



NOW OR NEVER: THE WAY TO A CREDIBLE EUROPEAN DEFENSE

MAYA KANDEL
GENERAL JEAN-PAUL PERRUCHE

AVERTISSEMENT

Les opinions émises dans ce document
n'engagent que leurs auteurs.

Elles ne constituent en aucune manière
une position officielle du ministère de la défense.

PARIS PAPERS DEJA PARUS :

- 1- PAKISTAN: COERCION AND CAPITAL IN AN “INSECURITY STATE”**
- 2- NOW OR NEVER: THE WAY TO A CREDIBLE EUROPEAN DEFENSE**

ABSTRACT

NOW OR NEVER: THE WAY TO A CREDIBLE EUROPEAN DEFENSE

Is European defense, understood as the EU arm to defend Europe, necessary for European countries? Is it feasible? Can it be credible? This *Paris Paper* presents answers to these difficult questions, in a context of strategic redefinitions on both sides of the Atlantic.

Today, the capacity of individual European countries to act on defense and security matters is shrinking. The intervention in Libya, against an opponent both weak militarily and close geographically, showed that even Europe's two major military powers need to join forces and have the support of the U.S. and NATO.

NATO was built on the postulate of the necessity of American military power to defend Europe and the incapacity of European countries to defend themselves alone. This is no longer true. NATO's commitment has always depended on the strategic interest of the U.S. in Europe, and on American willingness to provide leadership and to shoulder the major share of the costs. If Afghanistan illustrated all three points, Libya showed that it will not always be the case.

Today, Europeans must be prepared to take over the responsibility and the cost of their defense. It could be their only chance to redefine a transatlantic strategic partnership – and make sure it continues to exist over coming decades.

CONTENTS

Introduction	9
European Defense in the New Context	13
European Defense: Against Whom, to Defend What?.....	13
<i>The Challenges of European Defense</i>	
The Need for European Defense.....	15
Can Europe Have a Strategy?	19
A Strategy for Europe.....	19
European Patriotism: Does it Make Sense?.....	21
Who Will Lead in Europe?.....	22
<i>The Franco-German Couple</i>	
<i>The 2010 Franco-British Agreement</i>	
Redefining European Ambition and Relationship to NATO	27
Back to Basics.....	27
<i>Clarifying Means and Goals</i>	
<i>The Conditions for a Revival of European Defense</i>	
No Obstacle on the Russian Side.....	31
The Time is Right for Washington.....	31
<i>Gates' Brussels Speech</i>	
<i>Alliance Competition</i>	
<i>War Fatigue</i>	
Conclusion	37

INTRODUCTION

“European Defense is an illusion. It won’t happen, and that’s just as well, as it is a dangerous illusion.”¹ Jean-Dominique Merchet

“European defense must become a true independent pillar, with a relation of equality to America, or NATO will not be a credible guarantee any longer. It is only by becoming a military power that Europe will start a logic leading to a true Union.”² Henri Hude

For the past 60 years and even more since the Maastricht Treaty (1992), experts have been debating European Defense – with views ranging from one extreme (a dangerous illusion) to the other (the only future for Europe).

Today the question is quite straightforward: is European Defense, understood as the EU arm to defend Europe, necessary for European countries? And, most importantly: is it feasible? Can it be credible?

After World War II, European countries faced two challenges: how to build a lasting peace on a continent exhausted by two terrible wars, and how to defend themselves against the existential threat posed by the Soviet Union’s Red Army, an army that had penetrated deep into the heart of Germany. The double challenge led to a double collective answer: the construction of a (western) European community to promote integration and prevent the risks

¹ « *La défense européenne est une illusion. Elle ne verra pas le jour et c’est tant mieux, car c’est une illusion dangereuse* », JD Merchet.

² « *L’Europe de la Défense doit devenir un véritable pilier indépendant, lié à l’Amérique à égalité, ou bien l’Otan ne fournira plus de garantie crédible. Si l’Europe décidait d’être un pouvoir et de se défendre, elle mettrait en marche une logique qui ferait d’elle une véritable Union* », H Hude.

of renewed internal divisions, and the alliance with the United States against the Soviet threat. Of course, the two projects, with their very different sets of objectives, were of distinctive nature: an economic and political project with a strong integrating dynamic for the EC (later EU), a strictly intergovernmental organization limited to defense and security issues for the transatlantic alliance, embodied by NATO.

Until the end of the Cold War, NATO remained basically in charge of European defense. But in the 1990s, the situation evolved. First, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia prompted an initial claim by Europeans that “the hour of Europe had come” (in the notorious quote of Jacques Poos, Luxembourg Foreign Affairs Minister representing the EU in 1991), and that Europeans would take care of the security of their environment. As it turned out, the claim was premature, and the U.S. had to step in to solve the crisis, which it did by using NATO, “out of area”, for the first time in the Alliance’s history. Second, the Maastricht Treaty introduced, for the first time in the history of European integration, the goal of developing an integrated security and defense policy, a goal that the U.S. did not welcome at the time, fearing a “duplication” of NATO (or, worse, the emergence of a rival European power), in a context of deep interrogations on the Alliance’s future.

