

#32

PeSCo

THE POLISH PERSPECTIVE

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*The views expressed here are solely those of the authors.
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Policy Paper

Poland's position in the debate on launching PESCO was with no doubt special. Poland criticised the concept of making PESCO an exclusive defence core of the EU and advocated not only an open character of PESCO, but also linking it with NATO as closely as possible. This firm stance led to concerns that Poland might eventually choose to stay outside PESCO. Yet, Poland joined at the very last moment. Soon thereafter, Poland announced that it would join 9 PESCO projects and focused on promoting closer EU-NATO cooperation in line with a concept of reinforcing NATO through European defence. Polish interest towards the European Defence Fund has also started to increase as Poland began to seek different ways of transforming its Defence Technological and Industrial Base.

THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF POLAND'S SECURITY

The Polish stance towards PESCO has to be set in the broader context of Poland's approach towards the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Between 2004 and 2014, Poland was among the most active EU Member States in CSDP operations, capability-building initiatives and institutional debates. Poland contributed to all major EU operations in Africa: EUFOR RD Congo (2006), EUFOR Chad/RCA (2008/2009), EUTM Mali (2013/14), EUFOR RCA (2014/15)¹, EUTM RCA (since 2016), as well as EUFOR "Althea" in Bosnia and Herzegovina (since 2004). Three EU Battle Groups, in 2010, 2013 and 2016 (with the next one scheduled for 2019) were established with Poland as a framework nation. Poland has been also supportive of the pragmatic build-up of CSDP institutions, including EU Operational Headquarters for military operations².

Given Poland's limited military capacity (at least compared to the top European military powers) and involvement in numerous NATO operations, the Polish contribution to CSDP has to be assessed as relatively high. This can be explained by the place and role of the EU in Poland's security policy. Ever since its accession to the EU, the CSDP has been considered an additional security mechanism for Poland, complementing the national defence capacity, membership in NATO and strategic partnership with the U.S.³ Poland has recognised strong CSDP as the key vehicle to respond to asymmetric and non-military threats to European security, which could not (and should not) be tackled by NATO as a politico-military alliance in the first place. By participating in African operations, Poland also aimed to reinforce the European solidarity. Proving their readiness to engage militarily in the southern neighbourhood of Europe, Poland at the same time aimed to increase the European understanding of the threats represented by Russia in the East.

¹ Before the start of EUFOR RCA Poland also supported a national French operation there (SANGARIS). See: M. Radziejowska, M. Terlikowski, *EUFOR RCA and the Future of Polish Engagement in Crisis Management Missions*, "Bulletin PISM", No. 75 (670), 28 May 2014.

² It was one of the goals of the 2011 Polish EU Council presidency. See: C. Major, F. Wassenberg, *Warsaw's ambitious CSDP Agenda*, SWP Comments, No. 25 September 2011 - www.swp-berlin.org

³ A particular role of the EU and CSDP was noted by the Polish minister of foreign affairs Witold Waszczykowski in his Foreign Policy Speech before the Parliament on 29 January 2016 - www.sejm.gov.pl

THE NATO FACTOR

This approach did not change after the debate on launching PESCO started. What rather happened was that Poland concentrated on the potential negative effects of PESCO and attempted to avoid them. Why this focus was both particularly heavy and to a large extent justified can be explained mostly by the developments in NATO and transatlantic relations.

Following the 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw a core Polish interest became to keep the momentum of NATO adaptation to the Russian threat. The summit's decision to deploy allied troops to the Eastern Flank as a key element of NATO defence and deterrence posture towards Russia was widely considered in Poland a historical success⁴. Further, the summit paved way for an overhaul of allied operational plans, command structures and capabilities, so that NATO could engage more effectively in Art 5. contingencies. It is then no wonder that a shift of the European strategic debate from NATO to PESCO was largely met in Poland with anxiety about the sustainability of summit decisions. Proposals to establish PESCO as an ambitious mechanism added to the concerns over the perspective of the EU defence undermining NATO by requirements and commitments alternative to those agreed within the Alliance.

