

EUROPEAN DEFENCE COOPERATION : SPEAK THE TRUTH, ACT NOW

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On 8 October 2015, the Jacques Delors Institute was a partner in the sixth edition of the “Ateliers de la Citadelle”, organised by the Mission Lille Eurométropole Défense Sécurité (MLEDS), around the theme, “More crises, more European defence cooperation?”. This day of debate between experts and insiders on security issues made way for an analysis of the new threats facing Europe and the way in which European security cooperation can respond to these threats.

The Common security and defence policy (CSDP) remains a young policy: first established under the Treaty of Nice, it is currently fifteen years old. The European defence policy has already shown that it can respond to threats. It has chalked up several successes, such as Operation Artemis, which probably averted genocide in the Congo. Even so, it is a project that is still in its infancy and it needs to improve its response to the new security threats which have arisen in recent years.

The CDSP's future is first and foremost a political issue. The institutions are already in place but a lack of political will prevents them from being used to their full potential. We therefore need to conduct a thorough analysis of European security threats. This will allow Europeans to use the European defence policy where it is most useful. To analyse the new challenges facing Europe, the Jacques Delors Institute was a partner of the sixth edition of the “Ateliers de la Citadelle”, organised by the *Mission Lille Eurométropole Défense Sécurité* (MLEDS), in partnership with France Culture, *Défense et Sécurité Internationale* magazine and the *Toute l'Europe* news website, in Lille on 8 October 2015 and devoted to the topic: “More crises, more European defence cooperation?”

Michel Barnier, Special adviser on European defence and security policy to the President of the European Commission, played a key role in the conference which was moderated by Nicole Gnesotto, Vice-president of the Jacques Delors Institute, Chair of the Board of the IHEDN (French institute of advanced studies in national defence) and Professor at the CNAM (French national conservatory of arts and crafts). The main

speakers at the conference, which was introduced by French Secretary General for National security and defence Louis Gautier, were: Swedish Ambassador in Paris Veronika Wand-Danielson; General Eric Margail, French Rapid Reaction Force Chief of Staff; Air Chief Marshal Patrick de Rousiers, President of the EU military committee; Jacques Delors Institute board member Joachim Bitterlich, former adviser to Chancellor Helmut Kohl; Strategic research foundation director, Camille Grand; and Senior fellow with the *European council on foreign relations* (ECFR), Nick Witney; along with Nicolas Gros-Verheyde and Jean-Dominique Merchet, journalists and bloggers with “Bruxelles2” and “Secret Défense” respectively.



1. Threats to European security

1.1. War is dancing around Europe

In the view of Michel Barnier, the world is now “more dangerous, more unfair and more unstable than it was a few years ago”. While the EU wanted its neighbourhood to be a “circle of friends”, it is now surrounded by a “circle of fire”: invasion of Ukraine, Syrian civil war, resumption of fighting in south-eastern Turkey, risk of a third *Intifada* in the Palestinian territories, and ISIS’ consolidation of territory in Iraq and Syria and its presence in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. As Louis Gauthier put it succinctly: “War is dancing around Europe” with unprecedented simultaneity and magnitude.

The diversity of these threats poses a challenge to European cohesion. For certain member states, attention is focused on Russia’s aggressive attitude towards its neighbours, while for others, the security situation to the south of the Mediterranean and in Africa is the chief source of concern due to the major impact it has on migrant flows towards the EU. Thus the European countries’ perception of Russia differs: for eastern member states it is an adversary, while for southern Europe it is a potential partner. According to Nicole Gnesotto, Europeans are not divided, they are simply different. Veronika Wand-Danielson added that we need to leave behind this dichotomy between threats from the east and threats from the south of Europe. A threat to Europe is a threat to the Union as whole, regardless of its geographical origin.

