

**EUROPE, STRATEGY,  
SECURITY  
PROGRAMME**

# **A EUROPEAN ARMY IN WHAT FORM?**

**(5/5)**

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**ANALYSIS #5**



**T**he words “European army” inescapably evoke images of soldiers in the same uniform, marching under the same banner. In reality, an “army” is far more than a body of soldiers. It is everything that allows the soldiers to act, namely: a commensurate budget, clear orders, effective equipment and an industrial and technological base capable of producing them. All this must be brought together at the same time if the dream of a European army is to be made flesh.

## **COMMON DEFENCE OBJECTIVES AND EFFECTIVE PLANNING**

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When an army or alliance is created, there must be agreement on two points: clearly defined defence objectives, commonly known as a White Paper or strategic concept, and, subsequently, a plan to build the defence apparatus deemed necessary to meet these objectives, which is known as defence planning.

This is why the first thing to be done towards creating a European army would be for the member states of the Defence Eurogroup (see parts 3 and 4) to agree on a reference document setting out the details of the objectives pursued. To take account of developments in the strategic concept and the missions stemming from it, it would have to be possible to revise this document over time. But most of all, it would have to be credible and reflect a genuine will to achieve the stated ambition.

It would not need to be a “global strategy”, still less a lengthy document like the French and British White Papers. That kind of document has the considerable disadvantage of requiring lengthy negotiations, watering down priorities and remaining vague over the resources to be put on the table, in order to keep everybody happy. It would be more effective to aim for a “strategic concept” of about ten pages in length, like the NATO version, and that can be renewed every time the need to do so arises.

If this vital step is taken, the European defence planning process would then have to be amended to make it more effective, which is not how one would describe it today. From this point of view, the most controversial matter to be resolved is that of the coexistence of this kind of planning process with its NATO counterpart.

Certainly, the reason the member states are happy with a below-par process lies in the fact that they really do not want a third “laundry list” in addition to their national list and their NATO list. This is why any attempt to improve the situation would be doomed to

failure unless the relationship between European defence and the Atlantic Alliance had been clarified ahead of time.

The Europeans would firstly need to be clear on whether they want to do something outside, but entirely compatible with, an Alliance framework refocused on its primary Euro-Atlantic collective defence mission, by developing a real autonomous capacity to manage crises outside EU territory.

In addition, the Europeans would have to decide whether or not to assume their common defence on an integrated basis, by proposing a European pillar to the collective defence provided by the Atlantic Alliance. If they opt to do so, this will raise the question of extending the French nuclear guarantee to all members of the Defence Eurogroup. Once this has been clarified, all options are open.

## A COMMON BUDGET

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*Pecunia nervus belli.* Money is the sinew of war. No money, no army. That, therefore, is where we must start. However, the financing of the common security and defence policy (CSDP) on an intergovernmental basis has shown its shortcomings. The principle that the member states bear the costs of the operations they carry out on behalf of the EU has given rise to a growing reluctance to carry out these operations.

This means that operations decided upon jointly must be paid for jointly. There must also be a fair share-out of the burden between member states. Financing cannot depend on the goodwill of each, the budgetary situation or the prevalent political thinking. The only realistic solution is to have a common budget, to be fed into on the basis of proportional distribution key. Like the general budget, this budget would be subject to parliamentary scrutiny, as per the rules arising from the institutional model selected.

Incidentally, the first building blocks of a European defence budget are being put together at the moment. In the draft multi-annual financial framework for 2021-2028, provision is made for three sources of defence financing. These are the European Defence Fund (€13 billion over seven years) and a credit line allocated to “military mobility”, specifically interconnection in continental Europe (€6.5 billion over seven years). As well as these two lines of the Community budget, there is a third instrument outside the EU budget: the “European Peace Facility”. This is an international agreement, the terms and conditions of which will be decided upon by the participating states, meaning that it will not be bound by the limitations of the treaties. This facility will make it possible to pay for external operations and measures to build the capacities of EU partners. Under the proposal of the

High Representative, this facility will have a budget of €10.5 billion over seven years. The details are currently being negotiated.

To round off this budgetary apparatus, there is also an instrument to allow for the acquisition of common capabilities by the EU, such as infrastructure (bases, testing centres, research centres, etc.), communication networks, systems of systems or common equipment, such as aerial reconnaissance systems, refuellers, drones or satellites and, more broadly, all systems for which pooling presents an advantage, even if only because the costs are prohibitive for any one state on its own. It is only by unifying demand that supply can be defragmented or, to put it another way, that we can do away with having 17 different armoured vehicle programmes or three types of fighter jet. Experience has shown that European states have been unable to make progress in this area on the basis of cooperation and that acquiring common capabilities, as with the Galileo satellites, has proved the best solution.

