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TOWARDS THE END OF "THE EUROPE OF DEFENCE"
AND THE ADVENT OF EUROPEAN DEFENCE

Senate Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Armed Forces

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The issue of the Europe of defence is finally back on the table again. Heads of state and government will be attending the meeting of the **European Council** in December 2013. The leaders of all 28 Member States will come together to debate the revival of Europe's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

In view of this meeting, the Senate Committee for Foreign Affairs, Defence and the Armed Forces created a working group – at the initiative of its Chair, Mr Jean-Louis Carrère – consisting of six Senators from across the political spectrum. Following six months of work, this document sets out the working group's **main conclusions.**

I. "The Europe of defence": a conceptual stalemate, a counter-productive situation

1. An ambiguous but attractive expression

"***The Europe of defence***" is an attractive idea precisely because it is ambiguous. It does not refer to the ***defence of Europe***, i.e. the defence of the territory of Europe, because this role is fulfilled by NATO. Nor is it ***European defence***. Were such a concept to exist, it would cover not only the defence *of* Europe, but also defence *by* and *for* Europe. This is not the case. Furthermore, it is not the **CSDP**, which involves the deployment of forces outside the European Union on low-intensity operations. "The Europe of defence" is an informal arrangement, a sort of **conceptual mish-mash**. It is a concept that does not translate well into other European languages. And this, paradoxically, is why it is so attractive.

Firstly, it is an **intergovernmental** concept. It is not about requiring Member States to commit to projects that they do not support, or to expeditions that they disagree with. As such, it has a "variably geometry", i.e. it is "optional".

Secondly, it is a **gradual process**. It involves making progress in small steps, brick by brick.

Finally, it is intended to **complement the existing role played by NATO**.

It has achieved results. A number of structures have been set up, including the PSC, the EEAS and the EDA. It has also given rise to around 30 different civilian and military operations, such as Operation Atalanta. It has also spawned a haphazard array of different projects, including EADS, MBDA, the A400M, the Meteor and Aster missiles, and the

EATC, the first step towards a tactical air command.

2. A conceptual stalemate

Unfortunately, no new major programmes have been launched since the A400M back in 2003. The planned merger between EADS and BAE collapsed due to competing national interests. The European Union was notably absent in the Libyan conflict, despite it being on its doorstep, as it had been in the Balkans a decade previously. In Mali, meanwhile, the conditions were right for the deployment of a European Union battle group. It was a test case for the Europe of defence, and Europe failed this test. Europe no longer has its own "independent" military capability, and there is no political will to pursue the European defence project. Why is this the case?

The reasons for this stalemate are threefold. Firstly, there is no clear threat, and therefore no clear reason for Europeans to join forces. Secondly, the relationship between NATO and the EU is poorly coordinated. Thirdly, and most importantly, the "brick by brick" method has reached its limits. There is no continuum between the intergovernmental concept of "the Europe of defence" and the essentially federal notion of "European defence".
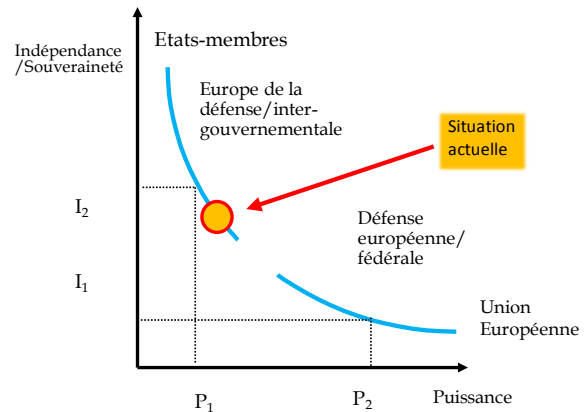
3. A counter-productive situation

The Europe of defence has become a source of frustration and misunderstanding. There are fewer cooperation programs today than there were 10 years ago, and fewer 10 years ago than there were 20 years ago. Support for the European project is on the decline. The Europe of defence has a plethora of "tools" but lacks a "European brain", i.e. an arbitration body capable of taking decisions in the common interest.

II. Common European defence: an urgent necessity that remains out of reach

1. The game has changed

The financial crisis has forced all European Member States to introduce drastic **cuts** in defence spending, resulting in reductions in military capability and falling troop numbers. At the same time, emerging nations are ramping up their defence spending. Europe is at the risk of being "written out of history".

With the United States' **focal shift** towards the Asia-Pacific region, its "*operational fatigue*" in the wake of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and its budgetary restrictions, its attitude has changed dramatically. The Americans are also more open to accepting Europe as a partner in the Transatlantic Alliance in its own right, but want to see this done on their terms.

Finally, as the **cost** of **military equipment** continues to rise, it is becoming ever more important to share and pool resources at European level. This applies in particular to future capabilities, such as aerospace, drones and future combat aircraft – systems that no European country is capable of developing on its own.

