



EUROPEAN DEFENCE: THE CHALLENGE OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

**An Information Report by Mr Ronan Le Gleut and Ms H  l  ne Conway-Mouret
on behalf of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces Committee**

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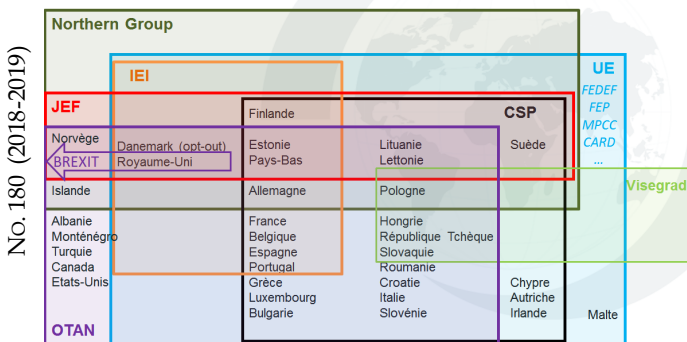
All European countries wish to preserve peace, that common good of European construction, and we must therefore not miss the historic opportunity for Europe to strengthen its defence due to mistakes, misunderstandings or disagreements that cause us to fall short in addressing the challenges.

After six months of work, dozens of hearings and visits to seven European countries, the rapporteurs have noted that the building of European defence is clearly underway, although not in the shape of a formal master plan, and much less of a "European army," but rather in the form of a series of progressive, cumulative and multifaceted developments.

An historic opportunity to strengthen European defence

Despite the pessimism that is often the norm on this issue, European defence is progressing. Today, it is fundamentally based on two pillars: NATO and the EU. **The conclusions of this report are the result of a careful examination of the analyses and needs expressed by our partners.**

European defence: a complex architecture



Source: hearing of Alice Guitton and Nicolas Roche on 3 April 2019

1. With the notable exception of France and the United Kingdom, Europe has given up on providing for its own defence in recent decades. Since the end of the Cold War, this defence has been provided mainly by NATO, **and therefore by the United States, whose expenditure devoted specifically to the defence of Europe is estimated at \$35.8 billion, which is slightly less than the defence budget of France.** These expenditures finance, in particular, the presence of **68,000 personnel** from the five branches of the US military. The United States plays a major role in terms of NATO's strategic and tactical nuclear capabilities.

To provide for the defence of Europe without the United States would cost Europeans  300 billion.

¹ Germany, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, Romania.



France plays a key role in defence issues within the European Union. It is imperative that it should strengthen its **involvement in NATO**. Since that decision, the post of Supreme Allied Commander, Transformation (SACT) has been held by a French general. France is in a **key position within NATO to help balance approaches**. It is increasingly listened to at NATO, where **it has gained credibility** not only by its participation in Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP), but also by its proven operational competence in external operations (OPEX). It is therefore in a good position to advocate for the strengthening of European defence, not against the United States but with it. Everyone on both sides of the Atlantic can understand that this involves a process of strategic empowerment and a rebalancing of relationships.

But Europeans must also be firm: **the defence of Europe cannot be bought with equipment contracts**; that would be contrary to the values that have underpinned the exceptional nature of the transatlantic relationship for two centuries. Euro-American solidarity must be unconditional, because its aim is to defend a set of values, our civilisation. Preserving and strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) is an essential part of the empowerment process.

2. The terms "strategic autonomy" or "European army" should not be used lightly: **these terms are of concern to our partners**, because they

provoke a fear that the protection of NATO that is considered to be effective might be progressively replaced by a system that is still not clearly defined, and the fear that American disengagement in a virtual sense may end up leading to American disengagement in a real sense. Many misunderstandings with our European partners also arise from **linguistic and semantic differences**: we tend to use expressions that are ambiguous, or not easily translatable, to which each assigns a different significance. France has long spoken of a "*Europe de la défense*" [a Europe of defence] - an untranslatable expression that should be replaced by the notion of "European defence," which is also closer to what the majority of the European countries want.

We must work to strengthen our mutual understanding, so as to create the conditions for increased interdependence; such is the price that we must all share to build European defence. That good faith will also come about through **long-term compliance with established commitments**.

3. **European opinion today basically breaks down into three groups**: Europeans concerned about the threat from the east of Europe (Russia), those who are more concerned about instability originating in the south (Africa and the Middle East), and lastly - and this is probably the case for a significant part of public opinion - those who do not feel concerned by any threat at all.

It is urgent that we overcome these divisions and **generate a shift in public opinion**. It is up to European governments to inform the public about the **European Union's achievements** in the security and defence field, to explain the security-defence continuum, to highlight Europe's strengths rather than always focussing on its weaknesses, and to **strive to make advances in European defence before being forced to do so by a major crisis** that would make us realise, only all too late, how serious these issues really are.