Lastly, it would be advantageous to bring together all these instruments within a specific chapter of the European budget, so as to allow the Parliament to exercise its competence over the whole area and ensure the checks and balances of the European Court of Auditors. But this will work only if all member states agree to participate in the European army.

As the chances of this happening are vanishingly small, the Community instruments currently envisaged in the general budget under the budgetary authority of the Council and European Parliament would have to be split off, establishing a separate defence-operations-acquisitions budget for the Defence Eurogroup that constitutes this army, with parliamentary scrutiny adapted to this system.

## A DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY

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To decide on this budget and how it should be used, a clear decision-making architecture is necessary, particularly as defence does not lend itself well to procrastination. In an emergency, rapid action is needed. This is why the decision-making framework needs to be solid and legitimate. Soldiers absolutely need to know who is giving them their orders and whom they need to report back to on the execution of these.

Obviously, the wording of the actual question to be answered will depend on whether the framework is that of the current institutions or that of a Defence Eurogroup.

If the preference is to remain within the framework of the current treaties, several amendments will be necessary to create an authentic decision-making capacity. For instance, the European Council could hypothetically meet in various configurations dedicated to security: heads of state or government, foreign affairs ministers or defence ministers. The term security refers here to the entirety of military or civil-military actions that aim to defend the EU, its member states and its citizens.

In the first two configurations, this European Security Council would be responsible for all decisions of an institutional and budgetary nature. It would also be responsible for adopting the strategic concept and deciding to launch any major operation with the aim of common defence. The decisions would unavoidably need to be made by qualified majority, in our view. All other missions and operations stemming from the strategic concept, particularly those that are expeditionary in nature (crisis management, stabilisation, counter-terrorism, etc.), would also be decided upon in this framework, but would remain subject to the unanimity rule, so that each state would retain a right of veto over the mobilisation of its own forces in such an event.

In its defence minister format, the European Security Council would be more specifically responsible for defence planning and for executing decisions on operations. For this, it would enjoy the support of a European Defence Minister or High Representative/Vice-President of the European Commission, who would head up the defence department, to include a full staff, a planning command and an operations command as well as all security and defence roles that currently under the responsibility of the EEAS and, through it, the military committee of the European Union. The European Defence Agency and a European acquisitions agency would be attached to it. Finally, it would be endowed with a defence and security (not including domestic security) portfolio within the Commission to cover security research, the European Defence Fund and military mobility at minimum.

In the absence of an agreement on treaty change with a view to securing the participation of all member states, it would be for the states participating in the Defence Eurogroup to set in place a similar plan, with a Council meeting in three separate formats and applying the voting modalities set out above. This Eurogroup would require a secretariat and permanent staff, including a planning command and operational command. All of it would come under the political authority of the President of the Council of the Defence Eurogroup, to be charged with executing all decisions of the Council. The cooperation of this Eurogroup with the European Union would be facilitated by giving a European Commissioner a portfolio uniting security (not including domestic security) with defence.

The European Parliament or an ad hoc parliamentary structure would have to be closely involved with the most important decisions, such as launching operations. This parliamentary dimension is a prerequisite to ensure the legitimacy of the system and the decisions it makes. Within the European Parliament, this would require the current security and defence sub-committee to be elevated to the rank of full committee.

## **AN OPERATIONAL CAPACITY**

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This is doubtless the area in which the confusion between what the European army could be and what it should be is greatest. Certainly, if there were to be a European army, it would not be a question of merging national forces and putting them into the same uniform, but of rendering them capable of fighting alongside each other, specialising them if necessary.

Here again, there needs to be a distinction between hypothetical scenarios of reform coming within the framework of the treaties on the one hand and within that of the Eurogroup on the other.

In all scenarios, there should be a re-examination of the benefits of all existing structures: Franco-German brigade, Eurocorps, Euronavcorps, battle groups, etc.

Beyond that exercise, we consider that there are three possible axes of effort.

The first would be to create an exclusively European chain of command, which would presuppose a civilian-military headquarters worthy of the name. It would have commensurate staff and equipment to allow it to take on the Command and Control (C2) of the European forces. At its helm, it would have a Commander-In-Chief of the European forces. The European command should be capable of carrying out non-emergency operational planning and leading all missions set out in the Treaty of Lisbon, including the most demanding ones. It could have authority over multinational task forces such as Eurocorps, which is a deployable joint force, or over common capabilities that would be dedicated to the European Union.

Then, quite obviously, you would need an army in the strictest sense of the word, in other words a standing army. This is the only realistic option to ensure that force generation can be carried out quickly and seamlessly, as it would then stem from the European command rather than the national commands. This is a critical staging post on the path to integration and impossible without the close involvement of the national staffs.

