

EUROPE FACING THE CHALLENGE OF ITS DEFENCE: BETWEEN REALISM AND RESPONSIBILITY

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On 29 June 2017, the Jacques Delors Institute held a conference on the future of the European defence structure as part of the 7th Ateliers de la Citadelle, in partnership with the Mission Lille Eurométropole Défense Sécurité and the French Rapid Reaction Corps, under the high patronage of the Army Minister. Experts and practitioners of defence and security issues came together to discuss the theme “Europe facing the challenge of its defence: between realism and responsibility”, in order to analyse both the new challenges and the window of opportunity resulting from the current security issues, the new Trump administration and the Brexit negotiations.

Depending on their geographical location, EU Member States focus on different perceptions of threat. For some, the immediate and existential threat to their security comes from Russia. For others, Islamist terrorism is the key security issue that Europe must tackle. These two visions raise several types of responses which may prove to be different at times, in particular on the issue of cooperation with Russia. The challenge Europe is facing is to avoid a clash between these two visions which would limit European cooperation on these security issues. The European Council of June 2017 welcomed the creation of a European Defence Fund and presented proposals on the direction to be taken by the European defence strategy, in order to provide input for the debate on the future direction of the EU27. Following a stagnation in debate over almost a decade, European defence has been relaunched. What avenues are open and which pitfalls must be avoided?

To debate these issues, the Jacques Delors Institute, in partnership with the Mission Lille Eurométropole Défense Sécurité and the French Rapid Reaction Corps, held a first round table on “**the relationship between NATO and the EU - planned obsolescence**”, in which participated the Division Major-General Gert-Johannes Hagemann, Deputy Commander of the French Rapid Reaction Corps (CRR-Fr) and former Commander of the Franco-German Brigade, Alain Leroy, French Ambassador and former Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and the Professor of contemporary British civilisation and specialist in the United Kingdom’s foreign and European

policy, Pauline Schnapper. The second round table of the day focused on “**Refugees and borders - What security for what democracy?**” with Pascal Brice, General Director of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), Bruno Tertrais, Deputy Director of the Fondation pour la recherche stratégique (FRS), Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, Research Director at the French National Scientific Research Council (CNRS) specialist of international migrations, and Ana Maria Gomes, Portuguese MEP since 2004 and member of the Parliament’s Subcommittee on Security and Defence and since 2014 of the “Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs” Committee. The debates were chaired by Nicole Gnesotto, Vice-President of the Jacques Delors Institute, President of the Board of the Institute of Higher Defence Studies of France (IHEDN) and Professor at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM). Army General (2S) Jean-Louis Georgelin, former Supreme Commander of the armed forces, was the esteemed guest at this conference opened by the Force Commander Thierry Corber, Commander of the CRR-Fr. The Ateliers de la Citadelle event was also an opportunity to present the latest book by political scientist and specialist of European defence André Dumoulin and Nicolas Gros Verheyde, a journalist specialising in European defence and foreign policy affairs and author of the blog B2-Bruxelles 2, entitled *La politique européenne de sécurité et de défense commune: « Parce que l’Europe vaut bien une défense »*.



1. State of play

For Nicole Gnesotto, the time could be right to put the idea of a European defence strategy back on the agenda following a decade which saw few initiatives. The financial and economic crisis which hit Europe made a return to prosperity the political focus to the detriment of security. Member States' military budgets have decreased over the last decade. The United Kingdom regularly used its veto to block a reinforcement of defence capacities in a European framework. Some would have liked to have seen the crisis in Georgia in 2008 become an opportunity to reposition NATO as Europe's first defence lever. In addition, in recent years France's leadership in Europe has faded, demonstrating little initiative-taking while security and defence issues remain key subjects of French diplomacy.

