

**EUROPE, STRATEGY,
SECURITY
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IS THE EUROPEAN UNION REALLY UNABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF?

BY FRÉDÉRIC MAURO

LAWYER AT THE BRUSSELS BAR, ASSOCIATE RESEARCHER AT IRIS

AND PABLO FERNANDEZ-CRAS

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

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The possibility of an autonomous European Union defence has never been as intensely debated as in the past few years.

It is, however, not a new idea and has been adorned with many names since the 1998 St Malo declaration: “capacity for autonomous action”, “operational capacity drawing on civilian and military assets” (art. 42.1 Treaty on European Union - TEU), “Common Security and Defence Policy” (CSDP), “Common defence” (art. 42.2 TEU), the much-touted “Strategic Autonomy” and lastly even the controversial “European army” mentioned by Orbán, Macron, Merkel and Sánchez since 2016. Naming aside, the substance of this idea is quite simply that Europeans should be capable of managing crises in their neighbourhood that impact their security directly or indirectly and in which their American allies have no desire to get involved; and maybe to do more overall - within or without the NATO framework.

It is also a topical idea, its relevance confirmed by contemporary conflicts such as the rampant war against jihadists in the Sahel, the proxy war in Libya or the open war in Syria, which all affect European security and stability on many levels. In the latter, Europeans would be within their rights to blame Mr. Trump for having abandoned the Kurds to their fate and pivoting all of a sudden towards Turkey, leaving French and British special forces on the ground in peril. However, before pointing fingers at the American president, they should blame themselves for their inability to deploy a thousand meagre personnel 160 km east of Cyprus.

Despite such obvious shortcomings, European strategic autonomy had not garnered consensus, let alone unanimous support across the Union, before the Coronavirus crisis. As best captured by Franke and Varma¹, there were significant differences of opinion between Member States about the operational level that such autonomy should prioritize (decision-making, information and autonomy of action), its geographical reach, and even about its importance for Member States’ security and foreign policy.

The Coronavirus crisis seems to have reshuffled the cards. Never before had the words “Strategic Autonomy” been uttered so often, by so many. At the last defence summit, on 17 June 2020, these words were easily written into the conclusions, and the commitment to enhance strategic autonomy was effortlessly reaffirmed. Will this support last for long? Or will the European Union go back to the ‘normal’ state of affairs once the fallout from the crisis has vanished?

¹ (Varma, July 2018)

The question itself defies belief. Ultimately strategic autonomy is a no-brainer. The alternative – *the acceptance of dependence* – should be the real subject of debate. Nonetheless, the argument of its naysayers boils down to two assumed premises. First, that the European Union is incapable of defending itself on its own. Second, that only the United States has the means and the will to protect Europe. The conclusion drawn is thus that any attempt to build up a defence for Europe when such a defence already exists and when Europeans cannot possibly match it, is a downright waste of time and energy.

This school of thought includes Polish Foreign Minister Czaputowicz, who as recently as the February 2019 Munich Security Conference stated that European defence with reduced American presence would ‘lead to problems’². His words echo the most concrete vision of British ex-MEP Geoffrey van Orden who claimed that strategic autonomy is a distraction that the CSDP has no reason to exist in the first place and that, in short, Europeans should abandon their delusions of adequacy and just ‘let the professionals do it’. The only concern Europeans should have to ensure their security, by this account, is to keep the Americans *happy*, so that we can keep them *in*.

All this suggests that the entire discussion surrounding strategic autonomy and European defence stems from the central assumption that Europe is incapable of defending itself on its own, which is considered as a given. But against whom should Europe be able to defend itself? Against what threats? Granted, fears are irrational and cannot be measured with precision, but if Europeans fail to even name their demons, they are condemned never to master them. Is the main concern the deployment of troops to the Sahel so as to stabilize the region and avert the spread of jihadism? What about responding to cyber threats from China – are we even under attack to begin with? Is safeguarding free circulation through the straits of Hormuz, or Malacca or even in the South China Sea a European responsibility? What about the possibility of conventional war with Russia over the forty-mile Suwalki gap?

The latter is at any rate the threat that most worries Poland and the Baltic countries on account of having concrete precedents – namely Russian armed interventions in Georgia, the Donbass and Crimea. Taking a step back for perspective would be helpful: the EU27 has a combined military expenditure 60% larger than Russia’s³, a country with a GDP hardly surpassing that of Spain: should the EU27 genuinely fear having to face Putin by itself? Either Europeans are severely underestimating their own defence capacity and have convinced themselves of some sort of intrinsic inferiority despite having far larger defence spending; or more likely, Europeans need to start scrutinizing the efficiency of their defence expenditure more seriously. When, despite the bloc’s combined EUR 187 billion in spending it has not managed to send 1 000 troops to Libya, cannot afford to send another 5 000 to stabilize North Africa and is dumbstruck at the prospect of conflict with

² (Brzozowski, 2019)

³ When Russia’s gross EUR 54 billion defence budget is adjusted by Purchasing Power Parity the estimation reaches EUR 117 billion, according to the French Defence Ministry. (Defence, 2020)

Russia, then clearly the issue lies not in the budgetary input but in the security capacity output Europeans achieve with their expenditure. This is not just a current issue: the CSDP, which is ultimately a legally binding commitment, has consistently failed to achieve the objectives it set for itself in its twenty years of existence. Why this chasm between input and output?

In our quest for an answer, we will address three core questions: (i) What are the European Union’s defence ambitions? (ii) What are the threats the Union faces? (iii) What are the solutions to close the gaps?

WHAT ARE THE AMBITIONS?

In November 2016, the Council issued its conclusions on implementing the Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy. The paper marked a turning point: for the first time ever, the Union’s military level of ambition was articulated explicitly as a concrete vision. The three paragraphs that expound this implementation plan provide a three-pronged approach to understanding the overarching goals of European defence. They are: (A) responding to external conflicts and crises, (B) building the capacities of partners, and (C) protecting the Union and its citizens⁴. Each is explored in greater depth below.

Crisis Management

Efforts in the realm of European defence have consistently been the fruit of reactions to external pressures, more so than the product of an internal federalizing drive. The CSDP itself resulted from this dynamic. The relative order of the cold war gave way to gruelling civil wars and instability in the Balkans throughout the 1990s. NATO, devoid of its *raison d’être*, was soul-searching. Not for long. The deteriorating security situation prompted Europeans to beg the Americans to stop genocide in former Yugoslavia “two hours by plane from Paris”. This humiliation, particularly badly experienced by President Chirac and Prime Minister Blair, eventually led them to the Franco-British Saint Malo summit of 1998: never again Yugoslavia! Europeans should be able to take care of their own backyard, if not alone at least jointly. This is why they stated the need to provide the “European Union [with] the capacity for autonomous decision-making and action, backed up by credible military forces”⁵ and launched the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

In June 1999, the Cologne Council formulated the capabilities catalogue, an inventory of EU military capabilities. In December that same year, the Helsinki “headline goal” stipulated that Member States should be able to take on the full range of the so-called

⁴ (Council, 14 November 2016)

⁵ (Joint Declaration on European Defence. Joint Declaration issued at the British-French Summit, 3-4 December 1998)

“Petersberg tasks” for “crisis management” and to assemble a military force of 60 000 troops – which represents more or less an army corps - to deploy them for up to a year, starting in late 2003. While the Member States’ commitment to the Petersberg tasks, now incorporated under article 43 of the TEU, was restated with the 2016 Council conclusions, the Helsinki goal *remains* the most ambitious strategic military objective the CSDP has set itself, and twenty years later is still unachieved.