Since then, NATO has proved its capacity to adapt to a changing international context, by intervening in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and most recently Libya, while the EU has developed (Nice and Lisbon Treaties) the necessary instruments to cope with a growing number of security crises, proving that it could in fact act as a power on the international scene³. But the question of complementarity and distribution of roles between the two organizations remains.

Given the economic and financial context, now is a good time to look back at the past twenty years and try to assess the actual situation of European Defense – and anticipate what the future might be, or, rather, what we want it to be.

³ The EU has launched 23 military operations, including 6 under CSDP since 2003.

For European countries, the issue of European Defense has radically changed since the end of the Cold War. If general objectives remain the same (defense of a territory, population and vital interests), the new context of global risks and the rapidly changing international environment put into question existing conceptions and organizations of national defense policies. Armed conflict within the EU seems implausible today: the goal of a durable peace in Europe has been achieved. But it doesn't mean that Europe will remain at peace with the rest of the world. European countries must accept, and face, the fact that peace in Europe is not enough to guarantee the protection of European interests, or the security of Europe's people in the new context. **(1. European defense in the new context)**

The capacity of individual European countries (including the most powerful, France and the UK) for initiative and action in defense and security matters is shrinking, for reasons that are political (legitimacy), economic (cost of military intervention), and operational (capabilities lacking). The air intervention in Libya, against an opponent both militarily weak and geographically close, showed that even there, France and Britain need to join forces and have the support of the U.S. and NATO. **(2. Can Europe have a strategy?)**

NATO was built from the outset on a double postulate: the necessity of the commitment of American military power to defend Europe; the incapacity of European countries to defend themselves alone against the Soviet threat. The validity of both propositions need to be verified today. The commitment of NATO so far has depended on the strategic interest of the U.S. in Europe, American willingness to provide leadership and, last but certainly not least, American agreement to shoulder the major share of the cost of NATO; the operation in Afghanistan illustrated all three points. However, the recent intervention in Libya shows, if anything, that this will not always be the case, and that in the future, if American interest is moderate, leadership and responsibility will have to be provided by Europeans. In addition, before leaving office in June 2010, former U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates stated that the American guarantee would henceforth be conditional and depend primarily on the (evolving) interests of the United States. As a result, Europeans must be prepared to take over the responsibility, and the cost, of

their defense. **(3. Redefining European ambition and relationship to NATO)**

Most European nations have chosen to join the European Union, to which they have transferred part of their sovereignty in the economic field, and where they can choose either to act together as a community, or to cooperate via intergovernmental mechanisms. The building of a European defense is closely linked to the process of political construction of the EU itself. But if the need to defend their common (economic) interests in the Union has appealed to most European countries (27), the final political goal of European integration, simple common market or real political power, continues to be debated and remains undetermined today. Certainly, much progress has been made in spite of, or perhaps thanks to, the vagueness of the “finality of European integration”. However, one can question whether a credible European Defense can be built on such ambiguity.

The distribution of roles between NATO and the EU in relation to defense matters remains to be determined as well, despite the abundance of well-meaning official statements. This question seems largely internal to Europeans however: for the past several years (since 2008 at least), the U.S. has repeatedly pledged support for European defense initiatives regardless of the framework, as long as they lead to a strengthening of European capabilities.

EUROPEAN DEFENSE IN THE NEW CONTEXT

European Defense: Against whom, to defend what ?

Although Europe today has no declared enemy and does not face any specified military threat, except for terrorism, the world has not become peaceful. Globalization has deepened the overall integration of the world's nations, economically at least, but progress has been slow in terms of global governance of this newly found economic integration. As a result, states have largely lost control over their economies, but no supranational authority has emerged to fill the gap – even though the G8 and G20 are attempting to do just that. Instability and inequalities have grown, between states, and within states, between rich and poor.

At the same time, military spending increased by almost 56% (in volume) in the world since 1996, while it almost stagnated (6%) in Europe during the same period. Military power remains important in most countries of the world – except in Europe. Moreover, the rise of the BRICS seems to announce the advent of a multipolar world organized around five or six continent-states, even though it is difficult today to assess their future level of cooperation or conflict, and even though confrontation would most certainly take place on third-country territories (thanks to nuclear deterrence).

As mentioned, the only declared threat against Europe today is terrorism, which, even though not a specifically military threat, can require the use of military means either for information or to destroy present or future centers (Afghanistan / Pakistan, Africa...). But there are also many risks that could, with more or less advance notice, turn into threats for Europeans: the

proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction, the militarization of space, cyber attacks, the consequences of global warming, international organized crime, plus the destabilization and disintegration of states with more or less dramatic strategic consequences. Facing these risks is obviously complex. It will require a variety of tools and responses. Military capabilities cannot be excluded: military power will retain a role, partial certainly, but in some cases irreplaceable.

The security of European states must be considered in a new world characterized by a very volatile and uncertain security environment, a world that remains dangerous and where the use of military force remains an option, although a strongly constrained one for leaders in democratic countries, where public opinion has a diminishing tolerance for military ventures, particularly in times of fiscal austerity.

In today's climate of tight budget constraints, it is even more difficult for national political leaders to determine (and impose) the quantity and quality of the armed forces needed to address potential threats – knowing that no individual country could face those threats alone. Common approaches have been taken in the EU in terms of maritime surveillance (FRONTEX), of the movement of people and goods (Schengen), of strategic airlift (EATC). But a comprehensive analysis of common defense needs is still lacking in Europe, even though it is indispensable to determine what needs to be done together at the European level, and what needs to be provided by individual member states.