Facing uncertainty about Donald Trump's views on the utility of NATO and a growing discord between major EU Member States and the U.S., Poland has also become increasingly worried about the near future of the American commitment to the Alliance. Scenarios were widely considered, in which the U.S. pressure on increasing defence expenditure of European Allies, together with Trump's declared animosity towards multilateral institutions, would put an end to the American leadership in formulating responses to the Russian threat⁵. All that while numerous voices appeared in Europe, suggesting that PESCO – and the broader quest for a European strategic autonomy – was the answer to an alleged withdrawal of the U.S. from Europe, or a substitute for increasing defence expenditure⁶.

What is more, following Brexit the scenario of differentiated integration in the EU was brought up for popular discussion. Although considered mostly in the context of the Eurozone and the Schengen system, it also had a defence dimension. The original concept of PESCO, as introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, reflected the idea of splitting the EU to a core and a periphery⁷. While Poland objected to it on the grounds of European solidarity, it was also aware of the adverse effects of establishing a European defence core on the

⁴ In addition to a NATO multinational, battalion-sized battle group (app. 1,100 soldiers) established within the Enhanced Forward Presence, since early 2017 the U.S. has been also rotating to Poland its Armoured Brigade Combat Team, with about 3,000-4,000 soldiers. More: A. Kacprzyk, *U.S. Policy towards NATO: Continuation with Risk of Change*, "Bulletin PISM", No. 30 (970) 23 March 2017.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ See: H. Kundani, *The Necessity and Impossibility of "Strategic Autonomy"*, "Transatlantic Take", GMF, 10 January 2018.

⁷ Establishing a European defence core outside the framework of treaties was vaguely suggested in August 2016 by Italy in a joint op-ed for "Le Monde" by then ministers of foreign affairs Paolo Gentiloni and defence Roberta Pinotti. See: A "Schengen of Defence" to respond to terrorism, Ministry of Defence of Italy, 11.08.2016 - www.difesa.it

solidarity and cohesion of both the EU and NATO.

Consequently, the position of Poland towards PESCO was to a large degree a result of its concerns about the sustainability of both NATO adaptation and the U.S. commitment to the Alliance, as well as the dynamics of European integration.

THE TWO “NOES”

In the debate on PESCO, Poland constructed its stance around two basic assumptions: that PESCO must neither undermine NATO, nor lead towards a two-speed Europe in defence. Already at the meeting of EU defence ministers in September 2016, when the European Global Strategy (EUGS) implementation agenda was discussed, Poland argued that the EU should avoid duplication of competences and tasks of the Alliance, particularly in planning and conducting operations⁸. It was also stressed that reforms of the CSDP should respond to the threats both from the South and East, and follow the principle of not weakening NATO. A further concern was that the proposed Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD) would become to a large extent mandatory and could undermine NATO by proposing alternative capability targets to those agreed in NATO. Notably, Poland pointed the fact that without an increase of defence expenditure of EU Member States, all discussions about potential PESCO effects on European capabilities would remain void⁹.

Not much later Poland began to argue that CSDP reforms should focus on boosting EU-NATO practical cooperation, hopefully relaunched to a new level with the July 2016 Joint Declaration¹⁰. This reflected the concept that risks for NATO and transatlantic relations, which might result from the EUGS implementation, could be alleviated by focusing on potential benefits from a closer collaboration and synchronisation of EU defence initiatives with the Alliance.

Consequently, Poland has shown determination to have the principle of coordination and cooperation with NATO acknowledged in all EU documents implementing the EUGS, and paving the way to the launch of PESCO. Further, in its narrative about European defence, it promoted a vision in which the EU can actually work hand-in-hand with NATO, maybe not in the heavy capabilities and territorial defence, but certainly in countering hybrid warfare, disinformation and cyberattacks.

The prevention of a two-speed Europe in defence began to feature prominently in the Polish agenda when the discussion began on PESCO governance, goals, accession criteria

⁸ *Meeting of the EU Ministers of Defence*, Ministry of National Defence, 27.09.2016 - en.mon.gov.pl

⁹ *Meeting of EU Defence Ministers*, Ministry of National Defence, 14.11.2016 - en.mon.gov.pl

¹⁰ *Minister Witold Waszczykowski discusses EU cooperation with NATO*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21.11.2016, www.msz.gov.pl

and commitments to be taken by the states willing to join¹¹. Although the November 2016 EU Council had endorsed inclusiveness and modularity as principles of PESCO, it remained open how detailed modalities of this cooperation mechanism were to be set. A scenario in which PESCO would exclude a number of EU Member States not only from participation, but also from information about its development, was deemed possible.

