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**A call for a European Security and Defence Union in tumultuous
times – preparing the Union for the future**

Position Paper by
Minna Alander & David Ohlig
(Free University Berlin, Germany)



Minna Ålander
minna.alander@hotmail.com

David Ohlig
david.ohlig@gmx.de

Position Paper Germany: European Security and Defence

The world experiences currently an illiberal moment, characterized by the rise of nationalist populism in Europe and the United States, fundamental Islamism in the Arab world and deep polarization of societies in the West as well as in the East. As was stated in the annual Munich Security Report from February 2017, “[t]he past twelve months have been a resounding rejection of the status quo [...] the main dividing line in politics runs less and less between left and right but between a liberal cosmopolitan pole and a populist (or even xenophobic authoritarian) one.”¹ For the security dimension such developments have serious implications:

“If politicians, for instance, lie about crowd sizes, say demonstrably wrong things about previously held positions and suggest that falsehoods are merely ‘alternative facts’, can citizens and allies trust them on national security issues?”²

Accordingly, the European Union (EU) is facing a series of challenges. The Munich Security Report identifies as such the Brexit, the populist surge, the refugee crisis, a potential return of the euro crisis, jihadist attacks, a revisionist Russia, and the uncertainty about the transatlantic security partnership and the United States’ commitment to European security.³ Indeed, newly elected President Donald Trump has indicated very mixed messages about his intentions regarding Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). On one occasion, he described the EU as “a project intended to counter US influence”⁴ and NATO as obsolete. In another statement, however, he described NATO as “very important”⁵. The consequence has

¹ Munich Security Report 2017: Post-Truth, Post-West, Post-Order? February 2017, p. 6

² Ibid.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, p. 14.

been a deep confusion among the European allies, making efforts to update and upgrade the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU more urgent than ever.

In this context of new, unprecedented and unpredictable challenges, Germany has assumed the role of a Framework Nation in the Framework Nations Concept (FNC), intended “to improve the European capability landscape and to further strengthen the European pillar of the transatlantic partnership”⁶. The goal is to address the critique from Europe’s transatlantic allies, notably the United States, that the European members of NATO are contributing too little to NATO’s military capabilities and do not meet the required military budget spending of 2% of the GDP. Although this critique is nothing new, President Trump has embraced it in a manner that has triggered increased uncertainty among the European partners. Resembling the worries raised by Trump’s statements, Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker stated in September 2016 that “Europe can no longer afford to piggyback on the military might of others”⁷.

From the German perspective, the European attempts to make the necessary structures more efficient and to eliminate existing capability deficits must be strengthened, since national options become increasingly limited due to the globalisation of threats such as the international terrorism all of us bitterly had to experience recently. The possibility of progress towards more cooperation for those who see the need for it is provided in the Articles 42(6) and 46 TEU of the Treaty of Lisbon.⁸ The goal of deepening current integration into a European Security and Defence Union (ESDU), as pursued by Germany, does not conflict with the EU member states’

NATO commitments. On the contrary, optimizing defence spending of the European NATO members will strengthen NATO’s European pillar and reaffirm Europe’s willingness to permanently and reliably assume its share of responsibility. As stated in the White Book of the

⁶ White Book on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr 2016, p. 68.

⁷ Munich Security Report, February 2017, p. 16.

⁸ See White Book on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr 2016, p. 73.

German Bundeswehr 2016, “Europe must use its limited resources in a more targeted and efficient manner”⁹, and capability gaps must be closed through multinational solutions and European Defence Agency projects. Since the European defence industry is still highly fragmented along national lines, disadvantages in international competition, an unsatisfactory cost structure in the programmes and a greater burden on national defence budgets weaken the European capabilities. Therefore, restructuring and consolidation is necessary, and consequently Germany is calling for a “Europeanisation” of the defence industries. As a means to achieve these goals, Germany proposes the following steps¹⁰:

- promoting the joint build-up of capabilities through the bilateral and multilateral interconnection of armed forces, a rigorous lead nation approach, as well as the pooling and sharing of capabilities
- increasing the involvement of the European Defence Agency in planning new capabilities
- strengthening the EU’s responsiveness by means of a permanent civil-military planning and command and control capability
- generating synergies with NATO through the harmonisation of force planning processes and intensified joint exercise activities, and intensify cooperation particularly in countering cyber and hybrid threats and in the area of strategic communication

Furthermore, Germany is committed to pursue different levels of armed forces integration on a European level. Such integration of European armed forces has taken place within the EU and NATO framework, including integration on a high level of mutual interdependence in the form of joint units, such as the French-German Brigade, NATO’s standing maritime task forces,

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 75.

permanent mutual exchanges of troops for example between Germany and the Netherlands as well as between Germany and Poland. Also, multinational command structures have been included, such as permanent NATO and EU headquarters; the European Corps; the German-Netherlands Corps in Münster; the German- Polish-Danish Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin; and the Multinational Joint Headquarters in Ulm. Interconnection of armed forces has also been pursued on a lower level of mutual interdependence: contributions to the NATO Response Force with its Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF), to EU Battlegroups (the EU's rapid response force), and contributions of personnel to NATO's collective capabilities such as Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), Alliance Ground Surveillance (AGS) from 2017, and NATO's integrated command structure. Additionally, capability pools exist, for example the European Air Transport Command (EATC) and the maritime surveillance force.¹¹

The afore-mentioned structures provide a basis for deeper integration into ESDU, including the prospect of establishing common EU armed forces. Burden-sharing in the military sector would result in a win-win-situation for all the participating member countries, providing a more efficient solution to the military spending problem caused by the NATO requirements. With common armed forces, the European NATO members could finally meet their partners' expectations and the often-mentioned European pillar of the transatlantic security partnership would be strengthened adequately. Furthermore, the idea of common armed forces resembles the foundation idea of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) after World War II, which aimed at making war impossible between the community's members through common regulation of the "ingredients of war". Since coal and steel have lost their key role as raw materials of war, it is only natural to update the idea according to the modern standards of