2. The emergence of own interests

The European Union has its own interests and specific values. As such, it must be able to act independently, even when the United States is unwilling to lend its support. This applies in particular to operations on its own borders, as well as in Africa and else-

where. There can be no common European foreign policy without common defence. Without this, the European Union is condemned to becoming a sort of "Super-Switzerland" or an "oversized NGO" that pays the price but is incapable of making any decisions.

3. The clear need for European defence

As well as the ongoing **traditional threats**, which require continuing "*robust*" military capability, a series of **new threats** has emerged, such as cyber-attacks and technological exclusion. These new threats require coordinated, collective responses – something that can only be achieved at European Union level.

The benefits of the European Union are often overlooked in this respect. The main benefit is the **critical mass effect** that comes from the combination of resources. When it comes to military conflict, superior equipment is not always enough to compen-

sate for an inferior army. Quantity is also important. The next benefit is the **effect on the price** of military equipment. By ordering large production runs, Member States can drive down equipment costs by sharing one-off costs.

Europe still has a number of strengths that make it well positioned to meet these challenges. The European Union is the world's leading economic power, with a population of 500 million people. Despite falling budgets, European countries still spend a total of **€175 billion** each year on defence, with combined service personnel of 1.5 million. Unfortunately, much of this expenditure is wasted on duplication and watered down by dispersal across the 28 Member States.

III. From the Europe of defence to European defence

1. The short-term solution: keep pursuing pragmatism – an essential approach but one that is insufficient on its own

In **operational** terms, the military dimension of the "global approach" needs to be strengthened, to combat the tendency of our European partners to focus on the civilian dimension. The creation of a permanent military headquarters should once again be considered.

In order to overcome **capability** shortfalls, the heads of state and government will need to adopt a "*roadmap*" at the meeting of the European Council in December 2013. This roadmap will need to outline arrangements for the sharing and pooling of critical capabilities, including in-flight refuelling, A400M support, drones, aerospace and cyber-defence. Why not give the European Union its own capabilities in certain areas?

In order to consolidate the **European Defence Technological and Industrial Base**, companies should be encouraged to form consortia on a voluntary basis, OCCAR (Organization for Joint Armament Cooperation) and the EDA (European Defence Agency) should be merged into a single European arms agency, more European funding should be made available for defence R&D projects, greater support should be given to defence-sector small and middle size enterprises and defence should be explicitly excluded from the free trade agreement between the EU and the United States.

Alongside these three aspects, it is also important to **improve the EU's institutions**:

- develop a new European security strategy involving a joint analysis of risks and threats, and a specific strategy for dealing with Russia

- "institutionalise" the Council of Defence Ministers and appoint a stable chair in the form of a "European Defence Minister".

2. The long-term solution: inject fresh impetus into the European political project

It is essential to resurrect the European project and make foreign policy and defence a key pillar of future EU developments. It is the best way to demonstrate the benefits of Europe, and will provide an opportunity to close the gap between the EU and its citizens, especially the younger generations. It is also important to strengthen the role of national parliaments, enabling them to work together to discuss European-level defence matters.

3. The medium-term solution: create a defence Eurogroup to redress the balance of the transatlantic relationship
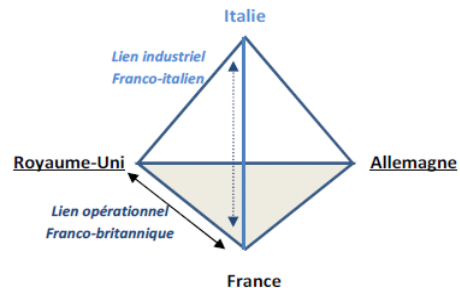
The only way to ensure a smooth transition from the Europe of defence to a genuine European defence is to create a **breakaway group**, open to countries that are willing and able to push the agenda and move towards a common European defence system. This breakaway group, the "*Defence Eurogroup*", would be based around the expeditionary capabilities of the United Kingdom and France, and would also include Germany.

Its aim would be to provide the European Union with the military capability it needs to operate outside its own borders, even without the support of the United States. It would also redress the balance of the Transatlantic Alliance and pave the way for a genuine European defence, i.e. defence of Europe's territory and its citizens.

It is also important to **build on the existing Franco-British defence treaty**, including the creation of a joint expeditionary force and, over time, to include Germany and other European partners such as Italy, Poland, Spain and other willing participants in this treaty.

This "*Defence Eurogroup*" will provide a platform for participating states to coordinate their operational resources, capabilities and industries, and to develop a genuine "European White Paper". It will also provide an expeditionary force and a new military headquarters, responsible for the planning and execution of operations and equipped with its own intelligence-gathering resources.

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