Indeed, on the ground, the record is rather underwhelming. Not only have twenty-three of the thirty-seven CSDP missions been of civilian, training or advisory nature, but the fact that there was never any question of carrying out an executive CSDP operation in Libya or Mali, let alone Syria, proves the declining military level of ambition with which Member States have approached an atrophying CSDP. As a matter of fact, if the European Union cannot tackle crises such as the one in Syria which constitutes an outright carnage on its doorstep, drives unmanageable migration and alters political balances within its own Member States, then the Union is simply not a “geopolitical” actor.

Furthermore, the establishment in 2017 – ten years after it was expected to - of the Permanent Structured Cooperation, known as PESCO, brought no relief to the cause. PESCO was supposed to be the capability integrated process to build the desired “autonomous capacity”. It turned into a mere “framework” for cooperation, “inclusive” and “modular” and as such duplicates the already existing European Defence Agency. With twenty-five Member States on board, taking their decisions by unanimity, there is little chance that will change. The concept of “integration” which was hiding behind the three words “permanent” – which means forever – “structured” - therefore structuring – and “cooperation”, has been lost in implementation.

Whatever the treaties and the alleged “legally binding commitments”, the bottom line of CSDP remains a factual, not a normative one. It is an open secret that the Union remains incapable of fulfilling the full spectrum of crisis management goals it set for itself, especially with regards to the most demanding missions.

Does all that mean that crisis management is an unreachable defence ambition for the European Union? On the contrary, the Syrian experience and the European missions in the Sahel highlight the fact that crisis management is a reasonable and rather modest ambition for one of the richest blocs in the world. What Russia and Turkey can do, the Union can do too. This will not happen until Member States, or at least a handful of them, take the resolute step of integrating, in part or in whole, their defence apparatus. We are not there yet.

Capacity Building

A central aspect of developing a sustainable security policy is, once peace has been enforced, to provide legitimate state actors the ways and means to maintain it. That requires that the Union be able to provide those actors with training and sound military equipment. What is the point in resolving high-intensity crises like the post-Yugoslav wars if thereafter local actors are unable to retain the benefits of peace and arrive at political solutions? Providing military support and training for a year is the sign of a healthy bilateral relationship; remaining on foreign soil for six years is akin to occupation, even with the best motivations.

The geostrategic stabilization of neighbouring countries thus constitutes a distinct category of security ambitions. As such, it calls for reflection on how the Union can best assist its neighbours to safeguard their rule of law independently. It remains a complex subject, but one thing is clear: for Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad to deal independently with the threats posed by growing ISIL presence on their soil, European support cannot, as it has until now, limit itself to training and strategic advice. This approach - without the transfer of adequate equipment - has so far proven a recipe for an undesired drawn-out presence: deprived of the material necessary keep the peace themselves, partner governments depend on the EU countries that have such material, to keep the peace for them.

Mali's civil war now drags on into its 8th year and the CSDP's failure to equip government forces is proving a severe handicap. With due perspective, training soldiers in military capacity if afterwards they are not equipped with military equipment is nonsensical. The High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP), Josep Borrell, formulated this precise incoherence of past CSDP policy on his last visit to Addis Ababa with African Union leaders: "If we train troops and we send these people to fight, better to send them well equipped. No?"⁶

The reason why such an obvious provision has not been made in previous CDSP operations stems from legal obstacles: the EU has not been endowed with the authority to carry out armament operations under the CSDP. Article 41.2 of the TEU provides for the opposite dynamics. Under this article, CSDP running costs are at the expense of the Union's budget "except for such expenditure arising from *operations having military or defence implications* and cases where the Council acting unanimously decides otherwise".⁷ The words "defence implications" refer precisely to armament operations. The cause of this handicap derives from the principle of 'who pays decides'. For the past twenty years Member States have refused to transfer to the Union the responsibility for arming partner nations, each of them predictably preferring to sell or to give the weapons made by its own industries.

⁶ (DAVID M. HERSZENHORN, 2020)

⁷ (States, 2012)

To get around this problem, a proposal was made in 2018 by the then HR/VP Federica Mogherini to establish a “European Peace Facility” (EPF), outside the Union’s budget and therefore escaping the strict rules of article 41.2. But for now the project still remains in limbo and its funding uncertain. While the Commission proposed an endowment of EUR 10.5 billion for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, the Finnish rotating presidency tabled a different proposal that would have cut the EPF’s budget to EUR 4.5 billion while an even more recent plan by the Permanent Council President Charles Michel suggested a figure of EUR 8 billion⁸.

To sum up, this European ambition of capability building is likely to be met soon, but we don’t know yet at which level.

Protecting Europe and its citizens

The final element of the Global Strategy is a fine slogan. After all, protecting its own citizens should be the ultimate priority of any political Union. As de Gaulle warned a long time ago: a state cannot fail to defend its citizens because if it fails to defend its citizens, it ceases to be a state.⁹ The Union is not a state; but will it be taken seriously if it is not capable of defending itself and its citizens ? For now, goals along “the nexus of internal and external security” remain foggy and have yet to be defined in a defence sub strategy.

In this regard, the “Strategic Compass” promoted by Germany could offer clarity. Nevertheless, building autonomous military capabilities needs more than just knowing the direction the boat is heading. It needs unshakeable and constant political will in the long run, a functioning and binding defence planning capacity, a strong and efficient military staff to implement it, and finally a defence industry fit to purpose. In other words, the Union badly needs a compass, but it also needs to build a boat to reach the destination given by the Compass. This boat will be very different depending on whether the Union wants to sail across the deep blue sea or tour lakes and rivers.

In essence, the Strategic Compass would have to define what politico-military responsibilities the EU is willing to assume. Is the EU serious when it comes to stepping up its role in disaster relief and critical infrastructure maintenance, securing freedom of movement through the global commons, and consolidating the EU’s satellite guarantees? If so, a more serious budget should be convened than the meagre European Defence Fund dedicated to Research and Development purposes. The Union should also contemplate acquiring its own capabilities, as it already did with Copernicus and Galileo. Why not a European aircraft carrier?

