc* Executive Council and not individually by the participating countries.

⁷ And a common list of countries considered "safe" for the resettlement of people not accepted on the territory of the EU.

⁸ In both cases the objective is to quickly achieve an allocation of 2% of the GDP of each Member State to Defence and to establish joint forces for external intervention and for defence.

⁹ Referred to in France as the "Opex".

¹⁰ This Eurocorps currently includes land units that are assigned to it.

¹¹ A special protocol annexed to the TEU describes the institutional arrangements corresponding to the PESCO.

The British decision to leave the EU is an obstacle, as the British and French armies are currently the only ones provided with the full range of military means and capabilities for "projection" further afield. On the other hand, because of its Atlanticism, Great Britain has always been the principal opponent of common European defence efforts. Appropriate cooperation will no doubt still be possible.

Lastly, Common European Defence must be incorporated into the industrial domain so that it can be inter-operable and also to reduce costs through economies of scale. It will therefore be necessary to put in place the instruments of the future, which are: common norms and standards for materials and equipment; joint armament programmes, from the design stage; and joint orders for the same materials. This will require political will and coherent efforts to manage (possibly with Community assistance) the local consequences of the indispensable industrial choices of specialisation.

The fourth chapter deals with the financial aspects of this European security and defence programme. Each country will have to arrange its necessary budgetary efforts in order to achieve the GDP target of 2% (excluding pensions) by 2025¹², of which at least 20% is for investment. In order to prevent the requirements of the Stability Pact from blocking this effort¹³, it would be very appropriate to take up the idea of setting aside from the Maastricht criteria a fraction of the national expenditures on defence and security, at least in relation to the new expenditure.

But we are also proposing that part of this effort, both in terms of the financing of joint operations and also the investments in research and development (R&D) and joint armament programmes, should be grouped together in a common budget, managed by an *ad hoc* commissioner, who would be the equivalent of a European Minister of Defence. This common budget would be financed by each of the participating States and then, ideally, by European-owned resources (specific taxation, borrowing).

Lastly, we would like to refer to the proposal, made amongst others by former Minister Thierry Breton, to have the EU take back or to share some of the debt of Member States arising out of expenditure on security and defence (excluding "strike force"), since they are implemented in the common interest. This part of the communitarised debt could, depending on the approach¹⁴, cover that part of the current sovereign debts used to finance the defence efforts or cover only a fraction (half?) of the new expenditures of the Member States.

This first federal-type debt would originate primarily from the exchange of a portion of current government bonds against new European bonds, similar to those currently issued under the European Stability Mechanism, and then direct recourse to markets. For some, it could be administered by a common Treasury and managed by a finance minister appointed by the European Council, in line with proposals often presented in the recent period.

¹²This objective is more ambitious than the presidential campaign programmes, which are also focused on 2025, or CEMA, which is targeting 2022, because they all talk about *inclusion of pensions*; pensions account for 0.3% to 0.4% of GDP.

¹³ We know that the Growth and Stability Pact limits the public deficit (State + Social Security + local authorities) of each Member State to 3% of GDP, subject to progressive sanctions. Although its recent interpretation has been flexible, it hinders the possibilities of additional military spending for States close to the ceiling, which is the case for France but also for a majority of the other Member States.

¹⁴ It has not yet taken a position on the matter, but one may anticipate a significant reluctance on the part of Germany to accept any proposal to take a share of the "old" debt; if this opposition could not be overcome, confining communitarisation to the new debt could already be a step forward.