

FUTURES AND CAPABILITIES – Reflections from EURODEFENSE-BELGIUM

We thank EURODEFENSE-SPAIN for the food for thought paper presented in reaction to the decision of the Presidents taken in Vienna the 21st May 2009 and we offer following reflections.

- “Capabilities” is an extremely important issue; it addresses people, equipment and structures in quality and quantity against a background of a continuously receding and ever faster changing future.
- Major equipments have an estimated lifespan of over thirty years.
- The acquisition of the knowledge necessary for an efficient use of a new capability takes ten years or more.
- All high level national and international military staffs are permanently studying and addressing those issues.
- The EURODEFENSE organizations cannot hope to match in quality (and not in quantity) those (IN) studies.
- But the EURODEFENSE organizations can provide overarching insights that are more difficult for insiders to identify or to formulate.
- The “NATO ACT Multiple Futures Project Study” indicates that in all imaginable plausible futures our world (the Western Democracies) will need polyvalent military forces for a multitude of possible conflicts, ranging from prevention and counterinsurgency to all out state on state war.
- Also the European Nations, members of the European Union, will in the future, as they do today, have to invest in Armed Forces. They will have to do it in a better way than they are doing it today if they want to achieve a better return on investment.

- European Future Capabilities studies should:
 - Be based on a truly common European Security and Defense Policy in its turn based on a truly common European Foreign Policy (Capitals will have to refrain from declaring national positions before having them cleared in the European Union environment).
 - Recognize that common acquisition of common equipment will result in more and better (one type of main battle tank, one type of fighter aircraft, one type of frigate, one type of personal defense weapon, ...).
 - Try to preserve an independent European Defense Industry (not mainly for economic reasons but for political reasons).
 - Also address the command structures necessary for the efficient employment of the capabilities. (OHQ)
 - Recognize that some capabilities, for reasons of cost, can only be acquired in a multinational way (observation from space, development of major new prototypes, ...).
 - Bear in mind that a coherence is necessary to guarantee the deployability and the sustainability of the capabilities (throughout the European Union and to theatres abroad).
 - Recognize that “Permanent Structured Cooperation” and “Commonality of Logistic Support” act as important force multipliers.

- Outsourcing the use of firearms to others than the military or the police is not in the European tradition.
- Underline the specificity of the European Union in its ability to employ not just military capabilities but also instruments in the other domains of nation building
- Insist on the benefits as results of a cooperation With NATO in these matters (Common or coordinated Defense Planning).

We wonder if EWG 14 should not try to develop and agree on a paper on those qualitative aspects of future European capability development.

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