⁸ (DAVID M. HERSZENHORN, 2020)

⁹ “La défense ! C’est la première raison d’être de l’État. Il n’y peut manquer sans se détruire lui-même”. Charles de Gaulle, deuxième discours de Bayeux, 1946 (Gaulle, 1946)

As for the immediate security dimension, the Strategic Compass needs to set the goals in order to better prevent and respond to terrorism and radicalization, the only EU-wide security crisis that has taken *civilian* lives within shared borders. These are highly complex issues that epitomize the internal-external nexus of security, but in order to protect its citizens the first thing the Union has to do is to increase, share and pool its intelligence assets. Here, the hurdles to surmount are high. As France has recently experienced in the Sahel, intelligence is decisive, but for the time being it relies crucially on American sources. In order to upgrade European capacities, the Union has to invest in critical technologies, such as high performance computing, big data, artificial intelligence, satellites, SIGINT, etc. In this regard there is indeed a strong nexus between the events taking place outside the Union and those unfolding on home soil. Since the Iraq war, too often the Americans have broken the dishes and the Europeans have done the clearing up. The fact is that soldiers from practically every EU country *have* been sent to die in Iraq and Afghanistan alongside the Americans:

Afghanistan (ISAF Forces until disbandment in 2014)

Country	Maximum personnel deployed	Casualties
United Kingdom	9.500	456
Germany	5.000	57
Italy	3.952	53
France	3.932	90
Poland	2.580	44
Romania	1.873	26
Spain	1.526	35
Denmark	750	43
Czech Republic	623	14
Bulgaria	597	0
Belgium	520	1
Sweden	500	5
Norway	429	10
Hungary	415	7
Netherlands	400	25
Croatia	317	1
Slovakia	309	0
Albania	286	0
Lithuania	236	1
Latvia	174	4
North Macedonia	163	1
Estonia	159	9
Finland	156	2
Greece	153	0
Portugal	140	2
Slovenia	77	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	55	0
Montenegro	39	1
Cyprus	35	0
Switzerland	31	
Luxembourg	11	1
Ireland	7	0
Iceland	4	0
Austria	3	0

Source : [Brookings Institute Afghanistan Index](#)

Iraq War Multi-National Force (2003-2009)

Country	Maximum personnel	Casualties
United Kingdom	46.000	179
Italy	3.200	33
Poland	2.500	23
Ukraine	1.650	18
Netherlands	1.345	2
Spain	1.300	11
Romania	730	3
Denmark	545	7
Bulgaria	485	13
Czech Republic	300	1
Hungary	300	1
Albania	240	0
Norway	150	
Latvia	136	3
Portugal	128	
Lithuania	120	0
Slovakia	110	4
Bosnia and Herzegovina	85	0
North Macedonia	77	
Estonia	40	2
Moldova	24	
Iceland	2	0

Without any doubt, Internal/external security is within the reach of the European Union. The most difficult aspect of the undertaking is not technical but political, since everybody knows the reluctance of intelligence services to share ... intelligence. That too can be overcome, though, for as long as there is a will, there is a way. The best testament hereto is the Five Eyes community. Maybe a twenty-seven eyes community is beyond the scope for the coming years. But that can be done in a narrower circle as is demonstrated by the example of “Maximator”, an intelligence alliance between Denmark, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Sweden - comparable to the Five Eyes - founded in 1976 and apparently still working. The crux is the same once again: do Member States genuinely want to bring their defence apparatus closer together or not?

Another crucial question is: Does the Union want to go beyond “protecting” its citizens and start “defending” them. Or by virtue of a non-written law, does it hope to rely eternally on the U.S. to defend itself, within or even without NATO? In other words, is the Union ready to undertake a journey from soft defence towards hard defence? If so, what are the threats?

WHAT ARE THE THREATS?

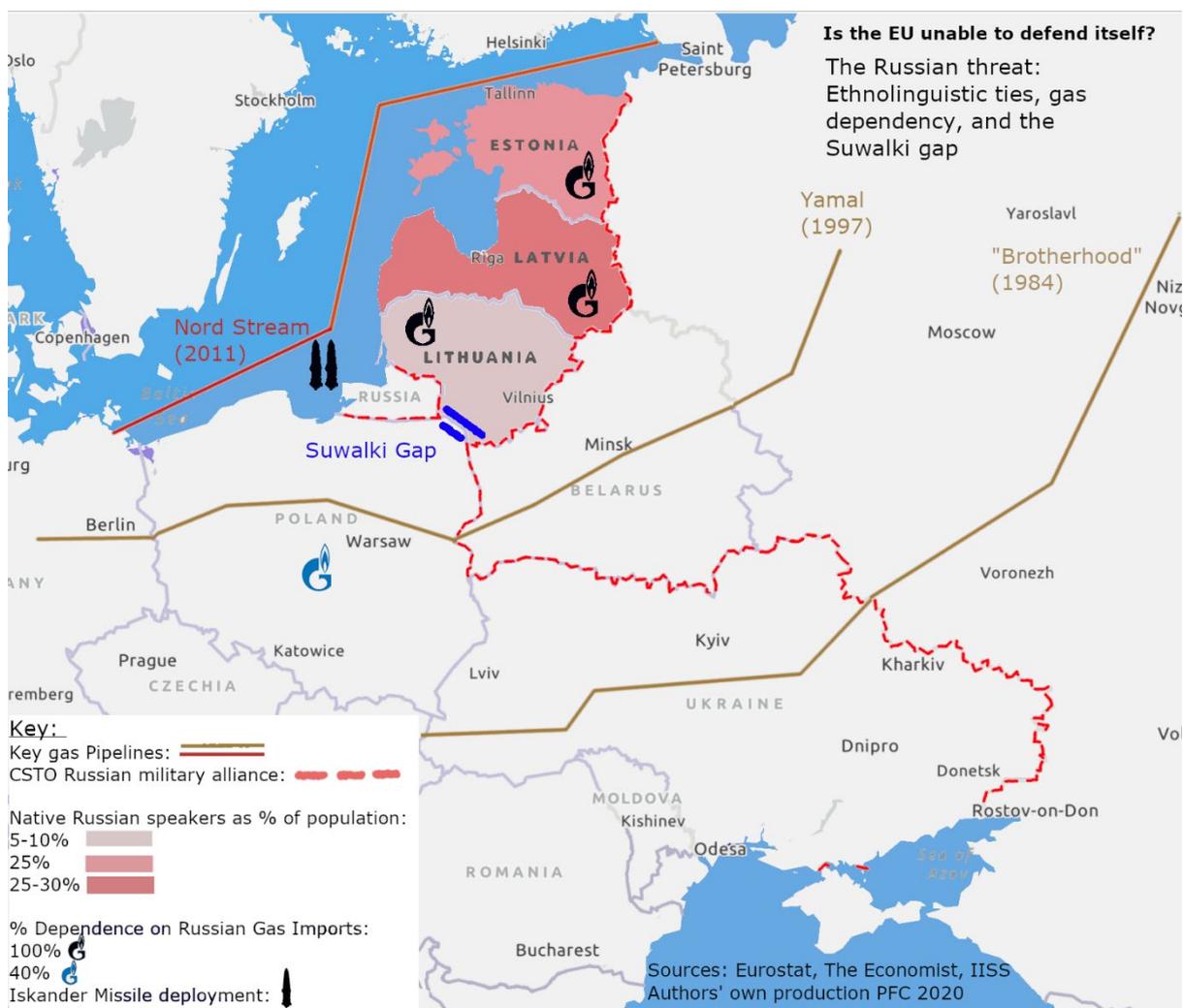
Russia?