The Challenges of European Defense

In the first half of the 20th century, war was the outcome of confrontations between rival nation-states seeking to expand their territory, their influence and their power. These wars started primarily in Europe, between European nations, before spreading to the world. The “goals of war” were the control of territory, resources, infrastructure and government coveted by rival countries. Today, these goals have evolved as a result of globalization, of the extension of democracy to a growing number of countries, and of European integration, among other factors.

Two main “families” of issues for European Defense can be defined. The first is best characterized by “European commons”, that is to say what the EU and European countries produce and represent in terms of wealth, resources of all kinds, space, prospects for their youth, technology, industry, etc. The second set of issues is the ability for Europeans to influence the global system as a way not only to prevent war on their soil, but also to promote their values, safeguard their interests (common and country-specific), and participate in world security according to their interests. As mentioned above: peace in Europe depends on peace in the world.

Responsibility for global order rests with the international community as a whole, especially the UN whose first duty is to look at “failed” states. Europe, if it wishes to see its values and interests integrated in an emerging “global governance”, must play a role, and the presence of two European countries in the UN Security Council permanent members is both a reason and a means to do so. European security policies must thus take into account the disorders “corrupting” world order and contribute to their resolution.

From what Europeans need to defend should stem an organization with the necessary means to fulfill those responsibilities: that should be the objective of European Defense.

The Need for European Defense

Apart from strategic areas of global concern such as the Middle East and Asia, Europeans must be prepared to take responsibility for their security, and therefore for any operation in their area of specific interests, especially in their neighborhood. They can only do so together. With regard to internal threats, they must also coordinate their efforts for reasons of proximity and efficiency.

Globally, the growing economic interdependence of states on one hand, and nuclear deterrence on the other, have greatly reduced the prospects of war between the most powerful states on their territories, but without undermining their rivalries nor the clash of their interests (see the divergent positions of Russia and China on the response to crises in Libya and Syria). Military operations and armed conflicts remain a possibility outside the territory of the great powers as demonstrated by the U.S. intervention in Iraq

and Afghanistan, the Russian intervention in Georgia, the French intervention in Ivory Coast, etc. Military power remains a key factor to prevent war on one's territory. But the required power level can no longer be met individually by any European country: only the European level can provide an answer.

Violence which cannot be expressed in inter-state wars now finds its outlet inside societies, particularly in weak, unstable or failed states, and fuels conflicts in many parts of the globe. It is in the interest of European countries to participate in the stabilization of such situations, and to facilitate access to democracy, especially in areas where their interests are more important. The variety of instruments for crisis management in the EU allows it to implement the comprehensive approach required for this type of situation. In addition, for reasons already mentioned, the Europeans must be able to act independently when the U.S. does not want to take the lead, or act at all.

Violence is also expressed inside European societies, as illustrated by the terrorist attacks in Spain and Britain, by social/ethnic urban riots in recent years in France or Britain, or by the recent attack of a local extremist in Norway. Such violent acts point to a new "continuum" between defense and security. Although the responsibility for maintaining law and order should remain a national prerogative, cooperation, coordination and a certain level of integration at the European level are needed to provide effective solutions at the lowest cost.

The EU is a union in which member states create common interests and develop common policies to protect their interests (common agricultural policy, common currency, Euro, Europol, Eurojust...). It is legitimate for them to do so in the field of Defense, through CSDP (Common Security and Defense Policy). But they do it today with a limited level of ambition, that has no common measure with the actual common interests that have been created by the union of European countries. Worse, they do it without any real strategy, and with deliberately limited capabilities under the pretext of the existence of NATO. This situation will not evolve favorably without the EU taking full responsibility for its defense, meaning the definition without restriction of a global project, with a coherent and full expression of common needs, and the aim of providing coordinated (or integrated) responses.

The capability gap of the armies of European countries will only be solved through the pooling and sharing of their efforts, and the economies of scale it will allow. But it is logical and legitimate for Europeans to make this pooling happen within Europe, rather than with the U.S.

CAN EUROPE HAVE A STRATEGY?

A Strategy for Europe

For European Defense to exist, it needs a strategy. A strategy of defense and security can only exist if the following requirements are fulfilled: identification of political objectives, identification of what is to be achieved (such as defined in the 2008 French Defense White Book for example, i.e. anticipation, prevention, protection, intervention and deterrence), and definition of the combination of necessary actions and capabilities to fulfill them. Most importantly, a strategy requires the definition of a level of ambition – probably the aspect most lacking today regarding European Defense.

The lack of clear objectives in relation with identified European interests has made it difficult for Europeans to agree on the desired effects of their own Common Security and Defense Policy. The definition by and agreement of all 27 European states on the desired effects of their CSDP is all the more difficult given the fact that the European strategy document of 2003 (updated in 2008) is very general and limits itself to identifying the main generic risks (proliferation, terrorism...) and to affirming the EU's ambition to contribute to global security. It does not specify geographic priorities or interests, nor does it set any priority in terms of missions.