Considerations about the possibility of a two-speed Europe in defence, like in other areas, drove Poland to argue strongly against the concept of differentiated integration. Following the adoption of the European Council declaration, issued on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties, Poland stressed that it was a common EU success, that the document underlined unity and solidarity of the Union together with the cooperation and complementarity with NATO as principles of developing the European defence¹². Consequently, Poland welcomed the May 2017 FAC decision, setting the framework for PESCO governance to fully involve the Council and CSDP institutions¹³. Following the 22 June 2017 European Council conclusions, in which it was agreed that the launch of PESCO was necessary, Poland declared its readiness to join in. Yet, it was stressed again that conditions for launching PESCO were complementary of all EU defence initiatives with NATO, and a “strategic balance” principle, understood as an equal focus of the EU on the threats coming from the East and South¹⁴.

The “4+4 letter” of July 2017, that first proposed PESCO accession criteria, commitments and governance mechanism as a single, coherent concept, launched the negotiations on the PESCO notification¹⁵. Of course, the Polish concerns were greatly alleviated. It was widely perceived in Poland that in comparison to the original Lisbon Treaty’s concept of EU defence core, PESCO was being turned into a broad – and somewhat loose – vehicle for military cooperation. This translated to a limited risk of undermining NATO, both politically and militarily, and also meant that there would be no two-speed European defence.

Three issues seemed to be crucial for this assessment. First, PESCO became open to all EU Member States, thanks to linking accession criteria not with strict military capacity indicators, but with the willingness of governments to undertake rather general commitments, mostly regarding defence and military cooperation or defence expenditure. The requirement to present a national plan to fulfill these commitments, that would undergo a regular review by EU Institutions, or the condition to participate in at least one

¹¹ To that aim, the EEAS distributed a special questionnaire among the Member States. See: A. Missiroli, D. Fiott, T. Tardy, *Permanent Structured Cooperation: What’s In a Name?* “EUISS Challiot Paper”, No. 172, November 2017.

¹² *Premier Beata Szydło przed wylotem do Rzymu na szczyt Rady Europejskiej* [Prime Minister Szydło before leaving for Rome European Council], statement at a press conference, 24 March 2017, www.premier.gov.pl

¹³ *Min. Macierewicz: próbuje się doprowadzić do „Europy dwóch prędkości” w wymiarze bezpieczeństwa* [Min. Macierewicz: some seek a two-speed Europe in defence], Interview, 18 May 2017, www.radiomaryja.pl

¹⁴ *Beata Szydło: Polska jest gotowa do wzmacniania europejskiej polityki obronnej* [Beata Szydło: Poland is ready to strengthen European defence policy], PAP/IAR, 22 June 2017, www.polskieradio.pl.

¹⁵ The letter (non-paper) was co-authored by France, Germany, Spain and Italy and supported by Belgium, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Finland. More: Missiroli, D. Fiott, T. Tardy, op. cit.

PESCO project, did not alter the growing perception in the EU that PESCO would remain – at least for the time being – a military cooperation mechanism, but not a political vehicle. Second, projects proposed by EU Member States as the substance of cooperation were largely technical, or far-reaching, but immature. In either case the defence planning process of NATO was hardly affected. Third, PESCO governance mechanism was built into existing CSDP structures and procedures (only with addition of a special secretariat), which confirmed PESCO as a common instrument of the Union.

Yet, up to the very last moment, Poland did not declare it would sign the PESCO notification. The confirmation came on 10 November – only 3 days before the EU Council meeting expected to receive the notification. On that occasion, Poland stressed that its accession was possible, because PESCO was eventually shaped in a proper way¹⁶. Before the formal vote on PESCO, Poland stressed again the principles of non-duplication and non-competition with NATO¹⁷.

A NATO-ISED PESCO?