The perception of a Russian threat has shaped the European defence debate in profound ways, most notably since the Georgian conflict in 2008, the invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the downing of Malaysian Airlines MH-17 aircraft by Russian-armed Ukrainian separatists, the Skripal hunt and other meddling in internal European politics. Beyond real fears stemming from these concrete instances, the EU’s strategic level of analysis begs the question: what is the nature of the overall Russian threat?

What first comes to mind for many is the scenario of a conventional war between Russia and Poland and/or the Baltic countries to defend the Suwalki gap. The IISS’s rigorous scenario-based capability requirement assessment - ‘Defending Europe’ (April 2019) - offers dim prospects. Russian conventional forces would in current circumstances be overwhelming and leave Poland and the Baltic countries undoubtedly on the losing end of the conflict. But is such a conventional conflict likely? Does the Russian Federation not have other channels through which to achieve its national interest objectives in the region, which are less conducive to a war of global proportions?

Far more accessible and effective a tool would be to instrumentalize its position as the dominant gas provider to Eastern Europe. Gas supply cuts are disruptive, exert pressure

on national governments and constitute a readily available channel of Russian influence in the Baltic and Poland. This is all the more the case following the development of Nord Stream II and South Stream, which create a direct channel of supply to Germany bypassing Ukraine and Poland. The new channels thereby render these countries' role as gas transit countries (for the Brotherhood and Yamal pipelines respectively) obsolete. Instead, Poland and Ukraine see their past leverage as gas transit countries that Russia had an interest in keeping on side, turn into a situation where it is in their interest to curry favour with Russia's. Under the new arrangement, Poland and Ukraine are solely client countries, who could see their gas provisions disrupted or cut off without this in any way impinging on the gas supply to Germany (the largest Gazprom energy client) and countries west and south of it – which certainly deterred Russia from turning off the tap in the past.



Yet this threat, like any other, will materialize if the threatening party has both the intention and the capacity to carry it out. As discussed, Russia has the capacity to prevail in conventional war and to take advantage of its position as the main energy supplier to Eastern Europe with devastating results. Does it also, however, have the intention to do so? To discern what truly motivates Russian engagement with the international scene is difficult but judging from past interventions we can form an impression. Since Putin has come to power, every military intervention beyond Russian borders has been in response to a European provocation in some shape or form starting with the broken promise that eastern bloc countries would not join NATO. The most reasonable inference would be that Russia principally wants to be respected as a regional geopolitical actor in its own right, while Europeans keep approaching the relationship as though Russia were still at 1990s levels of economic and political instability – a serious underestimation¹⁰.

The alternative exists too. If Russians have the capacity and equally possibly, have the intention to threaten European interests at a more profound level, then are we not already at war with them? How should one interpret the repeated Russian disinformation campaigns on social media, which have unquestionably tried to disrupt French elections and Brexit? What about the attempt by Putin to funnel 58 million euros into Lega Nord through Gianluca Savoini, one of Salvini's closest aides?¹¹ Depending on how severely one weighs cyberattacks, disinformation efforts and gas supply restrictions Russia might well already be at war with Europe, but it most likely is not the conventional conflict that dominates narratives – it is much more likely to be the insidious battle to disrupt European unity and foster divisions between members. This explains the incessant support that right-wing populist movements (covertly) receive from the Kremlin, or the development of energy supply lines that enable Russia to keep meeting market demand while setting the scene for eastern European countries to come under *de facto* Russian domination due to their gas dependence levels.

If this assessment is correct, the Union can indeed deter Russia, but once again that comes with an important string attached: forget about main battle tanks, onerous artificial bridges, and heavy armoured helicopters; invest in artificial intelligence, big data, counterintelligence and counter-interference, and above all: be united. If this assessment is not correct, then there is another way than spending the EUR 300 billion or more estimated by IISS for Europeans to come to par with the Russians: start a candid European strategic debate about extending France's nuclear umbrella.

China?

With US geopolitical hegemony steadily declining and China's political, economic and military clout growing, the American concern that China is a threat to its leadership is

¹⁰ See Thomas Graham's FA paper "Let Russia be Russia" (Graham, 2019)

¹¹ (France24, 2019)

justified. That said, it is important to dissociate the real from the perceived Chinese threat, the military threat from commercial influence and American from European interests .

Do 5G antennas really constitute a security threat or does the aversion to the technology stem from America-first protectionism? There is no question that Chinese technology in various fields is catching up with American and European standards and even overtaking them in some areas. It is also known that the Chinese government has engaged extensively in industrial espionage, with the US National Institutes of Health reporting that over 90% of investigations into misuse of funds, inappropriate sharing of confidential information and diversion of intellectual property drew direct links to the Chinese government¹². The 2020 rollout of the C919 - the first Chinese jetliner that can reasonably compete with Boeing and Airbus – turned many heads. Yet the C919 is a perfect example of how unsurprising China’s acquisition of western knowhow should be. 15 different American or European companies were involved in its production, working closely with 4 Chinese companies under the well-known partnership scheme. When the ‘friend’ company obtains the expertise, it needs from its western counterpart – legitimately or otherwise - the latter is rendered superfluous. Once the negligence of western companies who knowingly participate in the scheme is factored into the equation, the Chinese threat looks much less conspirator and much more preventable – at least as concerns consumer technologies.

By contrast, there are legitimate reasons to be wary of the Chinese government’s instrumentalization of economic ties for political goals. No European country has yet broken ranks in the UNHCR to publicly support Chinese interests, but Hungary and Greece are defecting from EU uniformity towards China. Hungary, to which Jinping pledged an investment of over EUR 2 billion¹³ for a railway construction project blocked the issue of a joint EU statement to reprimand China’s torture of lawyers. Greece saw a EUR 280 million investment in its port of Piraeus in 2016 and the CCP has pledged billions more for the Hellekion playground project. In return, it blocked an EU statement condemning China’s human rights record. The two countries joined forces to stop an EU statement questioning Chinese claims to the South China Sea. In view of these shifts, the Commission’s March 2019 EU-China strategic outlook duly identified China as a ‘systemic rival’. The threat, however, is indirect: China uses its economic influence to divide and befriend European countries at the direct expense of EU strategic autonomy. The only way to keep this unwanted political interference at bay is by being united, but that requires European leaders to commit to EU unity, at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic initially left European solidarity sadly wanting.

More recently, in a feat of propagandistic strategy, China pushed a narrative to turn itself from the perpetrator to the hero of the COVID-19 crisis, positioning itself as a bastion of

¹² (The Guardian , 2020)

¹³ (Piccone, September 2018)

generosity against the backdrop of faltering European solidarity and American denial. Once Europe received the blow of the virus, the CCP didn't skip a beat to send material and doctors, ensuring the help was fully covered by the media, even though when Italy and other EU countries sent over 70 tons of help in January and February¹⁴, they were asked to do so with the utmost discretion.