By taking the five strategic functions detailed in the French White Paper of 2008, we can suggest the following. Anticipation could be enhanced by creating an EU integrated intelligence center, with proper means to complete information received from member states. Prevention would benefit from a

much closer cooperation between the Commission and member states to take full advantage of the variety of instruments available to the EU. It is a function in which the EU could have a real added value compared to its individual member states. Protection of people and critical infrastructure would benefit from being organized at the EU level (notably with regard to missile defense or the protection of communications), but this would require lifting the restrictions on EU competence in the field of defense. An intervention requires the EU to be able to carry the overall responsibility for an operation, including its military aspects. The level of ambition of its operations should stem from its strategic interests and serve as a reference for defense planning, and not the other way around. Deterrence is an important function to prevent war on EU territory. For now, only two countries, France and Britain, possess nuclear deterrence, but a debate should exist to study the conditions of a European deterrence.

Unlike NATO, which plans in advance its answers to key threats identified by its study of the global security environment (MC 161), the EU does not allow itself such an approach and plans only when circumstances demand it, hence its lack of reactivity in the initial phase of international crises. This planning gap only reinforces the undermining effects of the lack of a clearly defined strategy. The strategic deficit in EU policy is obviously the cause of EU hesitation, even silence, in many recent crisis situations that nevertheless affect its safety (see the recent Libyan crisis).

However, improvements could result from several possible measures to be implemented in the short term. First, an analysis of White Papers or strategic concepts of individual EU countries is necessary to identify what could be transposed into a common strategy at the EU level, and what should be coordinated between the national strategies. Second, EU external action, through CFSP, CSDP and mostly the EEAS (the new European External Action Service) should be coherent with a newly defined EU strategy. Finally, the emergence of a European identity (or patriotism), defined not negatively as has mostly been the case historically (“never again” after WWII, Soviet threat), but positively for the new world era, is probably a necessary condition to accompany the rise of a European Defense identity.

European Patriotism: Does it Make Sense?

Patriotism was born with nation-states and it has until recently fed the spirit of defense in every nation, fueling the collective identification of citizens to shared common values and justifying the necessity of defending those values by military means if necessary. Patriotism has often been the moral strength needed to endure the sacrifices of war. But would patriotism be useful to European Defense, and can it exist at all at the European level?

Of course, the EU lacks the attributes of a nation-state: its territory (one of the foundations of nation-states) remains unclear given the ongoing process of EU enlargement, and its final borders remain ill-defined. Moreover, European citizenship, granted to any person holding the nationality of an EU state, still appears as a sub-citizenship with limited rights compared to the rights conferred by national citizenship.

Above all, European identity has a cultural and political content, but much lower than national identities, whether in terms of culture, values, territory or historical heritage. It certainly cannot replace national identities. But there is a problem of overlap or coexistence between European and national identity. In any event, national leaders are mostly reluctant to promote a European identity.

That doesn't mean that EU patriotism is irrelevant, or impossible. Rather, consideration should be given to a patriotism at a different level (different from the emotional level of national identity). According to the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, it is essential to create a sense of belonging to Europe through the strengthening of democracy and solidarity at the European level. For him, if we fail to forge a European identity, the old continent will disappear from the world stage. The current Euro-economic crisis could help, or worsen, the case for a European identity and patriotism, depending on the answer that is finally chosen by EU leaders. The issue of transfer of sovereignty is also central to European Defense, and the issue of the Euro-crisis will count.

In summary, a patriotism for Europe should be based on the sense that Europeans share a common destiny in the 21st century, and that they can only face new challenges together. This patriotism should not be automatically associated with the idea of war, but should not exclude the possibility, and thus the capacity of war, either. Reference to the European common good should gradually be mentioned, including in support of national initiatives. Defense objectives and strategic goals should be linked to Europe and European interests, and communicated to European citizens. The integration of national forces within the EU must remain the way forward. European Defense needs patriotism – and the overall European project probably could use it, too.

Who Can Lead in Europe?

The Franco-German Couple

From the perspective of France and Germany, the development of military institutions in Europe after World War II offered a multinational framework for both countries to overcome the heritage of the two World Wars. These institutions became the place of Franco-German reconciliation. The respective positions of both countries, however, was quite different. The attention of France was focused on restoring its power and prestige, while Germany, ruined and occupied, was looking for rehabilitation and could only find it under American tutelage through NATO. It is important to keep this in mind as differing attitudes today still result from those radically different historical experiences.

The geostrategic upheavals caused by the collapse of the USSR substantially changed the international security environment, especially in Europe. In the past twenty years, these changes have led both countries to redefine risks and threats affecting their safety – but they answered again in very different ways.

Through its participation in military operations of the 1991 Gulf War, France became aware of deficiencies in its military, not well suited for this type of commitment. Paris decided to launch a professionalization of its armed forces. This decision, announced in 1996, provoked a strong reaction in Germany,

raising the problem of maintaining the draft there, a politically sensitive issue. The German army is an army designed for territorial defense. This explains the reluctance of the German government to get involved in military operations abroad, especially if there is no strong support by the German population. In contrast, France considers its army as an instrument of national power and international influence, and has much less reluctance to engage in military operations to defend its interests.

