



Defending him alone?

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Relations internationales

For GDI (2S) Vincent DESPORTES, NATO, as we know it, is living its last years. Taken individually, no country, including France, has the means to ensure its defence in all areas on its own. There is therefore an urgent need to build a defence of Europe with those countries that share our vision of the issues at stake.

Defence, an essential tool for European autonomy

Europeans have long believed that, having eliminated war on their own soil, they had eradicated it. Rising international tensions, the revival of power politics and the explosion of terrorism are bringing them back to their senses. War still has a bright future and human relations remain a balance of power. It is therefore a mistake to reason solely from an economic standpoint while accepting political and military dwarfism: one cannot think of Europe without hoping for its strategic maturity, and therefore without wanting its autonomy, and therefore without building its defence.

Why is it necessary to build a European defence?

First of all, it is imperative because, in terms of defence, the scale of European nations is outdated. A middle power can no longer equip itself with a coherent defence system, as was the case until the middle of the 20th century. There are two reasons for this.

. The first is the continuing expansion of areas of conflict. War never abandons a space it has taken over. Yesterday, it was necessary to be able to fight on land, then at sea; the technological developments of the 20th century have forced armies to have combat capabilities in the third dimension, first in the air, then in space, and - for some - nuclear. The 21st century adds cyberspace and tomorrow we will have to defend ourselves in any new space conquered by man. The expansion of war zones does not in any way correspond to the expansion of increasingly scarce military budgets. Assuming it has the political will, a European state is no longer in a position to build up a substantial capacity

for action in the five areas of confrontation on its own.

. The second reason is the exponential increase in the cost of equipment. Each new generation of weapons increases the cost of weapons systems tenfold (and sometimes more), while sophisticated equipment manufactured in small series is prohibitively expensive. Every state is therefore forced to reduce its stock at each generational leap... or to accept the technological dropout.

The consequence? Except for superpowers with vast budgetary means, the choice is between a sample defence system, weakened by gaping capability deficiencies, and the restoration of coherence and comprehensiveness at a supranational level. For European nations, it is therefore technically necessary to find at this level the capabilities that are lacking at national level.

This is where the need for European defence again arises: this supranational level must be reliable. But if this has long been the case with the Atlantic Alliance, it is no longer the case. Europeans know that their defence is only as good as the American guarantee, but it has become a pernicious myth. They try to reassure themselves: "collective defence is NATO". True, for some time to come... but risky!

The United States provides the major part of NATO's budget and when they are definitively turned towards their West, there will no longer be a collective defence of Europe! This "strategic pivot" from the Atlantic to the Pacific reflects the reality of the world. In less than twenty years, the population American Americans of European origin will have become a minority and the old reflex of defending the "land of the ancestors" will have disappeared. The United States, freed from its energy dependence on the Near East, will certainly be able to experience brief revivals of interest in Europe, but let us be under no illusions: Never again will the soldier RYAN die on a beach in Europe ... especially since his name will be RAMIREZ! Let's not imagine that once the TRUMP page has been turned, the tide will turn: it's a heavy trend. The US/Europe decoupling is inevitable: TRUMP is not an accident of history.

Unable to link its destiny to a power whose strategic interests diverge from its own, Europe must recognise that NATO is no longer its all-risk insurance and react quickly: it has only a few years left to build its own defence system. Otherwise, it will find itself very poorly equipped when the last US Navy ship leaves Antwerp to bring the last American soldier back to Baltimore.

Finally, let us be sure, the world needs Europe. Whether we like it or not, our world born on 26 June 1945 in San Francisco is today moribund. Now, with our planet in turmoil, in profound change, less and less regulated by weakening organisations, our planet needs Europe. A Europe born of the bloody clash of national ambitions, then of the Enlightenment, then of massacres, a Europe that has become a pole of wisdom and balance, a Europe that is a melting pot and a bearer of humanist values, a Europe with reasonable ambitions, a Europe that is now a calming factor in a world that is once again running towards the abyss.

Europe must play its role in the world. But to do so, it must be heard, and it must therefore be militarily strong. For since the world has existed, its history has been like this: values are only worth as much as the power of the sword, the voice only carries as much weight as the calibre of the guns. Today, however, Europe, deprived of common military power, is a voiceless continent. This explains why France now plays a more important role than Europe on the international stage: it can make a concrete commitment at the heart of crises. Its voice carries much more weight than that of Europe.

What model for the defence of European countries?

Is the European army the solution? It is more of a Vision, but a long-term vision. Indeed, a democratic army is necessarily an army of citizens: as long as there are no European citizens, there will be no European army. It presupposes a legitimate political authority deciding for the nations of the common strategic interest, and therefore, if necessary, the commitment of forces - and death - to combat. We are a long way from that. But it is a useful vision, an ultimate milestone.

We must therefore build first - and urgently: we have twenty years at most - an army of European nations. Not of the 27 nations: we no longer have the luxury of a dream. European enlargement was pushed by Uncle Sam to dissolve Europe in space: a result brilliantly achieved. From Paris to Budapest, the perceptions of threats and strategic interests, the operational cultures, are too divergent for the countries of the Union to agree with one voice to subordinate their defence to the pooling of resources whose freedom of use they would have lost.

Realism therefore requires us to start from a core of sovereign nations capable of strategic compromises and of eroding their autonomy in the name of an accepted higher interest that goes beyond national egoism. This presupposes a clear awareness of what has been written above, unfailing voluntarism and a stubborn shaping of public opinion for the common good of the citizens. Today's most promising solution has proved its worth in other areas - that of monetary policy in particular. It is that of a Defence Eurogroup, supported by the joint will of France and Germany, in which decisions would be taken by qualified majority.

In a world of belligerent developments and in the absence of an international regulatory capacity, it is up to Europe to assume its common defence. If they value their civilisation, Europeans must acquire their own means of defence as soon as possible: realistically, firmly but step by step, by ceasing to dream of an ancient order that has disappeared for good.

It is not really important what it is called. What Europe needs is a defence of Europe, by Europe and for Europe, with an autonomous and integrated military capability, capable of defending autonomously its interests and its ability to live as it wishes.

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