Following the launch of PESCO, Poland started to develop a more positive agenda towards this cooperation mechanism. However, it remained guided by the premise that all European defence initiatives should reinforce NATO adaptation, including deterrence and defence towards Russia, and/or respond to Poland's own capability needs. In line with it, Poland declared accession to 9 PESCO projects and focused on promoting closer EU-NATO cooperation, taking military mobility and hybrid threats as its primary points of interest.

As soon as the launching of PESCO, Poland suggested it would join the Dutch-led project on military mobility, and another one, led by France, on the future secure software-defined military radio. The latter was a continuation of an OCCAR-managed ESSOR project, in which Poland had participated since 2009, with a significant industrial presence (Radmor company). Hence the natural Polish support to launch the ESSOR to a new European phase through PESCO.

It is the military mobility project, however, that testifies best to the logic of EU defence reinforcing NATO, that Poland aims to promote. The importance of improving military mobility in Europe is hard to overestimate when the credibility of NATO deterrence and defence is considered. The ability to move troops, equipment and logistical support quickly and flawlessly within the borders of NATO is particularly important for the Eastern Flank, which rests upon allied reinforcements in most of art. 5 scenarios. Yet, military mobility is

¹⁶ Szymański: *Polska wyrazi gotowość udziału w PESCO* [Szymański: Poland will notify readiness to participate in PESCO], Defence24, 10 November 2017, www.defence24.pl

¹⁷ A joint letter to HR/VP Federica Mogherini was presented by Polish foreign minister W. Waszczykowski and Defence Minister M. Macierewicz. It is available on-line: *Meeting of Defense Ministers of European Union*, Ministry of National Defence, 13 November 2017, en.mon.gov.pl

hampered mainly by physical barriers (insufficient infrastructures, or lack thereof) and legal regulations (clumsy procedures regarding, for instance, the crossing of borders by military units or transporting military equipment)¹⁸. Hence, the EU seems to be better suited to improve military mobility than NATO, which does not have legislative tools or funding for infrastructural objects, such as bridges, at its disposal. Military mobility can therefore become a special case, for which the EU could work hand-in-hand with NATO to reinforce territorial defence, rather than crisis management operations capacity, which usually does not require fast movement of large and heavy forces. And this is why military mobility came to be presented by Poland as a role model for both EU-NATO cooperation and future PESCO projects¹⁹.

Polish participation in 6 further projects was announced in May 2018. Among them are two projects on cooperation in cyberdefence, one on military logistics, two on new maritime technologies (unmanned countermine operations and harbour/littoral waters security), and one on artillery²⁰. Another project, regarding chemical weapons protection, is to be proposed by France and joined by Poland by the end of 2018²¹.

It is possible to establish a common profile of the projects selected by Poland. First, their character is largely technical: they are either about military cooperation or defence research collaboration. All of them respond either to known NATO needs (military mobility, logistics, cyberdefence), or technological and capability gaps, which Poland seeks to close (radio communication, unmanned maritime systems, artillery). Finally, none of them is oriented on EU crisis management operations (like EUFOR CROC).

Only time will tell if this is a good indication for the future Polish project portfolio in PESCO, but the chances are high. Focused on the credibility of NATO defence and deterrence in the Eastern Flank, Poland will be less likely to engage in politically ambitious PESCO projects regarding crisis management in the southern neighbourhood. Yet, it will seek further flagship initiatives proving that European defence can reinforce NATO. Poland is also likely to try launching regional PESCO projects, mainly in the Visegrad Group²², the Bucharest Nine format or within the Weimar Triangle – hence the Polish proposal of a common armament project on the next generation of main battle tanks, which could be built together with Germany and France, possibly in PESCO format.

¹⁸ More: M. Terlikowski, *PESCO: First Projects and the Search for (a Real) Breakthrough*, "Bulletin PISM", No. 65 (1136) 8 May 2018.