Almost twenty years after reunification, the German Republic is still looking for its place in the international arena. It has chosen another path to power projection, preferring economic tools. Its economic success has helped reunification, and allowed Germany to exercise increasing leadership within the EU. Its geographical position at the heart of Europe has helped to increase its political influence over the Eastern European countries – the “new Europe”. In contrast, France has long been involved in trying to build an autonomous European Defense, independent from the U.S.. German lack of appetite for defense investments leads to frustration in Paris, and a new height was reached recently with the German abstention on the vote of UN Resolution 1973 on Libya. Another area of disagreement is on the “pooling and sharing” initiatives, which France strongly supports, while Berlin has been more reluctant.

Once again, the Euro crisis could bring some change, especially by fostering better governance (political integration), which would have an impact on defense issues. And Germany could acknowledge that its economic interests do not exist in an abstract vacuum beyond any consideration of security. But for now the major initiative on defense issues has come from another, rather unexpected corner.

The 2010 Franco-British Agreement: New Breath or Fig Leaf?

Since the 1956 Suez Crisis, French and British approaches to the relationship between Europe and the U.S. have strongly differed: France concluded from Suez that it needed to take full responsibility for its defense to promote its national interest, while Britain by contrast decided it would be best served by siding unconditionally with American power. The French refusal (until 2009)

to fully reintegrate NATO, its lobbying for an independent European military capability, and its resistance to the war in Iraq (2002-2003) all reflected the desire to keep a distance with U.S. influence on defense and security issues, but also to maintain an autonomous and capable military, one with the capacities that other European countries today lack (except for Britain).

In that context, the recent agreement, signed in London on November 2, 2010, can come as a surprise. It is a defense treaty between France and UK that aims to strengthen the Franco-British cooperation on nuclear weapons (two shared facilities are provided to advance technological research on nuclear warheads); on the content of the armed forces (a joint expeditionary force will be set up); for interoperability of existing equipment and future capabilities (including aircraft carriers and the A400M transport aircraft); and in the field of military industry, and research and development (particularly on the development of surveillance and combat drones, of satellites, and of the next generation of sub-SSN)⁴.

This agreement is of course first and foremost the product of the current financial crisis, which calls for economic and geostrategic pooling of military capabilities of European states. Given French traditional ambitions to promote a European defense policy and British traditional opposition to such projects (preferring the NATO framework), one might wonder about the real scope and ambition of the Franco-British agreement: will it advance the establishment of a genuine capacity for autonomous European defense?

On the British side, the bilateral agreement of November 2 is not intended to deepen European military integration. David Cameron has done his best to emphasize the pragmatic rather than idealistic motivation of this cooperation, stating that it is all and only about British national interest: “It is about practical, hard-headed cooperation between sovereign countries⁵.” Yet this

⁴ GROS-VERHEYDE, Nicolas, « Les 13 points de l'accord franco-britannique sur la défense », *Bruxelles2.eu*, 2 novembre 2010 (<http://www.bruxelles2.eu/defense-ue/armees-europeennes/les-13-points-de-laccord-franco-britannique-sur-la-defense.html>). Gros-Verheyde notes that the agreement covers several texts: a cooperation treaty, a treaty on common nuclear facilities, a package of joint initiatives, and a letter of intent.

⁵ Her Majesty's Government, « UK-France Summit press conference », November 2, 2010: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/uk-france-summit-press-conference/>

does not mean the agreement will not benefit the development of an autonomous defense capability in the long term.

In fact, the agreement also reflects the fact that the U.K. is fully aware of the redefinition of American strategic interests away from Europe. The more the U.S. will turn away from the U.K., Europe and NATO, the more Britain will move closer to its European partners and be willing to collaborate in a European tool for a more effective defense. The continuation of American withdrawal from Europe should encourage Britain to push for the establishment of a genuine EU defense policy, independent and credible, and with effective capabilities.

In the same line of thought, Eastern European countries will be forced to acknowledge (and accept) America's withdrawal from Europe. That could in turn lead them to redefine their own "atlanticism", in a way more akin to evolving U.S. interests and means, and more favorable to European Defense.

REDEFINING EUROPEAN AMBITION AND RELATIONSHIP TO NATO

Back to Basics

Clarifying Means and Goals

Two main parameters will determine the realization of a European Defense: the level of ambition of the European project, and its relationship to NATO.

The proposed implementation of a “security policy and defense policy that could lead later to a common defense” first appeared in the Maastricht Treaty (1992). But the first instruments of European defense were created only by the 2000 Nice Treaty, after the 1998 bilateral Franco-British summit of St-Malo, where Paris and London agreed that if NATO would not provide for all security needs of Europeans, then the EU should act in its place.

It is therefore on a principle of “subsidiarity” with regard to NATO that the foundations of European Defense were first established. The European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), nested in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), saw from the beginning its missions limited to crisis management (so-called “Petersberg missions”) outside the territories of its member states. Collective defense was thus reserved to NATO, and the capabilities of the EU (provided by countries under the “Helsinki Headline Goal”) were voluntarily capped at 60 000 men and 400 aircraft. More importantly, EU Defense policy was not equipped with a permanent

operational command structure, under the pretext of not duplicating what existed in NATO.

Despite these limitations, European defense has already obtained encouraging results with 20 operations (civil, civil-military or military) launched between 2003 and 2008 on three continents. At the same time, the European Defense Agency was created in order to streamline the capability process of EU countries and to create an industrial and technological base for European Defense.