Although the objective is clear, nobody would deny that achieving it is a more complex matter. However, there are a number of possible solutions, including assigning certain existing multinational forces to the EU under the command of the European headquarters; the option for states capable of so doing to allocate one or more units or capabilities to the Union or the constitution of specialist rapid-reaction units or capability modules paid for out of the joint budget and placed under European command. Similar solutions could apply in the framework of a Eurogroup. But whether we stay within the framework of the treaties or establish a Defence Eurogroup, these solutions or any combination thereof will be viable only if the EU military committee or an assembly of the chiefs of staff of the Defence Eurogroup countries take ownership of it. This is a central issue that the European forces must work out together.

Finally, efforts must be made to develop a common strategic culture. This could be achieved by creating a European Defence Academy, financed out of the EU budget, to train senior European officers, or through frequent joint training exercises. The European situation analysis capacity, namely the European Intelligence Centre (IntCent), would also need to be reinforced. And last of all, the European Intervention Initiative would naturally have to be brought within this system.

## **AN INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY**

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If the aim is to succeed in creating strategic autonomy, Europe will need an industrial base that is capable of developing critical technologies for key capabilities. This will happen only if the member states adopt a common defence planning system. With this in mind, it would be useful to set in place a command for defence planning, from strategic forward analysis up to the expression of the European Union's capability requirements. Improving European defence planning must be translated into the creation of a European planning cycle and a single capability roadmap, consistent with those of the member states and NATO.

The Europeans must carry out their defence research together or, at the very least, in coordination with each other. This could be done by networking research agencies and organisations through a reformed EDA, or a dedicated agency with the resources to ensure the coherence and effectiveness of efforts expended on technological research and development. This agency would be responsible for establishing a strategic research agenda for the EU.

The European states would also have to develop and acquire their military equipment jointly. To do so, they would have to finally agree on common standards and specifications and, above all, stick to the rules they themselves laid down in the framework of the 2009 directive on defence public procurement. But the EU or, if applicable, the Defence Eurogroup, would also have to be able to acquire its own capabilities. As well as common planning, member states' joint acquisitions and the EU's acquisitions of its own capabilities would both require the creation of an agency to be responsible for procurement and the conduct of programmes that could include OCCAR, subject to Europeanising it, which could take the form of a merger with the EDA.

Finally, joint support and operational maintenance must become the norm. This could be achieved by pooling structures to be set in place once the programmes launch. This is particularly vital in the aeronautic domain, where support costs twice as much as acquisition. A common strategy, supported by a common budget, implemented by a clear and effective chain of command, able to command an autonomous military capability, using European equipment – that, essentially, is what a European army should look like.

## CONCLUSION

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European army, Army of the Europeans, European defence, common defence, European Union of Defence, Defence Eurozone or, our preferred term, Defence Eurogroup. All of these terms converge into the same idea: the defence of Europe, by Europe and for Europe, which presupposes the possession of an autonomous and integrated military capability to defend our own interests, using force if required.

Europe's defence has so far come mainly from the Americans. But times have changed. The Americans no longer have any desire to pay for defence that they feel, quite rightly, should be the responsibility of those benefiting from it and, quite wrongly, involves more disadvantages than benefits to themselves. They are therefore urging the Europeans to take their own defence in hand. And they are quite right, because nobody will ever defend you as well you will do it yourself.

Some Europeans continue to fear a European army, amid concerns that it would prompt the United States to withdraw its protection. But after what happened at the last NATO summit in Brussels, after the announced suspension of the application of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), after the announcement of the withdrawal of American troops from Syria and after the departure of Jim Mattis, how can

we rule out the eventuality of the United States leaving the Atlantic Alliance? And if it does, how will that reduce the need for a European army?

At the moment, Donald Trump is using NATO to obtain commercial advantages and drive a wedge between European peoples. If they come off, plans for “Fort Trump” in Poland would be tantamount to enshrining a bilateral approach on a transactional basis. The United States has also got into the habit of using the extraterritoriality in its legislation against major European businesses and subjecting them to its judicial administration racket. Not only do the Americans mean to dictate to the Europeans how to conduct their foreign policy and their trade policy, but they are also trying to decree with whom they are allowed to conclude treaties and from whom they can buy gas and oil. This situation is no longer acceptable. The Americans are our friends and allies and we hope to remain theirs. But we are not, and never will be, their vassals.

It is for all these reasons that a European army is not an option, it is a necessity. It is about striking a blow for dignity and freedom and refusing to submit. We just need to agree on the ways and means to do it. ■

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