¹⁹ Military Mobility was noted as a flagship project for both PESCO and EU-NATO cooperation by Polish minister of foreign affairs Jacek Czaputowicz in his Foreign Policy Speech before the Parliament on 21 March 2018 - www.msz.gov.pl

²⁰ Projects joined by Poland are: Military Mobility, ESSOR, EuroArtillery, HARMSPRO, MAS MCM, Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations, Cyber Threats and Incident Response Information Sharing Platform, Cyber Rapid Response Teams and Mutual Assistance in Cyber Security. *Kolejne "polskie" projekty w ramach PESCO – m.in. logistyka, walka przeciwwminowa, artyleria i cyberbezpieczeństwo* [Next „Polish” projects in PESCO–logistics, countering mine, artillery and cybersecurity], Defence24, 11 May 2018, www.defence24.pl

²¹ *To effectively use the EU programs*, Ministry of National Defence, 26 June 2018, en.mon.gov.pl

²² *Joint Communiqué of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Defence*, Budapest, 27 March 2018, www.visegradgriup.eu

THE DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL QUESTION

At the beginning of the debate on implementing the EUGS, considerations regarding the defence industrial dimension of PESCO were for Poland secondary to concerns about impairment of the NATO adaptation process and the possible emergence of a two-speed Europe. With links being set up between PESCO and the newly launched European Defence Fund, the Polish interest in these issues has, however, increased. Notably, Poland focused not on PESCO, but on EDF, seeing the latter as a more relevant tool to support capability development and – in general – to strengthen European defence.

This can be explained by three factors: the overall Polish prudence towards the effects of EUGS implementation on the NATO adaptation process; a specific situation of the Polish Defence Industrial and Technological Base (DTIB); and the other states' approach on PESCO's defence industrial dimension.

Considering the latter factor, it is the low number of defence industrial projects proposed in the first batch that reinforced the Polish reluctance to acknowledge the role of PESCO as a capability development vehicle. In other words, the most ardent proponents of PESCO apparently did not want to promote big armament projects as PESCO flagships. This was widely seen as a signal of a limited – even if temporarily – trust to this new cooperation mechanism (notwithstanding the argument that even a single large project could swallow a major part of the proposed EDF budget). In such a situation, there was no reason for Poland to update its national approach to armament programmes towards a higher use of PESCO. Yet, as already mentioned, Poland did join R&T-related PESCO projects (on maritime technologies) and signalled its interest in making a future European main battle tank programme a PESCO initiative²³.

It is, however, the structure of the Polish DTIB that shaped the most the Polish thinking about PESCO-EDF links. Unlike major armament producers in the EU, the Polish DTIB largely remains state-owned. Only a few subsidiaries of global prime contractors like Airbus, Leonardo, Lockheed Martin can be found in the aeronautics branch. There is also a small group of privately-owned SMEs, active mostly in the military software, sensors and micro UAVs markets. Land systems, munitions, naval and military electronics branches remain all under control of the State. Further, full consolidation of public-owned companies into a single entity came only in 2014. With that move, the PGZ, or the Polish Armaments Group, was established to become Poland's national defence champion. With approximately \$1.14 billion of arms sales, it was ranked as the world's 75th defence company on the SIPRI's Top 100 list for 2016²⁴. The key feature of the Polish DTIB is,

²³ This option has not been yet officially proposed at the political level, but is considered among experts. See: *MBT for Poland Without Involvement of the Polish Industry?*, Defence24, 14.02.2018, www.defence24.pl.

²⁴ *The SIPRI Top 100 arms-producing and military service companies, 2016*, December 2017, www.sipri.org Comprising of over 60 different entities, PGZ employs app. 17,5 thousand people.

however, its full dependence on the national market. The value of exports is relatively low: it was approximately €470 million in 2017, a 23% increase compared to the €380 million in 2016²⁵. One of the reasons behind these figures is the non-integration of the Polish DTIB at the European level. Only a few firms and research institutes have been active in European projects, mostly R&T (such as ESSOR). Needless to say, Poland has never participated in any of the flagship collaborative programmes such as Typhoon or A400M²⁶.

Hence, Poland has shown clear preference for government-to-government contracts and offsets over all other forms of armament cooperation. Understandably, these vehicles allowed much more flexibility in agreements on work share and technology transfer to the Polish DTIB, than for instance competitive procedures foreseen in Directive 2009/81/EC. Aiming to launch huge programmes, such as air and missile defence, long-range precision strike or submarines, Poland has sought maximal flexibility to tailor defence industrial partnerships to both the needs and capacities of its DTIB. Further, the focus on NATO defence and deterrence credibility in the Eastern Flank led Poland to consider the U.S. as their key partner not only on the strategic and political level, but also in the defence industrial dimension.

