

Continuing the rise of our armies

G2S FILE N°16

Groupe de liaison G2S

Published on 01/03/2017

Histoire & stratégie

A global disorder growing at the rate of a worrying instability, military rearmament of entire regions of the world, also localized on the European periphery, random terrorist attacks, etc., all of which are a threat to the security of the world. At the rise of extremist Islam in Europe, this is roughly sketched out in the geopolitical and security context of our planet, which is a sign of a generalised military awakening.

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The need is emerging for European nations to defend themselves against multiform aggression, whether foreseeable (such as terrorism) or not, which could have the potential to damage their vital interests.

Europe is finding it difficult to gauge this general trend, having collectively chosen the path of disarmament since the disappearance of the Warsaw Pact. It is no longer a question of exporting the peace model built by the founding fathers to the outside world, but of protecting citizens from the threat of war. It is no longer a question of exporting the peace model built by the founding fathers to the outside world, but of protecting the citizens of the Union from threats coming from outside or developing on its borders, and now even rising up in the heart of its cities. Is it not strange to consider a Europe with more than 500 million inhabitants and a GDP higher than that of the United States, still expecting everything from the United States to ensure its own defence?

At a time when, on the one hand, our "great Ally" seems to be more focused on Asia, wiping out a European tropism that is becoming more and more exacting. On the other

hand, defence Europe remains in a state of deep collective lethargy, with no overall political reaction on the part of the member states. Until when will we have to wait for a salutary reaction to this denial of a reality that is becoming more and more oppressive by the day?

In its position paper, the recently concluded Munich Security Conference notes with regard to the situation in Syria: "for the first time since the end of the cold war, the escalation of violence between major powers cannot be dismissed as an unrealistic nightmare"!

Shouldn't Europe - the European Union - be one of the major powers? Yet, all available military means combined, it would not even be able to oppose a military force (including France, with its operational contract of only 15,000 h.and 45 fighter planes) equivalent to that deployed by the Islamic state?

France, however original and apparently preserved from this European contagion by a foreign policy that does not exclude the use of military force, has finally aligned itself on this general line, engaging in deflation and a reduction of its defence effort and degrading, in fact, its military apparatus beyond all reason, against the rising tide of peril.

However, the terrorist attacks against the French population on its own territory seem to have made the eyes glaze over. Previously, the truth is that there was no shortage of warnings, including among the political class, especially from military leaders, but they were not heard. The decisions taken by the President of the Republic in January and then in November 2015 in favour of the armed forces, which are indispensable in terms of budget and manpower, fortunately illustrate this awareness.

However, the general situation of our armies cannot be satisfied with these simple minimum measures, taken under the weight of urgency and emotion. Their commitments in external theatres, which should not waver, and their involvement - which has been counter-employed up to now, it must be stressed¹ - in supplementary tasks in the Mediterranean region, are a sign of the need to maintain a high level of professionalism and professionalism. The fact is that they are increasingly being suffocated every day by the lack of any military manoeuvre or effect, to the detriment of their training and the execution of their complex operational missions.

For the first time in a long time, our citizens are realizing that defence and national security must remain at the heart of the State's priorities. They will be a vital issue in the debates surrounding the next presidential election, since the French Constitution entrusts a prominent role in these areas to the President of the Republic, head of the Armed Forces. The time has come for a real and energetic restoration of our operational capabilities to deal today and even more tomorrow with conflict situations, undoubtedly unsuspected to date, which a certain comfortable and consensual blindness has not fully allowed us to analyse or foresee.

The rebuilding of our armies is becoming a pressing and urgent necessity. It will only come about through a strong, energetic and sustained political will, whatever the majorities in power. It will have to take the form of a clear and obstinate defence policy, guided by a forward-looking vision without taboos and more structured, which has been sorely lacking until now. Finally, it will be based on a general strategy that takes account of, but is not subordinate to, the desirable European dimension and should lead to a strategy that is more coherent and more effective. Finally, it will be based on a general

strategy that takes into account the desirable European dimension without subordinating itself to it, and which should lead to a strategy that is free of the sometimes dubious constraints and recurrent budgetary pusillanimity, implemented under the grip of the technocratic apparatus that is trapped in the short term.

The purpose of our remarks is not to interfere with the actions carried out in a commendable manner by the Ministry of Defence over the past few months within the armed forces, be it in terms of army manpower or the strengthening of joint intelligence capabilities and cybernetic combat resources. This is not our intention, since our thinking is exclusively concerned with the medium and long term, as recommended in the 1994 White Paper on Defence, when it referred to the need to "strengthen the European defence system". scenario 6 (resurgence of a major threat to western Europe) the need for "force generation and a change of format"². This was a hypothesis that was subsequently given scant mention in the 2008 White Paper on Defence and National Security³ and totally absent from the 2013 White Paper.

Here we are. The threat is real, which is why the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister say "we are at war", as much as the recently demonstrated inadequacy of our resources.

There is no need for a new White Paper on defence and national security. The limits and inadequacy of the armed forces' means were demonstrated in the description of their means, even though they accurately described the risks and threats ahead. It should be remembered that the definition of defence policy is a government responsibility, like foreign policy from which it partly derives, and not the responsibility of ad hoc committees, important though they may be, since they are by their very nature exempt from all leadership and command responsibilities.

For his part, and to put an end to the definition of real responsibilities, it is the Minister for Defence, with the Chief of Defence Staff⁴ as his top adviser, who is in charge of means strategy: formats, manpower, equipment, real estate, operation and training of the forces, etc. The Minister for Defence is also responsible for the defence policy of the armed forces. Of course, and in very concrete terms, the build-up to power will have to be based on several military programming laws, a maximum of two of which would be good - or twelve years of sustained effort - including theA maximum of two would be good - twelve years of sustained effort - and the priority of the executive will be to impose their strict observance in the long term and to prohibit the annual and devastating budgetary guerrilla war with Bercy.

Finally, France, in solidarity with the European nations, will have the ambition as well as the necessity to drag the other members of the Union along with it, because a rise in power limited to our country alone would not make much sense at the strategic level. Indeed, several operational capabilities call for mutual reinforcement with our partners, on a permanent basis and not according to the economic situation in the light of a particular crisis. However, the decision to regain power cannot be subordinated to a collective European surge; it must even prevent it in order to encourage and promote it by example.

The aim of this dossier is not, of course, to deal with such a difficult subject in an exhaustive manner, but to stimulate the widest possible reflection, to assist in political and military decision-making and to propose a number of courses of action that can certainly be improved upon. It contains a clear joint vision, even if some chapters (human

resources, "land" DITB) or some elements of chapters are more specific as regards air-land forces in particular.

By Army General (2S) Jean-Marie Faugère

An association under the law of 1901, the G2S is a group made up of general officers of the army who have recently left active service. They intend to pool their experience and expertise in defence issues, including their strategic and economic aspects, to give their vision of the desirable development prospects for defence.

Title :	Groupe de liaison G2S
Author (s) :	Groupe de liaison G2S
Release date	27/02/2017

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