1.2. Structural threats: climate change, particularly in Africa

Aside from the current crises threatening European security in the immediate term, there are other, structural threats that are emerging. Climate disruption is already taking its toll in the world¹, particularly in Africa, and it is restricting people’s access to such crucial resources as arable land and water. The doubling of the population in Africa between now and the year 2050² in a context of limited access to resources may well spark major clashes, which will translate both into human tragedies and into millions of people migrating to other countries, in Africa but also in Europe. Thus the migrant issue, far from being merely a temporary challenge linked to present circumstances, is in fact a structural phenomenon which is going to be with us for decades, and its potential magnitude may well cause the recent influx of migrants into Europe to pale by comparison.

1.3. The economic and financial crisis

The economic and financial crisis has had two major consequences for European security: it has led both to defence budget cuts, and to a decrease in the amount of political importance assigned to defence issues.

Defence budgets have been seriously hit by cuts in national public-sector expenditure. Defence research budgets have been especially hit by these cuts, dropping by an average of 30% in the EU as a whole over the past 10 years. Key technologies are



moving away from Europe, which means a loss of jobs, a loss of capacity for innovation and a loss of strategic independence for the EU. To reverse this trend, the European Commission proposes using European funds to finance research into dual-use technologies, i.e. technologies serving both civilian and military purposes (such as surveillance drones, which can be used both by farmers and by the military). It is also worth considering removing spending on military research from the calculation of the public deficit when evaluating member states' compliance with deficit goals as laid down in the Stability and growth pact.

With the economic and financial crisis, defence issues have been removed from the political agenda of the European Council comprising the heads of state and government. It wasn't until December 2013 that the European Council was once again ready to address the development of defence capabilities in Europe. And it was pledged to return to the issue in June 2015, but the heightened gravity of the economic and political situation in Greece at that time once again *de facto* relegated defence issues to the sidelines. While we should not exaggerate the impact that new institutional arrangements might have, the idea of setting up a "European Union Security Council" was aired at the debate by Nicole Gnesotto, based on the concept that, every year, a European Council meeting would be entirely devoted to security and defence issues.



2. Pragmatic European integration to respond to the threats

2.1. European countries' loss of influence in the world

GDP growth in European countries has been weaker than GDP growth in the new emerging economies for almost forty years now. Thus Michel Barnier stressed that while a majority of the ten wealthiest countries in the world were European fifty years ago, and that only four of the the G8 group's member states are European today, neither list might have a single European country in it by 2030. This decline is by no means inevitable, but European countries ought to cooperate strongly together, including in the sphere of defence.

2.2. The need to be able to resort to the use of force

The ability to resort to the use of force continues to be a crucial tool for achieving a number of foreign policy goals. For instance, if humanitarian aid and development aid are to be effective, it is crucial to securitise the areas where that aid is due to be deployed. Furthermore, years of development aid can be totally nullified by a civil war. That is why the European strategy in Somalia is based on dovetailing the deployment of military forces³ with aid policies designed to allow the country to rebuild.

Europeans need to continue to have the military capabilities that they need in order to allow them to resort to the use of force in a genuinely comprehensive approach to conflicts. So the problem here is making up our minds about to what extent beefing up military capability is a matter for national decision-makers, for cooperation or for European integration.

2.3. European defence solidarity already exists

With regard to defence issues, Europeans are not divided, they are simply different. It is obvious that the countries that were still a part of the Soviet Union twenty-five years ago should feel more concerned about Russia than about the threats from the south. That does not mean, however, that those countries are ignoring the EU's southern neighbourhood. As Air Chief Marshal Patrick de Rousiers pointed out, one of the countries making the largest contribution to the European mission in the Central African Republic is Estonia. And when command of the

EUTM-Mali mission was taken over, the European ministers in attendance came from Spain, but also from Germany and Austria.

Thus European solidarity is therefore an economic, military and political solidarity.

2.4. Defence of national interests requires European cooperation

Regarding security, even more so than with other spheres, there is no credible alternative to proposing a more thoroughly European response to the current challenges and to those that are beginning to take shape. In view of diminishing national defence budgets and military capabilities in the individual member states, the defence of national interests demands European cooperation today more than it ever has done in the past. It is no longer a matter of choosing between more NATO or more Europe, it is a question of beefing up Europe's capabilities both at the EU level and within NATO.

