



Contribution to the Second Sitting of the Convention of European Students in Rome

Group: DEFENCE

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INTRODUCTION

At the very beginning we would like to stress that one of the crucial factors in the political integration of the European Union is its ability to act as a unitary player at both, “domestic politics” and the international relations.

This entails the European Union having credible, available and effective defense policy. Voluntary action of the member states is no more sufficient to achieve this objective. Recent changes in the international political scene and the threat of the attack of the non-state entities not only modifies the role of international organizations such as UN, OSCE, and NATO, but also make this purpose mandatory.

The Union should exploit its comparative advantages, i.e. the integration of economic and military resources, the link between military and political objectives and the global legitimacy of the Union. Furthermore, the Union has a relative advantage over NATO in its ability to combine different resources, both military and non-military.

INSTITUTIONS

Many members and alternate members are of the opinion that ESPD and CFSP could not be dissociated because ESPD is an integral aspect of CFSP. In fact, ESPD should reinforce the Union’s CFSP.

We suggest that the domain of defense leave the intergovernmental policy in order to make part of the community policies.

Therefore we think that the High Representative should be an independent figure from the Council, and to be a part of the Commission. The role of the Commissioner for Defense and Security could be reinforced because he is the link between the political and the military structure of the EU. He could facilitate the political decision and speed up the processes because he could react to emergency situations and ensure the translation of political decision.

This Commissioner for Defense and Security will be granted the power to take initiatives regarding crises management, and the coordination of military actions and resolutions proposals.

In order to implement the tasks, he will be assisted by a special Agency and the whole organizational structure of the Commission

We also suggest to develop the role of the Political and Safety Committee as the center of strategic and logistics direction for military action.

At the same time, a kind of European diplomacy able to manage diplomatic relations and negotiations, acting with a single voice for the EU and coordinated by the Commissioner, will have to be developed.

Political impulse in the domain of the CSDP should remain at the European Council, as well as the legislative power. The desirable procedure will be co-operation.

Particularly, all actions involving military interventions and budgetary expenses would be only applied after the approval by the Parliament, except urgent actions activated by the Commissioner, in accordance with the Council and the Committee.

As for the decision-making process and the resolutions approval procedure, we suggest changing the unanimity system for the qualified majority system in the Council.

Special programs or plans of urgent action will be pursued by a restricted group of States using the reinforced cooperation procedure, with the possible constructive abstention of other States that, by choice or constitution have decided not to take part in any military action.

THE RELATIONS WITH THE OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

Given that the European defense will never be built against NATO, we think that the strengthening of the Alliance is not compatible with the development of the European identity in the field of defense and security.

In fact it would push toward the promotion of the "western" interest rather than the affirmation of an European autonomy and the building of a shared world view with other international actors (i.e. Russia, China, Mediterranean countries).

Consequently, the Union could enhance the capabilities of other International organizations, where partnerships already exist (like the Cotonou one and its reciprocal commitments). Thus, it could easily create a consensus on its own interests.

Particularly, thanks to the adoption of a juridical personality, the Union could either implement a global reform of the United Nation's role in the security and peace enforcing at a global level, or (re) activate the 43rd article of the Charter, making its Rapid Intervention Force available to the Security Council.

Therefore, Europe could give to the International Community a strong signal of belief in multilateralism and strengthen its role as a global actor.

NEUTRAL STATES

Considering the implementation of CFDP, we have to take in account the fact that in Europe there are many neutral countries, which fear the idea of Europe transformed into a military structure.

We think it could be possible to overcome this reticence by promoting an enhanced cooperation to develop common defense.

We also think that the clear choice of a multilateral vision based on the process of reinforcing the UN could beat those fears, excluding the possibility of an European interventionism.

MUTUAL ASSISTANCE CLAUSE

Many members of the Convention stressed the importance for whole Europe to be protected by a "mutual assistance clause".

This provision will be shaped on the art.5 of NATO treaty and will guarantee mutual protection from an external attack.

Those representatives underlined that Western European Union and NATO were both designed as organizations responsible for the collective defense of their members.

From this perspective, the security of the EU member States could be guaranteed at the European level through a mutual defense clause, which will complement and not duplicate NATO's role.

However, many other members of the Convention, whom we mostly agree with, stressed the fact that this mechanism will entail the creation of an operational infrastructure on the supranational level.

To build such an infrastructure would mean to rise the overall ESDP spending (with all the related problems) and would overtly duplicate NATO structures.

The inclusion of a mutual defense clause seems at this stage premature and unjustified in the current security context.

MILITARY CAPABILITIES

Enhancing military capabilities for crisis management lies at the heart of the ESDP project and was in fact the primary consideration that inspired its creation in 1999.

Insufficient defense spending is the biggest obstacle to the creation of the European force that should be active by 2003.

In particular, combat support capabilities will have to be greatly enhanced if a credible force is to be fielded for peacekeeping operations, either in Europe or beyond.

The requirements of tight budgetary discipline in the EU member States, as well as in the candidate countries, cause that any significant improvement in military capabilities can only be achieved by way of closer cooperation among the countries and specialization, taking into account parallel commitments of some countries within NATO.

But many different points of view are at stake.

We can be sure that, if a budgetary effort is not provided by EU Member States (nowadays spending less than 2% of their GDP for defense purposes) a credible cooperation and military EU commitment in this field is far to come.

MILITARY INDUSTRY

A stronger military industry should enable the European Union to work with the United States and to master the necessary technologies. We assume that it cannot be guided by national sectoral interests but must be based on management logic.

This should promote the development of an internal market in defense goods and services through joint research and industrial projects. It would set up a European Arms Agency.