

# **FOUR PROPOSALS FOR A DEFENCE PROCUREMENT PLAN FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**By Jean-Pierre MAULNY / Deputy Director, IRIS**

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**Comment**

**W**e are currently in a pivotal period of the European construction in the field of defence and armament.

European defence and armament as it exists nowadays, was built under the impetus of France and Germany. It was however only made possible with the consent of the British, symbolised by the St Malo French-British summit in 1998. Since January 1, 2003, European defence can lead military operations; it defines the resources necessary to these operations – namely, the Headline Goals – and it has at its disposal a body, the European Defence Agency, tasked with addressing capability gaps that have been identified with the ultimate goal to launch European cooperative armament programmes.

Nevertheless, the latter function has remained only theoretical for lack of agreement between the States to initiate the cooperation programmes. It must be said that European defence came into being in times of peace. The last sentence of the 2003 European Security Strategy stated, “Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free”. Today, the situation is different for two reasons:

- The reduction in defence budgets, during the years following the end of the Cold war and then after the economic crisis of 2008, has severely affected the military capabilities of European countries. No country has alone the full range of military resources that would allow it to respond to conflicts ranging from low to high intensity. The same applies to industrial and technological capabilities in the field of armament;
- European countries are very concerned at present.

They are concerned about the resurgence of tension in their proximity, in the East, even though the objective pursued is a peaceful relationship of trust and partnership with Russia. But a more adverse scenario cannot be excluded as the crisis in the relationship with Russia tends to become established for the long term.

They are threatened by terrorism related to Jihadist terror movements, the most organised of which, the Islamic State, has clearly proved to be hostile to the model of society of the European Union Member States.

Lastly, Europe must face challenges such as that of migration. It must do so while remaining true to its values of hospitality and respect for human rights, without either neglecting the security challenges posed by these migratory phenomena.

These three threats, crises or challenges have a common feature: they require a joint response from the European Union. None of them can be dealt with at national level. The Atlantic Alliance does not seem to be the primary setting where this response must be coordinated. The challenge of migration is a European challenge, and necessitates

solutions supported by civilian means. The relationship with Russia possesses more European specificities than was the case during the Cold War, for economic exchanges have multiplied between the EU and Russia. Terrorism also took on paramount importance for European Union countries. With the rise in power of the Islamic State that tends to supersede Al-Qaida, the “centre of gravity” of the threat has moved from the United States to the European Union.

Today, the European citizens demand a response from the European Union: what is the contribution of this institution for their security? What can it do that national governments cannot? American citizens also demand that Europeans do more for their security. The message addressed during the American presidential primaries is clear: they want Europeans to take charge of their security better than they did before.

The momentum is strong for the European Union to show that European countries can organise their security at the level of the European Union. In June 2016, the European Union will adopt its global strategy and will present the strategic vision of the world that the Europeans have and the role that they want to play in it. A European White Paper on Defence will follow to identify the missions and the military capabilities that the Union will have to implement. But it is necessary for the European Union to very quickly provide tangible solutions to the security challenges. The European Union must demonstrate to European public opinions the added value it brings to what the States already do in terms of security.

The preparatory action on defence research is a first step. For the first time, the Community budget will finance defence research. This action will be extended in the 9<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development 2021-2027 (FPRD), with a budget line dedicated to defence research (EU-funded Defence Research Programme, EDRP) that could reach several hundreds of millions of euros per year. Actual armament programmes could then be launched at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> FPRD, acquired with European Union funds, with or without complementary contribution from the States. If this path is pursued, this military equipment could be acquired by the European Union by 2035.

It is an interesting prospect, but too distant given the security challenges the European has to face. The European Union must therefore make concrete proposals today that will lead to strengthen the safety of citizens in order to account for its action in the field of defence and security.

The European Union can take steps today at four levels:

The first is that of military equipment, which several States have expressed the desire to acquire, but there is no coordination between them on that level. It is what the European

Defence Agency is trying to do by encouraging States to make joint acquisitions as it has done with tanker aircrafts.

It is necessary to go even further than joint acquisition with several States, and consider the acquisition of capacities in sectors where there are common European Union strategies or policies in the field of defence and security. This second level could cover all that concerns European border protection as well as the area of maritime security. Concurrently with the project of a border guards and coast guards Corps, the European Union could acquire a common security and surveillance system covering maritime approaches. As there is a Single European Sky project in air traffic, a Single European Sea should be created. The European Maritime Safety Agency already possesses monitoring capabilities and already cooperates with Frontex to detect criminal activities but it is possible to go much further in that field. This principle of common management of the borders or the common areas could also apply to cyber space or outer space.

The third level is that of the capabilities that the States tend to neglect, and for which weaknesses could appear even though they could be useful for the protection of citizens, or to lead European Union external operations. The European Union could support these capabilities, known to be common to all Member States, after a review of capabilities is carried out following the publication of the European Union global strategy. This is what could be labelled an intervention bottom up by the European Union.

The fourth level is, on the opposite, that of the capabilities that no Member State would be apt to acquire on its own and for which pooling resources is necessary. At this level, the European Union can play both the role of providing impetus and the role of federating the efforts of Member States. Today, we have the example in the civilian field, with the Galileo navigation system. Besides, this fourth level can intersect in that of common missions necessary to the protection of citizens listed above, which would be the case of a global surveillance system covering borders and maritime spaces. This is what could be labelled an intervention “from the top” by the European Union.

In conclusion, the European Union can very quickly bring a significant added value to the security of Member States of the European Union, if the Member States decide to. Substantial capabilities could be developed, that would be helpful to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions. The time being pressing for some needs, one can imagine that the document succeeding the European Union global strategy, necessary to define the European Union capabilities, could identify all the areas where the Union could take action. As we have seen, all areas are at the boundary between defence and security. The action plan for defence, which will be published at the end of the year, might then restate the needs expressed in the document on military capabilities that could succeed the global strategy. By proceeding in this manner, the European Union would save 15 years on the process currently undertaken in the field of defence research and development, which is of course necessary, but responds more to

future capabilities of the European Union and the need to strengthen the EDTIB than to common and urgent security needs. ■

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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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