Participants in the seminar disagreed, however, over the ultimate goal. While some spoke openly of the construction of a "European army", others adopted a more cautious stance, arguing that it was more realistic to expand cooperation among the countries of Europe, whether in an EU framework or otherwise.

2.5. Cooperating on the ground, moving forward pragmatically

As Camille Grand stressed, politicians, police forces and intelligence services in European countries have never achieved such a high degree of cooperation on the ground, as they struggle against the terrorist threat.

General Eric Margail pointed out that European armies are already interoperational and that this allows them to act together when the politicians require them to do. **Cooperation among European states on the ground has never been more intense than it is today.** Thus the European air transport command (EATC)⁴ allows Spanish planes to provision the French operation in Mali.

Where industry is concerned, merging national defence industries would make it possible to consolidate the European defence technological and industrial base. The -announced merger between French (Nexter) and German (KMW) tank manufacturers is therefore a move in the right direction.

In political terms, it is necessary to step up contacts both at the national parliamentary level and at the heads of state and government level.

And from a strategic standpoint, Europeans consult with one another to develop their national defence strategies (see the German white paper on defence due to be published in 2016), so this should facilitate the debate on the review of the European security strategy currently under way, and should pave the way, as Michel Barnier suggested, for the drafting of a European white paper on defence.

Numerous tools already exist, and those European countries that wish to cooperate more should make broader use of those existing tools. This is particularly true for the idea of enhanced cooperation in defence (known as "permanent structured cooperation"), of the European defence agency, whose budget could be significantly increased in order to boost the number of common research projects and/or equipment procurement, training and the deployment of the EU's battle groups.



Conclusion

Daring to decide, acting in the long term

While the European Union has once again shown in recent years that it is capable of surmounting powerful shocks, the new threats looming over the security of the peoples of Europe today demand that there be more **European pooling in defence**, and without delay. Structured debates on the two themes – “speaking the truth” and “acting now” – throughout the day endeavoured to submit concrete recommendations, including in particular:

- a “European Union Security Council” comprising the 28 heads of state and government should be established, it should meet once a year to discuss security and defence issues;
- an ambitious revision of the European security strategy by the High Representative should be followed by a European white paper on defence;
- there should be an increase in European Commission support for research resources, focusing in particular on dual-use capability research projects;
- there should be more systematic recourse to existing institutional tools such as permanent structured cooperation, the solidarity clause and the European defence agency;
- a European border-guard corps should be established;
- in industrial terms, governments should encourage the merger of European defence companies to prevent a technological drop-out and to create world leaders capable of guaranteeing the EU member states’ strategic independence;
- on the ground, bilateral and multilateral cooperation should grow, in a pragmatic manner, so as to allow Europeans to pool their military capabilities the way they are already doing with the EATC;
- Europeans should also demand greater transparency regarding foreign investment in strategic European industries.

Winding up the seminar, it appeared crucial for Europeans to be able to “speak the truth” but also to be able to “dare to make decisions”. And while it is necessary to “act now”, it is also necessary to be able to “act in the longer term”.

1. Thus the civil war in Syria was caused, in part and indirectly, by climate change and the heavy drought that struck Syria between 2006 and 2011. See Thomas Pellerin-Carlin & Jean-Arnold Vinois, 2015 Climate negotiations: Speeding up or slowing down the energy transition?, Jacques Delors Institute, Policy paper n° 142, September 2015.

2. The INED claims that the population of Africa could hit the 2.4 billion mark by 2050, as against 1.1 billion in 2013.

3. The military forces in Somalia are deployed chiefly at sea and on land. The forces at sea are international, with US, Japanese, Russian and Chinese participation in close conjunction with Europe’s Operation Atalanta. The forces on land are primarily African, chiefly comprising troops from Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, paid and/or trained by European funds/missions.

4. The EATC is a cooperative venture forged in the framework of the CSDP. Launched by The Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany in 2010, it now comprises seven EU member states – its four founding members plus Spain, Luxembourg and Italy. Its command centre is situated at Eindhoven in The Netherlands, and it controls a multi-national fleet of approximately 200 transport and air-to-air refuelling planes, in an effort to pool the participating member states’ resources.

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