This initial growth of European Defense probably peaked in 2008 with the European involvement in Georgia and the decision to strengthen ambitions (number of operations) and capacities adopted by the European Council at the conclusion of the French Presidency of the EU (December 2008). Since that date however, very few new operations have been launched, and curiously, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty has not created any new impulse, nor new operation⁶. The establishment of new structures and in particular the European External Action Service (EEAS) to improve the synergy between the Council, the Commission and the Member States in the CFSP, has been particularly arduous. The new High Representative does not show any particular appetite for CSDP and military issues in general, but that is not the only explanation. It is the nation states who bare the responsibility.

A succession of events since 2008 have highlighted the remaining differences in vision between European capitals – regarding the policy towards Russia, the recognition of Kosovo, the EU involvement in Africa, disarmament, and most recently the “Arab Spring”. Moreover, the continued weakening of defense budgets in European countries, with the deepening of the economic crisis, provides little incentive to engage in outside military adventures. Finally the full return of France in the integrated command structure of NATO has been interpreted as a change of strategy, away from the goal of greater European autonomy. The recent crisis in Libya has clearly illustrated the failure of EU institutions to take responsibility for military operations, even in a context of limited risk.

⁶ Except for the military training mission in Somalia Uganda (EUTM) launched in 2009.

The Conditions for a Revival of European Defense

In spite of all their differences, Europeans are more united than they think. They are united by geography, by the economy and the common currency, by the democratic and cultural values they share, and by history – however full of past conflicts and hatred, it is their common history. The EU is where they develop, promote and defend their common interests today by political, economic and financial means. It would be only natural for a foreign policy, focused on the defense of European interests, to follow tomorrow. But if such a foreign policy is to exist, it needs a strategy and the military means to accompany it. EU member states should strengthen their solidarity and work to include their national interests in the definition of EU interests. CSDP can and will only become what members states want it to be. Most European states have long lost their capacity to defend themselves and guarantee their security on their own, but continue to cling to a national foreign policy. The convergence of national foreign policies must become a priority for Europeans.

Appearances notwithstanding, common European interests already exist in a variety of fields: economy, the environment, international justice, terrorism... Some are specific and differ markedly from American interests. Solidarity between European countries is still far from adequate as evidenced by the Greek issue, but the EU has always been able to move on and improve from crisis to crisis. Whether the rescue of the Euro will be another example remains to be seen. But it is certain that European Defense will really happen only if citizens realize that they actually do have common interests to defend. To at least give it a try, the common European interest should be systematically mentioned in national decisions on security and defense.

The strengthening of European capabilities, expected from pooling and sharing, can only happen with further integration. This evolution can hardly take place without some compromising on sovereignty. A harmonization of national rates of defense budgets, around 1.7% of GDP for example, must remain a major objective to make European solidarity tangible. As in other areas (the Euro), an adaptive framework with initiatives of “variable geometry” should not be excluded to achieve a strengthening of European

capabilities within an EU Defense framework, even though the broad policy guidelines should continue to involve all 27 members.

The restrictions on missions and responsibilities set at the birth of CSDP to avoid duplication with NATO are totally unjustified and counter-productive. They must be removed. Defense issues must be debated in the EU without restriction, including with regard to NATO. It is inconsistent to criticize the weakness and lack of capacity of Europeans on the one hand, and to prevent them from collectively strengthening the EU defense arm on the other. A healthy complementarity between NATO and the EU can only be based on respect of the autonomy of each organization. The two organizations, which differ in nature and format, need to be able to work together in the same theater. They can also share missions and theaters depending on circumstances, and on dominant interests and capabilities. The U.S. disengagement makes this both useful and realistic. To this end, the EU needs to have a permanent operational chain of command, allowing it to act independently or as part of a NATO chain of command.

Many European countries still rely totally on the American guarantee for their defense. The United States has a role to play to change this attitude, as the parameters of the Libyan interventions have shown. But the U.S. must also admit that a strengthening of the European pillar of the Alliance can only come from a greater integration of European capabilities and that it is more likely to happen within the EU framework.

The defense of Europe remains in the hands of its constituent nations, and most have for decades organized their national defense primarily within NATO, and only secondarily within the EU. Such a situation is challenged by the changing global security context. Allegiance to the U.S. made by Euro-NATO countries in exchange for security guarantees no longer seems to satisfy the American ally, whose security interests in Europe have been significantly reduced. Moreover, *war fatigue* following a decade of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the economic crisis will lead to a stronger reluctance on the part of the U.S. to engage in other theaters in the years to come. The declared American search for partners to share security objectives and global

responsibility should encourage Europeans to strengthen their capacity for autonomous action.

No Obstacle on the Russian Side

Russia would have welcomed the development of a European Defense replacing NATO and paving the way for an EU-Russia partnership on equal terms regarding the security of Europe. Slow progress has disappointed Russian expectations, but Moscow reaffirmed in its 2008 “foreign policy concept” that Russia-EU relationship remains a strong priority, whether with the institution itself or with its major member countries (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Finland, Greece, Netherlands, Norway).

Promoting the idea of the “indivisibility of European security,” Russia favors the emergence of a true European Defense, but is pragmatic enough to wait for Europeans to decide if and when they will make it happen. During her meeting with Medvedev in June of 2010, Angela Merkel suggested the creation of a “EU-Russia Committee” to facilitate the exchange of views on international affairs, promote joint recommendations on specific crisis or conflicts, and enable co-participation in civil-military operations. The project remains relevant today.

