

Summary of an analysis prepared by EuroDefense France (edited by Lt Gen Jean Paul Perruche, President EURODEFENSE-FRANCE)

Recent changes in the context of world security are having a dangerous effect on the defence arrangements of European countries. An increased number of conflicts and threats at Europe's borders at a time when European defence budgets have been dangerously decreasing over more than 20 years now, together with the unavoidable disengagement of the USA, are the main causes.

This uncertain situation should incite the nations of the European Union to mutualise their forces and capabilities, but it is painfully obvious that any political will to do so is sorely lacking at present. Given this situation, a EuroDefense France working group (which reports to a pan-EU conference in Luxembourg this week) stresses the interest of producing a European White Paper on security and defence, emphasising the conditions for its feasibility, identifying the obstacles to be overcome, but also the opportunities to be seized, as well as an outline of such a White Paper's content and the possibilities for its exploitation.

Producing a European White Paper on security and defence would emphasise the insufficiencies and dangers of Europe's current system of defence. Protected by America in NATO, the capability for individual military action by the vast majority of European states is now negligible. As for the possibility for common action by the EU, this is ridiculously feeble in comparison with Europe's economic and political potential - a consequence of these countries' decline, especially in terms of insufficient spending on defence and lack of any real coordination where defence expenditure is concerned.

Nevertheless European nations must face up to the threats and risks which are mostly mutual, even if individual national priorities may differ. American withdrawal from Europe does however confront the European nations with the need for them to re-assume the responsibility for their own defence. This is impossible without a common analysis of joint

needs and the possibility for pooling assets and without a proper appreciation of capabilities and the capacity for mutual support, in an effort to achieve a necessary "critical mass" - a central criterion for power in today's globalised world.

A certain number of hurdles must still be surmounted before the goal is reached, nevertheless. Principally, the absence of a real common foreign policy. This could be alleviated, partly, via more convergence between the States, dossier by dossier, in the context of a new strategic analysis at the European level, (as already envisaged by the new High Representative). The following step would be to conquer the reluctance and fears of national representatives to modify their priorities so as not to emphasise their differences, to feel bound by positions agreed at the European level and to be obliged to justify options which may be seen by their compatriots as useless conditions and as an abandon of national sovereignty.

The complexity of political and military cultures in European States and their different conceptions of "power" should not be underestimated, but may well be reduced to an analysis which considers the EU as a whole of which each state is a part. Such an analysis would certainly reawaken the debate on the finality sought through European construction and its limits, but would also have the interest of clarifying our compatriots' vision, especially with respect to false, nationalistic alternatives. As far as the argument that reinforcing European capabilities would result in a weakening of NATO is concerned, this appears wholly specious at a moment when our U.S. Partner is insisting on a rebalancing of the burden of European security.

In contrast, the new scene concerning threats and risks all around the EU, and especially in its near neighbourhood, offers opportunities to be grasped in favour of a more European approach to defence. Taking these risks into account globally in their diversity and as a function of just how dangerous they may be at the European scale, would allow priorities to be established and share efforts between the member states, to emphasise complementary capabilities and thus increase the cost/efficiency ratio of European defence..

The current problem of uncontrolled migration movement in the Mediterranean basin well illustrates the real need to find solutions at the European level.

Such an approach would also favour the definition of a better system of role sharing between Europeans and the Americans not only for the defence of Europe, but also for the defence of our values and the protection of our common interests at a global level.

It would also allow for the identification of the strategic capacities which the European States would not be in a position to acquire individually in the future, but which are indispensable for their independence and freedom of action: capabilities for space, strategic transport, major arms systems for the future...

As for its content, a European White Paper should express the political will of EU States, supported by their public opinions, to consider and to organise their defence at the European level, without necessarily having to develop a totally integrated European defence, (for example, an European army).

The White Paper should concentrate on:

- developing the notion of critical mass for Europe's States' power of influence
- the expression of power and the use of armed force by the EU
- the expression of solidarity in the domaine of security and defence within the EU, with the aim not only of protecting the common interests of the member states, but also of making a common defence of all their interests, (common and national).
- putting into practice the principle of subsidiarity between EU and its member states in terms of defence, the aim of an European approach

being to produce common solutions where the nations are lacking individual solutions rather than Europe directing its members.

- the problem of establishing a concerted approach to nuclear deterrence and to ballistic missile defence within the realm of the EU's defence.

- conditions for the strategic autonomy of the EU, to allow it to achieve its aims and the necessary means.

With needs, ambitions and capabilities re-valued at the European level, the White Paper should show how the EU could prepare to cope with a partial dis-engagement by the United States and to redefine a transatlantic partnership adapted to 21st century realities.

Capabilities should be expressed in terms of needs: anticipation, prevention, protection, intervention, deterrence, in the light of the desired level of strategic autonomy.

The Paper should be short and instructive, accompanied by strategies for detailed implementation in the realms of internal and external security, depending on different regions of the world, with priorities. Such a White Paper should be usefully coherent and an instrument for doing better in the future at the European level, a reference work for individual nations' own White Papers. It must not be too technical, more an educational tool, appealing to a wide audience and available to the general public.

An element to help build the EU's global approach to its defence, the White Paper would allow for the defining of regional strategies, (eg in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa), and themes, (eg maritime security strategy, cyber defence, energy, the link between CSDP and the neighbourhood policy...), organisation, (command and control), setting up necessary budgets, (eg for the ECSP and Athena), doctrine, capability development, (CDP), linked with the safeguarding of a technical and industrial base and envisaged operational engagements. This European White Paper could also establish the level of cooperation and coordination desired with other major organisations, such as the UN, the OSCE, NATO or the African Union.

In the current climate of euro scepticism, developing a European White Paper could have a useful educational impact, allowing European citizens to become more aware of the security threats confronting the EU member states and also proposing possible European solutions. Its main aim would be to clarify the conditions necessary for a real reinforcement of all our states and their citizens via the development of our solidarity.