12 core proposals

1. To reinforce the commitments of each country and forge the elements of a European defence based on existing initiatives, work must be done for the collective drafting of a European **White Paper on Defence**, a link that is currently missing in the chain between the EU's Global Strategy, capacity processes and existing operational mechanisms.

2. Create the conditions to **raise the profile of defence issues within the European institutions**: a Directorate-General for Defence and Space, or the creation of a post of European Commissioner or Deputy to the High Representative in these domains, and recognition of a "defence" format of the Council (which currently handles defence issues in its "Foreign Affairs" format).

3. Multiply **exchanges and training systems** as well as **joint military exercises** on a Europe-wide basis, as is essential to building a shared strategic culture: at the military level, France should participate in the **Erasmus military** system, and create a European session on a basis provided by the Institute of Advanced Studies in National Defence (IHEDN) to develop a common **strategic vision for future decision-makers**. Gradually increase the admissions capacity at the *écoles de guerre* (war colleges) to facilitate the **joint training of officers**. On the political front, step up our contact with our European partners, for example by setting up a **European Defence Summer School**, which should provide a forum for reflection and parliamentary exchange.

4. A second position of deputy-SACEUR should be created, so that, in addition to his British deputy, the SACEUR could rely on a deputy coming from an ally member of the EU.

5. Better articulate **European capacity planning processes**, rendering them cyclical and consistent with the long-established, structured process of NATO.

6. Relaunch the **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** by concentrating resources where the

European Union can provide the greatest added value, as is the case in Africa thanks to the **EU's "global approach,"** combining a military component with diplomatic, economic and development assistance components. Expand the resources allocated to the recently created **Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)**.

Review of Operation Sophia (June 2019)



7. Defend the budget proposed for the **European Defence Fund (EDF)** in the next multiannual financial framework 2021-2027, i.e. **€13 billion**. These credits will need to be granted to projects of excellence chosen for their contribution to European strategic autonomy and the consolidation of the EDTIB, and **not allocated in small amounts to a variety of recipients** in view of promoting cohesion. Ensure that the EDF serves only the **industrial interests of Europe**. Plan a **project specifically focused on Artificial Intelligence**, a crosscutting concern that may also involve states with few or no defence industries.

8. Act to the extent possible to ensure that **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)** is an approach capable of filling the capacity gaps of the European Union, consistent with the previously proposed White Paper, and **reaffirm the binding nature of the commitments made by States in that framework**, particularly with regard to their **procurement strategies**, which must be favourable to the development of the EDTIB.

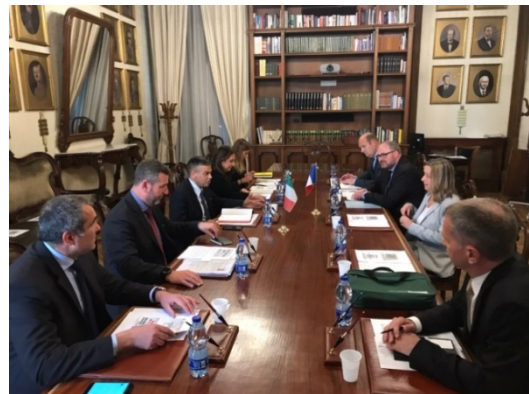
9. Clarify the **functioning of Article 42 § 7** of the Treaty on European Union by assigning an informational and coordinating role to a specific EU body, for example the High Representative. Conduct an upstream analysis of the possibilities for the activation of this article, as well as the procedures for providing the assistance requested (in consideration of the lessons learned from France's activation of the article in 2015).

10. Propose as a top priority for the EU **the establishment of a defence and security treaty with the UK**, as a vital partner of European defence to which we must offer flexible solutions to enable it to participate as much as possible in EU systems (EDF, PESCO, Galileo, etc.).



11. Major Franco-German industrial projects are key elements in the future of European defence. But for

those projects to succeed, we must be **frank and candid in our discussions with our German partner**, because unless we have a clear agreement on export rules and maintain a balanced industrial distribution in the long term - in other words, **unless legal and economic security is ensured - these projects will not be able to continue**. These projects must serve as a starting point to allow other European partners to join in and help build a veritable European consortium.

12. Preference and encouragement should be given to **flexible mechanisms** both inside and outside the EU, i.e., **spontaneous cooperation or pooling mechanisms**, similar to those established with regard to military air transport (EATC), whose underlying principle should be extended to other areas (helicopters and medical support, for example).



Rome - 10 May 2019 (Staff of the Minister of Defence)

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The complete report is available on the Senate website: <http://www.senat.fr/notice-rapport/2018/r18-626-notice.html>

