

OUR DEFENSE AND SECURITY AT A CROSSROADS

The Lisbon Treaty, ratified in 2009 by the 27 EU Member States, has reaffirmed their will to construct, within the European Union, their Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) as a key pillar of their Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This policy is founded on the principles and values that characterize the spirit of those (our) nations. These values have to be defended against new and traditional threats. Terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed states, cyber-attacks, organized crime, piracy and climate change are illustrative of the new threats. On top of that, our countries cannot (actually) disregard the more conventional threats resulting from the acquisition of modern military capabilities by various other countries, some of which are no true democracies, with the possible implications this may have for the defense and the security of our continent and for the international stability.

To protect our freedom, principles and values, the CSDP must be able of getting the capabilities required to achieve an effective defense against existing and foreseeable threats. The 2008 "Capabilities development Plan" of the European Defense Agency can serve as a guide to reach that goal. Although it must be pointed out that, besides defensive capabilities and the required renovation of weapon systems, it is also essential to have a comprehensive effective Crisis Management capacity. This specific European civilian-military comprehensive capacity should be the subject of an updated "2003 Solana strategy" where the need for a dedicated EU Operational Headquarters appeared.

The economic and financial situation, that most of EU countries are confronted with, has resulted in a significant reduction of their defense budgets. This affects in particular the acquisition plans for obtaining capabilities deemed essential, not only for national purposes but also to contribute to the CSDP. These cuts may increase even more in the future and, in some cases, have already led to the partial or total loss of essential capabilities. The damage is even more serious since these cuts have been done without sufficient coordination between EU countries.

On the other hand, taking into account the undeniable link between Defense spending, Defense industries and employment, the impact of these cuts can be translated into job losses and a problematic slowdown of technological development and innovation. Defense industries are essential not only for obtaining capabilities but also for the technological development of our countries. For all these reasons and without prejudice to the economic reality, we must find new ways to prevent the loss of essential defense capabilities. This process must be coordinated between all EU members, avoiding unaffordable duplication and ensuring effective cooperation with

NATO. Moreover, this must be consistent with the required adaptation of the Armed Forces to confront the traditional and the new threats mentioned above.

In this context it is vital for European citizens to become realistic actors of their own Defense, aware of the realities of this time, conscious of the damaging consequences of giving up their specific Defense efforts and also aware of the subsequent negative effects this may have on their freedom and their economic progress. This note of EuroDefense aims at awakening the European citizens on the danger they are running if they don't pay enough attention to their defense and security.

To avoid deepening the capability gap between present and foreseeable threats on the one hand and the ability to confront them on the other, we must act on two main fronts. The first is to increase cooperation among EU nations using innovative approaches in order to get significant savings and to improve interoperability. Although this cooperation will lead us to some advance in the right direction we should be aware that (, as a second premise,) there is also a need for adequate national Defense budgets. Without them it will be almost impossible to fill the above mentioned gap.

Our Defense and Security are at a crossroads and if we do not act in time, in addition to risk our security and freedom, we will loose jobs, technologies and industries, and therefore the EU will not be able to become and remain a credible player in today's international global multipolar arena (scenario).

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