All these elements had direct effects on the Polish assessment of PESCO and EDF: Poland argued for an EDF as broad and flexible as possible, which would not over-prioritise PESCO, but instead acknowledge the diversity of DTIBs across the EU. Since 2013, the Polish thinking about industrial dimension of European defence has been centred on art. 346 TFEU and EC's attempts to limit its use by EU Member States and phase-out offsets. Opposing the EC, Poland has claimed that all new initiatives affecting EDTIB should follow a "balanced" approach and stay in compliance with the EU law²⁷. With the start of the debate on PESCO and EDF, Poland continued this argumentation and kept underlining that intergovernmental agreements and offsets needed to remain part of the defence industrial policy in the EU²⁸. However, Poland also began to argue for an open and flexible EDF, which would allow all Member States to benefit from it equally and not curtail their freedom to choose defence industrial partners, whether from or outside of Europe. Strong links between PESCO and EDF, for instance ruling that a programme should be run in PESCO to qualify for EDF co-financing, could hardly fit into this approach.

The eligibility of entities for co-financing and the level of bonuses for capability-oriented projects under the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP) has become a focal point for Poland. Its primary goal has been to include the mid-size

²⁵ *Rosomak liderem eksportu PGZ w 2017* [Rosomak leader of the PGZ exports in 2017], Altair, 1 June 2018, www.altair.com.pl

²⁶ More: M. Terlikowski, *Defence and Industrial Policy in Poland*, ARES Policy Paper, 26 July 2018, <http://www.iris-france.org/ares/>

²⁷ These were the provisions of the December 2013 European Council on defence, which agreed to follow the Polish requests.

²⁸ *Meeting of the EU Ministers of Defence*, Ministry of National Defence, 27.09.2016, en.mon.gov.pl

companies in the list of entities, which allows a consortium they are part of to benefit from a higher co-financing rate from the EDF. In the Polish argumentation, these companies were referred to as mid-caps, i.e. firms with typical capitalisation between \$2-10 billion, so fitting between SMEs (preferred in the original proposal of the EC) and large prime contractors. Yet, the proposed regulation rather included an employment-related criterion (up to 3,000 people). Considering the eligibility of companies, Poland has been arguing – along with the U.S. and the UK – for broad criteria, which would make European subsidiaries of American and British prime contractors eligible members of consortia. While the EDIDP legislative process is approaching its final stages, it is more than likely that Poland will continue to actively pursue both of the aforementioned goals²⁹.

CONCLUSION

The way Poland approached PESCO was to a large degree a function of the Polish focus on sustaining NATO's post-Warsaw adaptation agenda, preventing further rifts in the strained transatlantic relations and keeping EU integration run at the same pace for all. Contrary to some claims, the Polish focus on making PESCO fit into NATO priorities did not indicate that Poland was becoming sceptical towards European defence by default. Poland's position was driven by the desire to avoid a scenario, in which a mismanaged PESCO would undermine the political solidarity and cohesion in both NATO and the EU, while not generating quick wins in military capabilities. At the same time, Poland acknowledged the potential of PESCO to actually close some capability gaps identified by NATO. With the decision to join 9 PESCO projects and its increasing interest in participating in the EDF, seen as an instrument in the integration of the Polish DTIB at a more European level, Poland may soon find itself in the group of the most active states in building European defence. Yet, the Polish position on the broader question of the European strategic autonomy is likely to remain informed by the desire to employ all tools at Poland's disposal to reinforce NATO's credibility of deterrence and defence potential, invariably seen by Warsaw as a cornerstone of Europe's security and the best guarantee of future peace in Europe. ■

²⁹ *Warszawa chce większych bonusów dla średnich firm w ramach EDF* [Warsaw seeks more bonuses for mid-caps in EDF], Defence24, 18.09.2018, www.defence24.pl

#32

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ARES GROUP

The Armament Industry European Research Group (Ares Group) was created in 2016 by the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs (Iris), who coordinates the Group. The aim of the Ares Group, a high-level network of security and defence specialists across Europe, is to provide a forum to the European armament community, bringing together top defence industrial policy specialists, to encourage fresh strategic thinking in the field, develop innovative policy proposals and conduct studies for public and private actors.

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