Today, we are witnessing a change in paradigm in Europe: a fresh impetus. The level of threat is constantly on the rise in and around Europe. The weakening of Europe's southern neighbours raises the question more keenly of the limits of NATO's missions and its commitment in stabilising the region. Moreover, the economic situation is improving. European countries which are members of NATO have renewed their promise to spend 2% of their GDP on defence, in accordance with the American expectations reasserted by Donald Trump. There is therefore a need for Europe to provide counter-insurance against the risk of American non-performance. At the same time, while it makes the situation more complicated for the EU27, Brexit tends to simplify the path towards a European defence strategy, unimpeded by the British veto. Similarly, in favour of Emmanuel Macron's election, a rise in a French proactive approach to Europe and in particular to defence issues has been

observed. Lastly, Europeans are negotiating the creation of a European fund to stimulate research and the joint acquisition of defence capacities and are launching a general debate on the future of the European defence strategy. The establishment of a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC), a sort of mini European headquarters, and the drive to create permanent structured cooperation initiatives, made possible by the Treaty of Lisbon, are signs of a new alignment of the stars for Europe's defence.

2. Using 2003 and its shortcomings as a benchmark

General Georgelin, former Chief of the French Defence Staff, reminded, however, that with the exception of the Defence Fund, most of these announcements were decisions made in 2003 that had not yet been implemented. The change comes more from the political impetus to take action; the challenge today being to decide how to organise collective European security. This is a consideration that must be projected twenty years into the future and which must define the issues effectively without being afraid of using the appropriate words. Defence is first and foremost a semantic battlefield: the European policy-makers have long-since avoided the words "war" and "power", and still do today.

Accounting for almost 25% of global GDP and 50% of international development funding, the EU is the champion of the civilian domain but lacks credibility when it comes to the military. The EU is perceived as a useful tool for secondary missions. NATO is the preferred tool for high-intensity missions. Since the end of the Cold War and the reduction in the imminent threat of invasion, Europe denied war. This tendency

to confine EU action far from hard power raises the question of what Europeans really mean by strategic autonomy. The fiasco of managing the crises and wars in former Yugoslavia is a cruel reminder of the shortcomings of this Europe, which refuses to see itself as a power with a full possibility of going to war. The lack of a voice from Europe, the sending of troops under a United Nations mandate, then NATO's intervention upon the request of the French president Jacques Chirac demonstrated the EU's inability to consider its autonomy to be real and effective, while rehabilitating NATO's role in the defence of European territory at a time when the importance of the Alliance was contested. Later on, European military cooperation was based on two different rationales: that of a Franco-British industrial cooperation and that of a Franco-German political cooperation.

Supported by General Georgelin's points on the NATO-EU relationship, Alain Leroy reminded the main stumbling blocks of the two structures. The definition of the Alliance's geographical area of intervention and the potential area of EU intervention do overlap but are not the same, particularly in Africa. The same goes for the ever-present problem of a single set of forces for the contribution of troops under EU or NATO mandate. This does not mean that the relationship should be viewed as antagonistic. The Atalanta operations to combat sea piracy under EU mandate and the Ocean Shield operation under NATO mandate were complementary and successfully put an end to piracy in an area through which one third of global trade transits. Should there be a division of tasks between the EU and NATO? Should tasks be divided on a geographical basis or per type of mission? Another essential question is that of the complementarity of expertise, given that some nations, which are not considered as conventional military powers, have developed specialist expertise in certain fields such as cyber or capacity enhancement.

3. Brexit: what are the consequences?

What place should be attributed to our British ally? Brexit has not yet happened. Negotiations are still underway. However, the question of the UK's foreign policy was barely covered during the referendum campaign. The *Global Britain* strategy seems to be very strongly based on the USA at a time when the US administration has doubts about Europe and about NATO. British officials reassure that while

the United Kingdom is leaving the EU, it is not leaving Europe. Bilateral defence cooperation remains essential. In this new configuration, the UK is highly dependent on NATO and the USA. Pauline Schnapper had a word of caution for Europeans: while the UK's departure from the EU should allow the European Defence Agency and European defence cooperation to be more ambitious, it should not be taken for granted that this can be achieved easily without the UK. Will Brexit result in a general weakening of Europe? In terms of defence, we are witnessing a mechanical and unilateral weakening of the UK. The country will have to bear the 2% of GDP in defence spending required by Trump despite difficult budgetary conditions. The British only have a few troops in the forces deployed by the EU. The UK's departure will only slightly affect the capacities made available for European missions. While they renewed their support for the Lancaster House Agreements, the Franco-British bilateral relationship should not be affected by Brexit. The British wish to leave a door open for maritime cooperation and to be able to access the European arms market. Another question is raised between NATO and London, and that is the role of the Deputy SACEUR¹, traditionally European. London can no longer occupy this position given its prerogatives of strategic coordinator with the European Union or will have to allow the creation of a genuine strategic military staff, the European equivalent of the SHAPE in Mons.