The high dependence of EU healthcare on Chinese production is a legitimate cause for concern. So too is China's leverage of economic ties to unravel the EU's foreign policy uniformity. But the channel through which China poses a threat to the EU is still strictly *commercial*. The EU today is not *military* threatened by China. The only conceivable way this could change is in a Thucydidean trap scenario, where the US and China escalate their rivalry and the EU is drawn into war by the Americans. The 'Ghost Fleet'¹⁵, for example, paints a compelling scenario where Chinese Malware effectively disables US military communication systems – and their greater fleet sizes cannot guarantee US supremacy. Not only would American victory be less than certain, the assumption that the US would enjoy broad support if it were to get to open conflict is not self-evident either. Graham Alison points out that, unlike the USSR, which had clear ideological aims and had an autarchy, self-isolated economy, China's ambition is not ideological dominance and its economy is globally integrated¹⁶. He reasons that the last thing Europeans want is to be forced to choose between commercial ties with China – that enhance their prosperity – and the defence ties with the US – which ensure their security. With the memory of European troops dragged into the American war in Iraq still fresh, the EU will be hard-pressed to commit to a war from which all are set to emerge as losers. As long as the EU is fundamentally dependent on American defence, Thucydides' paradigm will persist: "the strong do what they will, but the weak will suffer what they must".

Radical Islam?

Wars on intangibles like 'terror' or 'drugs' have so far proven unwinnable; war can be waged on an enemy, not on a means. When the enemy makes its presence tangible, it makes itself a more imminent threat, but also more feasibly engageable. ISIS' attempt to hold onto land conquered in the Syrian war began its downfall by becoming more easily defeated by conventional armies than when the threat was 'anywhere and nowhere' through unpredictable terror attacks. A successful scenario in the fight against the groups destabilizing Mali, Nigeria, Niger, through their physical presence, is thus possible.

Contrary to the perception commonly held in the North of Europe, this threat is neither exclusively directed towards France due to its colonial ties to the region, nor can it be

¹⁴ (Ferraresi, 2020)

¹⁵ P. W. Singer and August Cole – Houghton Mifflin Harcourt - US – June 2015

¹⁶ See China Institute Kishor Muhbabani and Graham Alison (Kishore Mahbubani, 2020)

resolved by France alone. Territorial strongholds established by al-Qaeda throughout the Sahel region represent a concrete threat. Even if there have been no attacks in Europe since 2017, Middle Eastern terrorism officials warn that disenfranchised European youth and returnees could “fall for a new ISIS”. A new caliphate could inspire followers globally to join the movement either on site or by carrying out terror attacks domestically, to which no European country is invulnerable.

June 15, 2020, council conclusions evoke the alarming advances made by both Al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa and by Daesh in the lake Chad region. They acknowledge that “internal security depends on the stability and peace beyond the EU” and restate the need for greater cooperation with countries “from which the most direct threats for the Union emanate” and which have the greatest need of assistance. The growing instability in the Sahel is a powerful ‘push’ factor of migration across the central Mediterranean, and containing this flux seems the only point on which EU migratory reform can reach a consensus. Yet, at present, the only Member State contributing troops to France’s operation *Barkhane* in Mali, is Estonia¹⁷ – which understands that reinforcing the EU’s eastern borders depends on the same goodwill that should stabilize the EU’s southern neighbourhood. If left unchecked, radical Islamic groups in North Africa will entrench themselves. Their success in doing so can empower the terrorist threat to Europe to replicate the scenarios suffered when ISIS was on the rise in Syria and will only accelerate the uncontrolled migration that has sustained the rise of populism across the continent.

The threat to the EU from radical Islamists is thus both external and internal since the viability of caliphates outside EU borders inspires latent terrorists within the EU. This duality also means that while the immediate threat is military, the spillovers onto domestic politics by reactionary opportunists can fuel sentiments of disunion in the medium term. Protecting Europe’s citizens from the Islamic terrorist threat, unlike the Russian, Turkish and ‘USA - disunity’ threats, will require intelligence sharing more so than integrating defence apparatuses and industries. This explains why the UK is so keen to retain access to EUROPOL despite leaving the EU. The EU, in turn, must improve its intelligence gathering to fill the void that the UK will leave once it exits the Union. At present, without the US, the EU does not have the intelligence resources that effective counterterrorism demands. This military intelligence coordination, while necessary in the short term, is not sufficient as a solution in the long-term. For that, the Union needs to tackle the root problem of regional instability – the relative weakness of partner governments vis-à-vis well-equipped and well-funded insurgent groups. Ultimately, to address the radical Islamic threat, partner government police forces need to be adequately equipped and a Sahel investment program needs to be launched at the Union

¹⁷ Since November 2019 Estonia committed 95 troops adding to the 4500 French soldiers and 2 UK Chinook helicopters taking part in the operation.

level in recognition of the importance of stable governments in Africa for the security of the bloc as a whole.

Turkey?

Turkish-EU relations are now a far cry from when Turkey was ‘next in line’ for membership. The Joint Declaration on the Refugee Crisis offered short-term migrant containment when the political will to revamp the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) was absent. In the medium-term Erdoğan received new leverage to exact financial demands – blackmailing Brussels by threatening to reopen the migrant gates of Europe. With progress on the Dublin IV regulation stalling, an asymmetrically burdened Greece will continue to exert pressure on other countries – indirectly relaying Ankara’s pressure. The migrant lever, however, is not a security threat in the true sense of the word.

The opposite is true of Turkish shows of force around the Mediterranean basin, such as the recent deployment of troops in Libya to support Fayed al-Sarraj’s government, or its ongoing violation of the arms embargo to Libya imposed, albeit poorly enforced, by EUNAVFOR Med IRINI. Since the discovery of new oil reserves in late 2019, the Turkish navy and armed drones swarm across Northern Cyprus to ‘protect drilling operations’ in contested Cypriot waters. How concrete is this threat? Can we really exclude the possibility of the Turkish Navy sinking a Cypriot ship in a confrontation? If so, would the EU be willing to stand by its common defence pledge stipulated in the CSDP over drilling zone altercations in land 130 km from Syria, where outright carnage failed to trigger an executive CSDP response? Adding insult to injury, EU Neighbourhood Commissioner Várhelyi confirmed in May that the Commission had in fact purchased 4 vessels for the Turkish Coast guard as well as armoured vehicles and surveillance equipment (Lord, 2020). On the one hand, African governments cooperating closely with the CSDP - supervised by EUTM personnel - have not been equipped with the necessary material for effective crisis management. On the other hand, Turkey which blackmails European stability for cash and repeatedly harasses Greek and Cypriot territorial waters is blessed with EU-gifted ships. The two actions are irreconcilable in a coherent common foreign policy.