¹¹ See *ibid*, p. 77.

warfare and coordinating defence industries more closely. In times of ever more ubiquitous uncertainty, the EU must show strength and prove that its role as a peace project is still up to date. Making armed forces an EU authority would be a strong sign to the world that the EU is still capable of securing peace within the Union as well as outside of its borders, and that its member states are willing to contribute to the common peace project. The persisting wars at the EU's eastern and southern borders, not to mention the recurrent terrorist attacks in major European cities, make efficient security and defence capabilities essential. Therefore, it is necessary to optimize the defence sector, which is at its current state not corresponding to the transnational nature of modern threats. By pooling national militaries into more efficient and functional common armed forces the European countries could show solidarity that has been missing since the outbreak of the euro crisis and prove that the EU members have understood the value of cooperation in sustaining peace. Hence Germany has frequently taken initiatives to promote the establishment of the ESDU, and pursuing this goal will be Germany's priority also in the future. In doing so, Germany is willing to assume a leading role in the efforts according to its global responsibility and commitment to European integration.

There have been several attempts in the history of the EU to make the security and defence policy more supranational. To date, member states remain sovereign in their defence policy. However, we believe this time we have a realistic chance to move on:

Let us recall why 2017 presents a unique historical momentum to increase European integration in the field of Common Security and Defence Policy:

- 1) While in many fields such as economic policy or migration policies the EU faces a deadlock over opposing positions by member states, the advantages of transforming the Common Security and Defence Policy into the European Security and Defence Union (ESDU) are in times of international terrorism clear to all member states. We have the

common responsibility to protect our European citizens from threats such as terrorism or cyber criminality and to guarantee the security of our territory. We can't differentiate anymore between internal and external security, both are increasingly intertwined. In other words, as Federica Mogherini put it, "peace within the EU depends on peace beyond our border".¹²

- 2) The increase of security threats and a more contested world order implicate a strong responsibility for Europe. The EU needs to get ready for the challenges of tomorrow. If we speak with one voice, we will be heard elsewhere. However, none of the member states, not even the biggest ones, will be heard in other parts of the world if we stop integrating our policies.
- 3) Insecurity about the reliability of the transatlantic partnership and ongoing tensions with NATO partners such as Turkey must logically lead to a strengthening of European Defence Policy in addition to NATO, while not replacing it.
- 4) Great Britain has decided to step out of the Union. While we all deeply regret this decision, GB has been one of the major opposing forces against a more common security policy. Crisis can also be the source for the creation of something new. From our point of view, member states should make use of this situation and further integrate their defence policies.
- 5) The main vision of the EU's founding fathers was shaped by the idea of "never again war in Europe". In line with this we should fully integrate our defence policies not only in an intergovernmental, but also supranational framework called European Security

¹² European Union (2016): Shared Vision, Common Action: A stronger Europe. A global strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy

and Defence Union (ESDU) and underline the EU's ambitious foreign policy goals through credibility.

Currently, the EU already is implementing six military operations/missions and nine civilian missions with over more than 5000 staff deployed. Whether in Kosovo, the Central African Republic, Ukraine, Mali or Libya, the EU is engaged in many different regions and settings. The goals of these missions are multifaceted: Securing the EU territory, building up resilience in EU neighbouring countries, humanitarian missions and peacebuilding missions. Yet, these missions too often remain based on voluntary contributions of member states and lack systematic coordination on EU level. The Lisbon Treaty already had designated more forms of cooperation in the field of defence and security than the EU is currently implementing. For instance, the treaty entails the possibility for a permanent structure to develop common equipment or to engage in combat operations. However, these “permanent structured cooperation” was never established and hence we should make use of the full Lisbon Treaty's potential.

Finally, we'd like to present our concrete proposals for the future arrangement of the Common Defence and Security Policy and the transformation in the Security and Defence Union:

- 1) A common European military force is to be created with some personnel of a permanent standing army of at least 10000 deployable soldiers under the democratic control of the European Parliament. The European Parliament should be in sole charge mandating the European Army for a certain mission, while the Commission can make proposals on missions/operations. The staff of the common European military force is recruited through a fair distribution among member states, based on military capabilities and economic strength. Yet, the European Army is not supposed to replace the national capabilities, it is rather complementary.

- 2) A common European military headquarter is to be set up which is in operational charge of all ongoing military and civilian mission, as well as counter-terrorism measures within Europe. The recently created “Military Planning and Conduct Capability Office” goes into the right direction, but can only be a first step.
- 3) The creation of a common European Security Academy, which will be in charge to train future EU military staff and develop common standards.

The idea of a common European army, controlled and held accountable by the European parliament would also strengthen the rights and duties of the EP and assure, that the newly created army is not prematurely misused. However, for short-term emergencies, such as counter-terrorism measures there should be made exceptions to be able to react, if necessary.

Besides the mentioned efficiency gains we must also be aware of the risks. Coming from Germany, we know very well how sensitive the field of defence policy is and how critical many citizens think about this topic. We also need to specify the future tasks of NATO and the European Security and Defence Union and make sure we are not building up unnecessary duplications of existing infrastructures and institutional overlaps. Yet, we think it is inevitable the EU and its member states get ready for the current and future security threats we face. Therefore, Germany has launched together with France a new initiative to boost action in the upcoming months. Finally, if not all member states can unanimously agree to engage with the same pace, the willing states should proceed nonetheless and elaborate their concretisations for the CSDP in the upcoming months.

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