4. What role for the Franco-German tandem?

The UK's departure repositions the Franco-German couple at the centre of the European arena. For the German Major-General Hagemann, NATO is not becoming obsolete but requires change and a furthering of the EU-NATO cooperation. We respond to many common threats. The nuclear proliferation in the Asia-Pacific concerns NATO just as much as it concerns Europeans. While there are points of convergence between the EU and NATO, it is the differences between them that must be properly identified and asserted. The potential calling into question of the Iranian nuclear agreement by the USA is a threat to global security. The Americans have the power to make NATO inoperative or obsolete should they so wish. It is therefore important to create a European defence strategy which is cooperative and yet autonomous, as the USA does not have the means to make

1. The Deputy SACEUR is the Deputy Commander of NATO's forces in Europe.

the EU obsolete. It is time to create this European pillar, putting it on a level playing field with the Atlantic Alliance.

Going beyond the EU-NATO relationship, Brexit and Donald Trump's election forces Germany to consider itself as the continent's defence driver. By shifting to 2% of GDP, German military spending would rise to almost €65 billion. This is more than Russia's defence budget. The question is therefore to ascertain how and by what means it should be spent, in a way that does not raise concerns among Germany's neighbours. The question of interoperability is major. Capacity enhancement, the reform of security systems, or disarmament, demobilisation and resettlement are all expenditure items in which Germany could make a significant contribution, for example in a field such as strategic air transport.

Reviving the European defence strategy does not mean putting an end to NATO. The Alliance has a well-rounded geopolitical vision. Russia has been neglected by some Europeans for twenty years. For the former Member States of the Warsaw Pact, joining NATO was a relief and a guarantee of security. The organisation, thanks to the US nuclear umbrella, ensures the territorial integrity of these States. The concept of a last resort, recently outlined by the Americans, invites Eastern European nations, which up to now based their entire defence strategy on NATO, to discuss with their partners in Western Europe the means to ensure the safeguarding of their territories from all types of external aggression, within a European framework.

5. Migrations and Borders

One of the new challenges Europe is facing is the refugee crisis and the increase in the number of migrants heading for the European continent. For the MEP Ana Maria Gomes, the management of the crisis in Europe has been catastrophic whereas it could have been anticipated. The EU-Turkey agreement is the acknowledgement of the limits and failures of the Dublin Regulation. The agreement with Turkey is also an admission of weakness towards Erdogan. Paradoxically, operation Sophia, intended as a means to combat traffickers, has strengthened their economic model by giving them the opportunity to adapt. The refugee issue is managed at both European and Member State level, respectively by

the DG Migration and Home Affairs and the home offices with a strong bias towards a security-oriented approach to the problem while the threat is only a tiny part of the broader refugee issue. In the name of the security threat, there have been serious breaches of EU's values, in particular in the refugee detention centres in Libya with whom Europeans plan to draft an agreement similar to that signed with Ankara. Severe criticism from NGOs and human rights groups attest to this. It would be preferable to consider legal immigration pathways in Europe, in particular with the option of humanitarian visas. There is an urgent need for a genuine mobility policy. We are facing a structural phenomenon but are continuing to consider it as if it were a temporary crisis. A structured and long-term political response would be welcome, and preferable to a response based on crisis management and reaction.