Strategically, Turkey’s rejection of the Montego Bay (1982) treaty definition of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) threatens the EU's power projection. The bloc ultimately derives its legitimacy from the ‘rules-based international order’; it must enforce that order when international rules are undermined - all the more when the transgression is against a Member State.

Finally, Ankara mobilizes its emigrant populations in European countries for domestic political goals, which creates new or aggravates existing divisions in EU electorates, fissuring the social fabric. The 2017 constitutional referendum – aimed at extending presidential powers – saw Erdoğan send government ministers abroad to campaign for the ‘yes’ vote with 1st2nd and 3rd generation Turkish communities. Dutch and German refusals to let foreign domestic political campaigns be held on national soil erupted in riots, diplomatic crises with Ankara and saw Erdoğan characterize the Dutch as ‘Nazi fascists’¹⁸. This has raised serious questions around the double identity of Turkish migrants in the Netherlands; when their identity is manipulated politically by Erdoğan against the government of their new home, is this not a serious threat to internal stability? Turkey possesses neither the conventional firepower of Russia nor the economic leverage of China, but it could be the best placed to threaten the strength of the European social fabric from within - either directly by politically mobilizing Turkish communities already established in Europe or indirectly by giving Eurosceptic populists the justifications they seek.

The United States and the Threat of Disunion

For a relationship as profound as that which Europe shares with the United States, the mere notion of the latter being a potential threat seems inconceivable to many. Some facts, however, are hard to interpret otherwise. In October 2019 President Trump described the European Union as a worse offender than China in unfair trade, imposing wide-ranging tariffs to the tune of EUR 7.5 billion on EU goods¹⁹. Although economically the US lacks a strong advantage vis-à-vis the old continent, the contrary is true in military defence - and the notable European dependence on Uncle Sam for its protection is increasingly exploited, with the threat of America pulling out of NATO looming like a sword of Damocles’. In other words: The Trump administration has weaponized the NATO alliance to obtain trade concessions. But is the threat of an American withdrawal at all credible?

When in November 2019 president Macron seemingly backed Trump’s denigrating stance, claiming NATO was “brain-dead”, the cards were put on the table. This single statement was enough to trigger a U-turn in the American president’s position, who rushed to reaffirm the Alliance’s centrality and rebuke Macron’s words: “NATO serves a great purpose. I think that’s very insulting.”²⁰ Did Macron call Trump’s bluff by trying to kill the hostage? With the hostage dead, Trump’s leverage over his European allies would take a significant blow.

¹⁸ (BBC , 2017)

¹⁹ (DW, 2019)

²⁰ (Wintour, 3 December 2019)

The reality underpinning this seemingly irreconcilable clash of American attitudes towards NATO is that the burden is not shouldered disinterestedly. While European armaments are scarcely bought across the pond, an estimated 25%²¹ of the equipment used by European military forces is American made. This structural asymmetry in the transatlantic defence market sees US manufacturers benefit from European governments reaching that craved 2% of GDP spending target.

After all, if Washington's calls for Europeans to take responsibility for their own defence were *genuine*, they are hard to reconcile with the simultaneous lobbying activity to undermine the European Defence Fund. The EDF's expected EUR 13 billion will only be available to organizations chiefly owned and controlled by EU governments or citizens. The ensuing 2019 rejection by US ambassador Sondland and Defence Secretary Ellen Lord practically labelled this as a deal-breaker for the alliance altogether, urging that they be reviewed, "with an eye to our shared long-term objectives for the transatlantic security partnership"²². To see the emergence of the EDF as a death note for the alliance with the United States is short-sighted, risks alienating the only friends the Americans have left, and diverts American focus away from their main priorities. To argue that Europe is unable to defend itself without the US when the US is in many ways suffocating Europe is unconvincing.

Trump has made the security partnership conditional on economic and diplomatic concessions. Whether to push for the purchase of American liquified natural gas (LNG) and not Russian gas, the rejection of the JCPOA, or to halt 'unfair' subsidies to Airbus whose new models compete well with Boeing's (also state-subsidized) 737 Max, Trump is willing to blackmail European countries with NATO as a lever. Defence is still negotiated on a bilateral level while the pooling of power in the commission makes the Union powerful on trade. Trump wilfully exploits this distinction, dividing European countries by taking advantage of those most attached to and dependent on NATO support and making it read between the lines that article 5 will only be applicable if other (trade) demands are met.

There is no doubt that the ties that bind the US and Europe are profound. The very bricks of the US would not have been laid without Europeans and Europe in turn would not be a free continent had the Greatest Generation of Americans not made the ultimate sacrifice to fight and die in Normandy. The debt owed to the Land of the Brave is engraved in the European collective memory.

²¹ Christoph Grams: *Transatlantische Rüstungskooperation. Bedingungsfaktoren und Strukturen im Wandel (1990 – 2005)*, Nomos, Baden-Baden 2007 (Grams 2007);

²² See May 01, 2019, letter from the Under Secretary of Defence and Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security to the HR of the Union.

Nevertheless, the relationship has become abusive in defence, toxic in trade and most recently selfish in healthcare during the Covid-19 pandemic. In a veritable ‘America First’ jest, Trump reportedly offered German biopharmaceutical company CureVac USD 1 billion to develop a Coronavirus vaccine “only for the United States”²³, thankfully finding German government officials determined to oppose the offer. America is constantly changing, yet by voluntarily perpetuating its dependence on the US, Europe is in a vulnerable and exploitable position.

This state of affairs has weakened the old continent domestic defence industry, deprived it of strategic autonomy to effectively dispatch crises in its direct surroundings, left it susceptible to blackmail in its security to make compromises on trade, and weakened its immune system to the virus of disunity.

At its core, the American threat is this disunion, attained through a narrative that tells Europeans not only that they don’t have the physical means to defend themselves, but also convinces them - by fostering disunity among them through bilateral reassurances - that the EU lacks the political will to ever offer something akin to the defence Uncle Sam provides, autonomously. The French would not be willing to defend the Estonian borders, but the Americans will, the thinking goes. However attractive the narrative has been in Poland, it is fundamentally misleading. Germans were prepared to give the ultimate sacrifice in an American-led war that did not respond to their national security demands. Why would Europeans not be prepared to fight for each other, but ready to die for the Americans? The will to make sacrifices for European interests can be found, but for these Europeans need to disavow the threat of the American narrative, which aggravates the feeling of insecurity and persuades Europeans that their fellow Member States are not committed to each other’s security. The counter-narrative of EU unity must be followed by the concrete integration of defence apparatuses to ensure it is not a desire in name only, but an achievable, actionable process.

A BLUEPRINT FOR A EUROPEAN UNION CAPABLE OF DEFENDING ITSELF

The art of war is engaged in a process of drastic change. Old threats have not disappeared, new ones have emerged and, as we do not choose our threats, we must be able to deal with all of them wherever they come from and whatever form they take.