The Time is Right for Washington

Most important perhaps for European Defense is the historical evolution of American attitudes. Washington has evolved from concerned reluctance, characterized by Madeleine Albright’s “3 D” anxiety of a competition for NATO (in response to the 1998 St. Malo summit), to warm encouragement at the end of the George W. Bush administration, in the words of then U.S. Ambassador to NATO Victoria Nuland in 2008. This evolution was consistently confirmed by the Obama administration.

In the meantime however, the problem has evolved. The “theological” phase of American concern about the emergence of a rival European power is over. Today Washington is focused on European military capabilities, in order to achieve “burden sharing”, or better even, “burden shifting”.

Indeed, with the economic crisis and the current debt/deficit problem in the U.S., the priority for the U.S. is to delegate, or one should say more accurately, to return to Europe the full responsibility for its security, not only within EU territory, but also, as Libya showed, in Europe's "backyard". And this should be seen as a true opportunity, as Europe has shown in Libya its ambitions (Paris and London at least), but also its limitations (with the deafening silence of EU institutions and the "inevitable" reliance on the U.S. and NATO).

America under Barack Obama has acknowledged both the failures of the previous administration and the changing nature of global power relations. It now admits that it can not do everything alone, and that it needs able partners to meet new threats. Europe is potentially the most interesting; apart from the transatlantic relationship and the shared values and interests it represents, European defense spending combined puts Europe second to the U.S. in terms of global military spending in the world today.

In Libya in 2011, it seemed that finally "the hour of Europe had come". With the U.S. "leading from behind," Europeans got what they had called for prematurely, in 1991, but had been unable to achieve because they failed to deal with the Yugoslav wars of disintegration on their own. We have witnessed with the Libyan intervention exactly the delegation of an essential question of defense and security to Europe – or at least the American hope of a possible full delegation.

Gates' Brussels Speech

What will certainly dominate the transatlantic agenda, and define how the U.S. looks at the issue of European Defense, is best summed up by the speech Secretary of Defense Robert Gates gave in Brussels in early June, 2011. In what was viewed as his political testament before handing over the Pentagon to Leon Panetta, Gates made an urgent call for Europeans to take responsibility for their own defense, and break with their dependence on the U.S.⁷ In Gates' words, Libya confirmed what Afghanistan had already demonstrated: Europe's limitations in terms of military capabilities. The

⁷ "The Security and Defense Agenda (Future of NATO)", Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Brussels, Belgium, Friday, June 10, 2011.

outgoing Secretary also used his speech to protest against (and condemn) the traditional division of labor between the two sides of the Atlantic, with “soft” humanitarian / peacekeeping missions assigned to Europe, and “hard” combat missions reserved for NATO. It is worth noting that this division of labor, once considered with sympathy by American officials, has now become “unacceptable.”

Europe also has an economic crisis to deal with, but the U.S. will continue to rail against the decline in European military budgets and the fact that today only four of the 28 NATO allies (US , UK, France and Albania) have a military budget reaching the 2% of GDP mark. Obviously, the current environment in Washington will not favor future interventions, especially those branded as “humanitarian” (such as Libya was), and Gates insisted on the diminishing appetite in the U.S. Congress for costs associated with NATO, including the stationing of U.S. troops in Europe. He also mentioned U.S. security investments in Asia, and alluded to the fact that Washington could find more motivated and interesting allies there.

Competing Alliances?

In fact, the U.S. has started shifting its strategic emphasis on Asia. It has been a priority for Hillary Clinton ever since she took office and made her first trip as Secretary of State... to Asia. It was confirmed again in the fall of 2011 with Clinton’s article in *Foreign Policy* Magazine, detailing the issues at stake and America’s new Pacific priority. This view is now also held at the Pentagon, where Leon Panetta chose Asia as well for his first trip as Secretary of Defense, and has insisted that the U.S. will certainly not cut back its naval presence in the Pacific.

In the White House, the emphasis has been reinforced by the president’s national security advisor, Thomas Donilon, who has been arguing the need for the U.S. to rebalance its strategic emphasis from Iraq and Afghanistan toward Asia. The opening of a new U.S. Marine base in Australia seems to confirm the choice by Washington of a long-term expansion of American military presence in the Pacific – despite the pressure of budget cuts in Congress.

Regarding Europe, these elements add to the fact that American congressmen and political leaders in general are increasingly from a new political generation, a generation for which the Cold War is history and the alliance with Europe belongs to the past. For this new generation, the U.S. investment in NATO, and even the existence of the Atlantic Alliance, could well be regarded as unprofitable for America – and increasingly useless⁸. In any event, with the ongoing U.S. debt crisis Congress is less likely to be willing to finance 75% of NATO's budget⁹.

War Fatigue

The mood in Congress cannot be understood without a look at American public opinion. In its annual study on American public opinion on foreign policy (released in June 2011), the Pew Research Center confirmed the growing isolationist sentiment in the U.S. population, already highlighted in its 2009 study. Isolationism seems to be a preference for a growing share of Americans. What is remarkable is the evolution on the Republican side. In 2005, 27% of Republicans stated that the U.S. should limit its international commitments; 45% of them think so today, the same proportion as Democrats holding that view (Democrats have held isolationist sentiment since 2002). The result is that today 46% of Americans want a decrease in their country's military commitments abroad, a trend that has to do with *war fatigue*, the gravity of the economic situation at home (and the desire, in Obama's words, to focus on "nation-building at home"), and the idea that with the death of Osama bin Laden, the job (and justice) "has been done".