The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) is a body from which inspiration can be drawn. Its Director Pascal Brice explained that OFPRA's primary vocation is to provide protection. A distinction must be made between what is governed by law and what is political choice. The right to asylum may not be politicised or exploited. Access to the right to asylum is governed by the Geneva Conventions. This does not mean being naive when it comes to the risk of infiltrations or breaches of the asylum procedure. For this, OFPRA protection officers conduct in-depth checks subject to judicial oversight of the journeys of asylum seekers in order to check any inconsistencies in their accounts. Since 2015, OFPRA has also had the right to reject an application in the name of state security. This prerogative is in the European Directives. Some Member States implement it, while others do not. It is important that asylum law is complied with and strictly applied. OFPRA's mission is not the same as that of Frontex. A European OFPRA would be a positive move if it could enjoy full political independence as in France, in order to conduct its mission without any restrictions or pressure. The refugee and migrant crisis shows that the problem does not concern only Greece or Italy, but rather is a European issue. European action is too little or too late.

Catherine Wihtol de Wenden reminded that obtaining an exemption of visas from Turkey should not be related to, or seen as, the result of Erdogan's blackmailing the EU. Currently, the number of Turks residing in Europe returning to Turkey is greater than the

number of Turks coming to settle in Europe. The abolition of visas would support this demographic trend. One of Europe's problems with regard to the refugee and migration crisis is its difficulty to consider itself as an area of immigration. The question of immigration has shifted. It was originally a question related to work, and has now become focused on security. A few years ago, Portuguese citizens emigrated to France for economic reasons rather than for political considerations related to the dictatorship. The same trend can be observed with regard to extra-European immigration. The cost of full security and this Malthusian vision of immigration is significant diplomatically, economically and demographically for Europe. It would be better to organise a global governance of migration, starting by accepting mobility as a sign of modernity and an instrument to support human development. According to Alain Leroy, the education of women is a key challenge to reduce demographic pressure and thereby lower fertility rates.

Migration management is a complex issue as migrants' motivations may be both political and economic. Distinction must be made between that governed by asylum law and economic migration. Hotspots must be used to identify and register migrants more effectively, improving on their current shortcomings. Europeans must discuss a common European asylum policy. The example of Algerian crisis in the 1990s is a clear demonstration of differences in perception according to the country. Portugal emphasised a policy based on the right to asylum while France saw a migration risk. An in-depth analysis of the causes of migration would help to alleviate them. The arrival of migrants from Chad are much more related to the crisis of governance of Lake Chad than to religious conflict.

Bruno Tertrais concurred with this. A return to borders is often mentioned when speaking about two different things. Some attempt to push back their borders, while others try to control them more effectively. A consolidation of borders can be observed, whether physical or legal. Borders act to reveal deeper problems or are a symptom of them when the discussion comes back to them. Turkey is currently a border post to Europe. It could be asked whether the price paid for it to play this role is worth it. Borders must not be perceived as a wall. Today, only 5 to 15% of borders could be qualified as walls. There is no new Berlin Wall today. This wall was designed to

prevent people from leaving. Today, we are attempting to stop people from entering. There are currently more than 75,000 entry points in the world. These entries must be organised, not barricaded. Europe must show solidarity and welcome its share. While some countries are reluctant to show their solidarity, pressure must be put on them. Ana Maria Gomes stated with surprise that sanction procedures can be launched against countries which do not comply with the 3% public deficit requirement but the lack of solidarity expressed by some Member States in view of the migration crisis cannot be punished. It was answered that while the treaties did not provide for the means to force European solidarity, there is no obstacle to increasing checks of the management of structural funds to put pressure on these countries.

6. A few avenues for consideration

The esteemed guest at this debate, General Georgelin, concluded that it is necessary to:

- Launch a wide-ranging study of the concept of European strategic autonomy in order to better define and understand it,
- Consider the organisation and relations of European security without NATO, but while searching for better complementarity in view of partnership. Europeans must know how to look after themselves and to create a genuine European pillar in order to be a credible ally,
- See how the EU's relations can be restructured with the UK following Brexit and to foster Germany's assumption of responsibility,
- Consider the best use of European defence budgets, in particular the 2% of German GDP which could be invested,
- Reassert the importance of European solidarity in defence, security and the management of crises of all kinds,
- Act together to tackle problems at their sources,
- Consider the creation of a European body like the French body OFPRA which contributes to make a clear distinction between asylum issues and economic migration issues.

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