²³ (The Guardian , 2020)

New methods and tools have surfaced: political misinformation campaigns, non-attributable cyber-attacks, social media radicalization and the weaponization of economic interdependence. Having more resources, manpower and heavier tonnage bombs no longer guarantees success in battle. Nevertheless, the simultaneous technological innovations pursued by traditional conventional rivals compel us to keep up with each new generation of missiles, fighter jets, malware and computing power. As the latter often have exorbitant R&D costs, meeting the demands of traditional and modern threats in the century of ‘hybrid’ warfare is daunting.

This security landscape is all the more worrying given the lack of a shared European consensus on defence. And yet, a true European strategic autonomy must address this kaleidoscope of old and new threats and do so from a place of genuine solidarity. Of all the threats evoked, only one is existential for the European Union, and it is of internal nature: it is the threat of disunion.

Any endeavour towards European strategic autonomy will be void if, with or without external pressure, Europeans let themselves be carried away by the short-term illusion that they can better protect themselves outside the Union – under the impression that a privileged bilateral relationship will guarantee their security in the long-term. The most valuable asset the EU’s citizens have is the abiding belief that their individual and national futures are inextricably intertwined with the common project. Stop believing in it and the project ceases to exist, with the unity that safeguards us crumbling soon after. In this regard, the rules of the game have not changed since the Delian League or the American Revolution. As Patrick Henry phrased it in 1799: “united we stand, divided we fall.”

Solidarity has to be at the heart of Europe’s protection: instability in the Sahel does not affect France alone – it threatens the security of the entire southern Mediterranean and foregoes humanitarian disasters in Lampedusa, Lesbos or Gibraltar: the southern border of the Union. These are *European* shores, enveloped by a neighbourhood of countries whose security deterioration directly impacts the viability of our common project and which constitute a certainly more justifiable destination to send European soldiers to fight and die in the name of our freedoms than when Germany deployed to Afghanistan – or the Italians deployed to Iraq. What logic, if any, can reconcile the German Bundestag’s willingness to shed blood for their American allies in Afghanistan, where no German national security interests exist, and their present refusal to deploy in combat operations in North Africa and beyond?²⁴ If anything, the latter is significantly closer to European and thus German security interests. Joint action would see German soldiers fighting shoulder to shoulder with other Europeans – would this alliance not be at least as secure and worth sacrificing for as the one with the US?

²⁴ Alternative proposals by the German defence minister to create no-fly zones in Syria are appealing in theory, but is Germany truly willing to face-off Tornado planes against Russian Sukhois?

More profoundly, the evolved conception of a European strategic autonomy remains a goal fundamentally worth pursuing and achieving it is within the realm of possibility. It does, however, come at a high cost: that of redesigning the EU defence architecture. In more simple terms – it will only come with true, genuine integration – underpinned by four pillars:

A Political Decision-Making Body: a European Security Council

Twenty years after Saint Malo and attempts of all sorts and nature, it seems now obvious that if the European Union is to become strategically autonomous, it cannot coax this under closer cooperation on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, trying to “cooperate” while retaining total sovereignty is exactly what Member States have done for the last twenty years, and that has led European defence nowhere and kept almost all European States reliant on the US to defend themselves.

If an authentic European defence is to become a reality, it won’t start by putting generals or industry heads together. Generals and industrials hardly ever agree among themselves, even in the framework of the Nation State. An authentic European defence is to be born from politics and nothing else. The question is: how do we create a genuine political body that is permanent, legitimate and efficient enough to give orders to a centralized chain of command under which Member States’ forces will organize themselves, from defence planning to military operations?

In this regard, the proposal made by the German Chancellor and the French President at the Meseberg summit in June 2018 has created high hopes. It boils down to the creation of a European Security Council with an extensive use of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV).

Unfortunately, this proposal has so far been followed by no concrete effect. Chiefly because the abandonment of the unanimity rule is a pill that is fairly difficult for all States to swallow. Another reason is that such a body would have to be installed outside the Union’s framework, which is something from which Germany recoils. And finally, such a body should be subject to oversight by some sort of parliamentary control yet to be created that will also vote for a common budget. All this together constitutes massive change and we can easily understand that it was not put at the top of the agenda in the middle of the Coronavirus crisis.

Furthermore, a great many Member States will still prefer American protection – even under the rule of a mercurial president - to any European defence so long as this European

alternative does not really exist. To halt any progress in the hope that they will change their minds is too costly. Kaim and Kempin of the SWP remark that willing countries will only exchange the sovereignty the ESC implies for true decision-making gains²⁵; hence the need for a leadership group. If this European Security Council is to be effective it will have to operate through qualified majority voting, making an initially small group of likewise committed Member States all the more important. Crucially, though, the European Security Council cannot include only France and Germany – and must incorporate other willing nations.

The Nuclear Guarantee

On the 7th of February 2020 President Macron stated that there was a “strategic dialogue to develop with our European partners, which are ready for it, on the role played by France’s nuclear deterrence in our collective security.” After Brexit, France is now the only nuclear power of the EU – a large responsibility. Gaullist scepticism of NATO and the pursuit of an independent nuclear arsenal are now paying off. The UK depends on the American government for its Trident D II 5 missiles (which are not owned by the UK but *leased*²⁶) and to a lesser extent for the nuclear propulsion generators. France’s deterrent program, devoid of a special relationship, became entirely independent from American provisions or other provisions.

Although France cannot share its nuclear capabilities under *joint command* without infringing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it could still assuage the Polish and Baltic concerns that drive their attachment to NATO and the American presence in Europe: that only America can face off the Russian nuclear threat. The double-key principle enabling the USA to entrust B61 tactical free fall bombs to NATO integrated powers is theoretically just as available to France. Remembering this now could not be timelier: In April, the American ambassador to Poland suggested that if the Bundestag keeps questioning its future commitment to nuclear deterrence, America would be happy to move the nuclear warheads in Germany to Poland. Besides the high and unnecessary expense of the transfer, it would be the most violent provocation of Russian aggression since NATO incorporated the ex-Warsaw pact countries.

Not only would France be legally able to offer a nuclear assurance, but the French nuclear arsenal, the world’s third largest, is technically on par, if not a step ahead of the American one deployed in the European countries. Where the NATO forces traditionally rely on B61 gravity bombs - dropped in flyovers - France favours nuclear cruise missiles. Meanwhile, the USA devoted most nuclear R&D efforts to missile defence systems. Putin asserted in June that Russia is well ahead of the US in developing the next generation of manoeuvrable

²⁵ (Markus Kaim, 2019)

²⁶ (Simons, 2015)

hypersonic missiles, and even the “means to combat hypersonic weapons by the time the world's leading countries have such weapons”. As the main distinguishing element of this new generation is manoeuvrability, France’s know-how makes it well placed to meet its own hypersonic parity goal by 2021 through the V-MaX project.

Beyond technical advantages - the psychological impact of nuclear capacity sharing should not be underestimated. After all, there is no better reassurance to the fear of shifting away from the American protectorate than giving Germans nuclear missiles to put under their planes.