We are witnessing the end of the transatlantic relation as we know it. The notion is quite clear on the American side of the Atlantic, the question is whether Europe will acknowledge the new situation, and adapt to it. It is

⁸ "The Security and Defense Agenda (Future of NATO)", Gates: "Indeed, if current trends in the decline of European defense capabilities are not halted and reversed, future U.S. political leaders— those for whom the Cold War was *not* the formative experience that it was for me – may not consider the return on America's investment in NATO worth the cost."

⁹ "Hearing Of The Defense Subcommittee Of The Senate Appropriations Committee, Subject: Proposed FY 2012 Budget Estimates For The Defense Department", Chaired By: Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Witnesses: Defense Secretary Robert Gates; Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs Of Staff, June 15, 2011.

essential and increasingly urgent to lay the foundations for a renewed transatlantic partnership – or the U.S. will turn away from European security issues. Could that create the necessary shock and incentive for Europeans?

CONCLUSION

Redefining the Transatlantic Relationship

European Defense is going through a period of doubt, but there is no alternative for Europeans to retain control of their destiny in the 21st century security environment. However, it only makes sense if it allows Europeans to defend their specific and common interests. Intergovernmental cooperation will not be enough to offset the relative decline of European countries. Only an integration based on a strengthened European solidarity and on the development of a true European citizenship can lead to a build-up of European capabilities allowing the EU to protect its interests worldwide.

The integration of military capabilities will only take place in the wake of political integration. The Lisbon Treaty creates a process to harmonize the views of member states and the synergy of foreign policy instruments. Other measures will help as well, including devising a true strategy for Europe's CSDP, free of the restrictions imposed so far on the pretext of preserving NATO. As noted, in America, as in Russia, leaders would more than welcome for Europeans to assume their defense responsibilities. It all depends now on the willingness of European states, especially the most powerful, to initiate a process that will necessarily include some sovereignty transfers to the EU. European procrastination should end: the time for clarification has come. European defense will not necessarily involve all 27 member states, but it should not disappear – or consequences could be dire for European global interests.

France has a unique and central role to play, as it is the only country belonging to the two quintessential European couples, the military couple with Britain, and the economic couple with Germany. Added to France's full reintegration

of NATO, these elements should give France a key role in the revitalization of European defense.

The time is right for Washington. The Libyan intervention has improved French standing at the Pentagon, where French leadership was noted and appreciated. More broadly, with the U.S. refocusing on core vital interests and rebalancing its global strategic outlook and priorities, now should be the time to do two things at once: strengthen the European pillar of NATO (something Washington wants to put “burden shifting” in action) by strengthening European military capabilities, including by the establishment of a permanent EU operational chain of command in Brussels. Only then would European Defense abandon its “subsidiary mentality” vis-à-vis NATO, which has so far hindered its development, at least for a majority of countries.

The difficulty will be to calm Americans concerns about a “European caucus” in NATO, something that has always been feared in Washington because it would exclude the U.S. and Turkey. The key will be to convince the U.S. that it is the only way to make European defense possible and credible, and that an efficient and autonomous European defense will actually be beneficial to U.S. interests and can contribute to the overall security of America. Once again, the time is right. The American public has grown tired of military operations, and that is probably the best explanation for the episode of America “leading from behind”, which was much criticized by the American foreign policy establishment, but not by the American people. Add to that a recent Presidential Security Directive (PSD-10) on the prevention of mass atrocities, which President Obama described as “a core national security interest and a core moral responsibility of the United States¹⁰”: Libya was a textbook case, and European partners showed their usefulness – and limitations.

In any event, Europeans should not forget that neither Libya nor Europe are at the heart of U.S. foreign policy concerns today. If France wants to influence the future of European Defense and the future of NATO, it will have to follow closely the current strategic debate taking place in Washington today.

¹⁰ “Presidential Study Directive on Mass Atrocities”, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, August 4, 2011: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/04/presidential-study-directive-mass-atrocities>

This debate, constrained by the debt issue, will affect America's choices for the years ahead, and especially its relations with its allies. It is therefore essential to understand what kind of strategic significance Europe will retain for the U.S. in the years to come. A more equitable distribution of NATO's financial burden will be a factor; the American capacity for force projection will be another; Europe will remain interesting if only for geographic reasons and its proximity to the Middle East and Africa.

Finally, the constraint of American public opinion remains crucial. In this regard, the repeated hints from Washington that it can find "better allies" elsewhere should not hide the fact that the community of values between the two sides of the Atlantic has been the indispensable cement of the Atlantic Alliance since the end of World War II. Americans might forget about it, and enjoy Europe-bashing, but without such closeness felt with the peoples of Europe, the American people would never have accepted for over a half century the constraint of NATO's Article 5, which has made the Atlantic Alliance the strongest and most constraining alliance in American history. In the context of an increasingly multipolar, one might say "multicultural" world, it is a dimension that cannot be discarded – on either side of the Atlantic.