



‘Security Matters’

YEPP position paper on Security and Defence

Authors:

Hristo Gadzhev *YEPP, VP*

Stefano Felician Beccari *GL, Italy*

Europe’s geographic location presents specific challenges to the Union’s interests and security. The lack of a credible and coordinated defence policy weakens the political strength of the European Union. If Europe wants to enhance its role as a global advocate of freedom, democracy, the rule of law and the advancement of human rights, we need to act in a strategic way today. Even though the priorities of the EU are on the economic and diplomatic level, security policy is one aspect of this strategic plan.

The requirements of legitimate defence justify the existence of armed forces in States, the activities of which should be to service peace. Those who defend the security and freedom of a country make an authentic contribution to peace. Those who serve in the armed forces are called to defend good, truth and justice in the world. Many are those who have sacrificed their lives for these values and in the defence of innocent lives. In this regard, the increasing number of military personnel serving in multinational forces on humanitarian or peace-keeping missions is very significant.

Due to the influence of the current financial crisis, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) needs to be improved significantly in order for member states to be able to respond to the ever increasing asymmetrical threats. The EU should act on different levels going beyond political rhetoric and providing concrete solutions to the area of common security and defence, while respecting the various militarily neutral Member States and honouring the opt-outs that these member states have negotiated in regards to the CDSP.

Considering that since 2011 the US has reshaped its foreign policy, focusing on the Asia- Pacific region, in a short number of years we can expect a decrease in the US military presence in Europe. Thus, the EU should assume its responsibility of providing security and defence in the area. Without a credible strength, Europe will

not be able to act as a key player on the global stage. This is also the time to refresh the European Security Strategy, adopted in 2003 and amended in 2008.

The EU member states must benefit from pooling and sharing of military resources, common peacekeeping initiatives and aid in crisis management. Counter-terrorism and defence against cyber-threats should also be incorporated under the CSDP. The threats of tomorrow differ from the threats of yesterday. Cyber-threats, natural disasters, political instability and the capability of peace-keeping and defending the pathways of global trade demand co-operation between military and civilian resources, and also between countries. The challenges of tomorrow are of such magnitude that no country will have the ability to handle it alone. Co-operation will be needed to share the burden of building new, expensive capability. The EU should take the lead globally to divide the building of capabilities between member states to keep costs down, and to increase co-dependence between partners.

There are many sub-regional and transnational local initiatives (“Visegrad 4”, Uk-France agreement, Weimar Triangle), but, in our opinion, the most important starting point is to identify the approach that members should follow. We recommend a bottom-up approach to lead to the creation of new capabilities starting from common initiatives.

In order to respond to the future challenges it is necessary to redefine already existing military structures, such as the EU Military Secretariat, Command structures and the European Defence Agency (EDA). The EU should improve its strategic and operational command structures; in such a way that in the future they are capable of running autonomous EU led missions and operations.

Creating multinational solutions, such as permanent joint task forces on different levels, will enable military capabilities to be at the disposal of the EU member states. In order to be effective, we should intensify military training exercises between the different armed forces of the member states. Moreover, it is necessary to create common standards in military education. These actions can improve interoperability and synergies among different armed forces.

On the political level, the European Parliament should increase its power over defence issues, especially on the accountability of the EU structures involved in CSDP and running current EU operations.

This is the time to open a comprehensive debate on CSDP policy. All stakeholders should raise awareness on this issue, mobilising public support. At the same time, transparency is important. Therefore we want to make it clear to EU citizens why and how their public money is spent in defence. This is particularly important for young citizens who did not have any military training or war experience. Transparency and accountability (limited by the confidentiality of some information and data) will also help create a positive debate in the public opinion, giving the answer of why security and defence matters.