Command, Control and Communications

The EU still has no permanent strategic military headquarters and recent missions demonstrated what concrete implications the CSDP’s languishing Command and Control has. During European Union Training Mission-Somalia (EUTM-S)(2012- present) the absence of an Operational Headquarters challenged C2 relations because the Operation Commander in Chief did not have a clearly defined Military Authority. The 2013 EU “Concept for Military Command and Control” establishes that different Troop Contributing Nations should oversee the tactical, strategic and operational levels of command. In practice, a single nation often heads two levels, and in EUTM-S, the Mission Commander even acted as Operation and Force commander simultaneously. Complicating matters is the Chairman of the EU Military Committee (EUMC), designated as the ‘principal point of contact’ for military and operational conduct. Prior to any mission outside Mogadishu, the Mission Commander had to inform EUMCC, who relayed the information to heads of state of the contributing nations, and if any opposed the operation, EUMC could oppose the decision, which would block the action. The Chairman thus does not act as a ‘point of contact’ but has true influence over the chain of command, despite theoretically not being part of it.

Similar confusion exists with the European External Affairs Services. During CSDP missions, the mission commander can receive ‘guidelines’ from the head of the EU delegation to Somalia (EUDEL) or of the EU Special Representative to the Horn of Africa. Even though the subordination of military missions to European Member States is evident that the EEAS can directly influence Tactical Operations undermines the authority of the military chain of command. As a specific example, consider that one of the requirements included in the Mission Plan of the EUTM-S’s fourth mandate was that, in order for EUTM-S to carry out an activity outside Mogadishu it must be an activity that is "supported" by EUDEL. This lack of clarity in the Chain of command is problematic. It delays reaction

times and dilutes responsibility. As Foch put it: “I have far less admiration for Napoleon since I’ve commanded a coalition”²⁷.

The launch of the 2017 Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) is an effort in the right direction, but its council-set objective of “being able to carry out a military executive mission of the size of one EU battlegroup by 2020” has yet to see its baptism of fire. Without a homegrown communication and transmission unit and a consolidated C2, Europe will continue to punch far below its weight. After all, the raw force of the Union would more than meet the requirements of missions of the highest level of ambition. Deploying 60 000 men (one corps – only land forces) for any reasonable period of time – between six months and one year - would probably require an overall 420 000 troops (including reserves and training). A sizeable figure, but even then, it would constitute less than a third of the EU27’s 1,410,000 active personnel.

The Budget

To become strategically autonomous, the Union needs to be able to acquire defence capabilities as one, and fill gaps whenever necessary. This is all the more important as some capabilities – such as aircraft carriers – carry price tags that are far too large for a single Member State to service, but far more accessible with pooled resources. This shared budget will have to be voted on by a separate Parliament to be defined – composed perhaps of the MEPs of Member States committed to the European Union of defence. The voting modality will also require harmonization – especially through compromises between the Assemblée Nationale and the Bundestag’s traditional approaches to defence decisions. Precisely this need to find shared ground in parliamentary systems for shared defence was already accounted for in the TEU. Protocol 10’s article 2 subsection c) paves the way for Member States to “undertake concrete measures” to “enhance the interoperability of forces [...] *including possibly reviewing their national decision-making procedures*”. A robust Defence Parliament is key to safeguard the military budget, to the greatest extent possible, from being compromised by blackmail, whether directed at individual Member States or individual Members of Parliament, and from the volatility of internal political and business cycles.

²⁷ (Gaulle & Gaymard, 2016)

CONCLUSION

Today, the assessment is unequivocal: the European Union is incapable of protecting its citizens or protecting itself as a political unit and even less able to defend itself as a geopolitical actor.

At present the Union does not fulfil any of the ambitions, it set itself in 2016. Particularly out of reach is the deployment of forces to high-intensity conflict theatres in its neighbourhood with a view to “peacemaking” and “post-conflict stabilization” (article 43.1 TEU). Syria, Libya and Mali have borne witness to this impotence, even though the CSDP’s *raison d’être* was to provide a response to conflicts of this nature. Admittedly, France is still capable of a sizable force projection, but it lacks the strategic enablers and adequate mass needed to make a true difference and depends too often on its American ally for critical capabilities, especially intelligence. In this regard, Brexit deals a heavy blow to the Union’s expeditionary capacity, and, as things stand, no Member State seems either willing or capable of filling the gap. The difficulties in mounting the recent naval operation IRINI off the coast of Libya are proof of the Union’s inability to manage crises in its neighbourhood. The mission to strengthen the capabilities of its partners, the second objective that the Union has set itself, should receive a significant boost with the implementation of the European Peace Facility. For the time being, however, negotiations on the creation of this fund seem to be getting bogged down and its budget for the coming years has yet to be determined. As for the objective of “protecting the Union and its citizens”, it is for the moment little more than a slogan.

With regards to its defence, the main military threat weighing on the Union is the Russian threat. Conventionally speaking, it is safe to say that European forces, without the support of American forces, would be in dire straits in a pre-emptive war at the crossroads of the Baltic States and Poland. But there is nothing inevitable about this scenario. Member States have all the financial, industrial and human resources to counter this challenge. It is a matter of coordinating efforts, specializing forces and, above all, investing in adequate military equipment. From this point of view, the main Member State concerned is Germany. Nevertheless, a defence that genuinely deters the Russians is inconceivable without a nuclear guarantee. This is why the “strategic dialogue” that could be started on this issue between France and Germany is of utmost importance. With respect to the jihadist threat, addressing it implies both internal coordination efforts between all the counterterrorism services of the European Union and beyond, as well as external investment efforts, in order to manage the pockets of terrorism likely to spring up in the Union’s neighbourhood, which again raises the issue of an efficient CSDP. Finally, on the greatest threat of all, that of disunity, the Member States are faced with the following conundrum: as long as the Union is not capable of defending itself, it will have to delegate

its defence to others, who may exert strong pressure on it or even attempt to destroy it. It seems the member states would rather be lulled into the illusion that they can still take sovereign decisions, when in practice they are becoming less and less independent and ever more integrated with the United States of America, without this bothering them too much.

At heart, the dilemma facing European democracies today is the same as that faced by the young American states during the War of Independence and which Benjamin Franklin summed up on 9th May 1754 in the Pennsylvania Gazette in a three-word formula that all citizens, whatever their level of education, could understand: *Join or Die*. ■

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ANALYSIS #9

IS THE EUROPEAN UNION REALLY UNABLE TO DEFEND ITSELF?

BY **FRÉDÉRIC MAURO** / LAWYER AT THE BRUSSELS BAR, ASSOCIATE RESEARCHER AT IRIS

AND **PABLO FERNANDEZ-CRAS** / RESEARCH ASSISTANT

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EUROPE, STRATEGY, SECURITY PROGRAMME

Under the supervision of Olivier de France, research director at IRIS

defrance@iris-france.org

and Jean-Pierre Maulny, deputy director of IRIS

jpmaulny@iris-france.org

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FRENCH INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC AFFAIRS

2 bis rue Mercoeur

75011 PARIS / France

T. + 33 (0) 1 53 27 60 60

contact@iris-france.org

@InstitutIRIS

www.iris-france.org