

## High expectations, modest results

### ***Security and Defence matters at the European Council 25 – 26 June and beyond***

*At the European summit in December 2013 Heads of State and Government discussed “Defence matters” for the first time since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. They agreed on trying to restart the Common Security and Defence policy (CSDP) and to return to the matter in June 2015. Thus, although expectations were high, the outcome of last week’s European Council proved to be disappointing. A way forward may be to set up permanent structured cooperation (PESCO), a hitherto unused provision of the Lisbon Treaty.*

The European Council (EuCo) held on 25-26 June 2015, invited the High Representative of the Union/Vice-President of the Commission to submit a draft EU global strategy on foreign and security policy by June 2016. It should then replace the out-dated European Security Strategy from 2003. More vaguely, Heads of State and Government put forward the idea of creating a future defence research and technology programme at the horizon of 2020. And that was more or less it. The rest of the text in the official Conclusions is mainly phraseology.

The reason for this inconclusive outcome can partly be explained by an already charged summit agenda, where migration and Greek debt drowned out the rest. The lack of ambition and of arriving at a result on “Defence matters”, however, may also reflect a more general mood of Europe *fatigue*. This is all the more regrettable as the European population has for more than 20 years now been in favour of a common security and defence policy. The latest *Eurobarometer* on this issue in autumn 2014 showed it is supported by 76% of EU citizens. Political support has also been on the rise recently. In March, President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker called for the creation of a European Army; and the European Parliament voted for several supportive resolutions in May.

The intellectual groundwork for a better integrated and more effective CSDP has been laid by numerous academic works and think tank reports. Of the latter, two were particularly important and clear minded: The report “*More Union in European Defence*” by a task force of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the strategic Note of the European Political Strategy Centre published under the title “*In Defence of Europe*”.

### **“More Union in European Defence”**

In February a task force headed by former EU High Representative Javier Solana and former NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer published their report “*More*

*Union in European Defence*<sup>1</sup>. It argues that an arc of instability surrounding the EU, diminished defence budgets and a shift of the world's economic centre of gravity to Asia would require “*bold steps in European defence integration*” with the goal of creating a European Defence Union (EDU). In order to complement NATO in the case of an attack on EU territory and to execute the so-called ‘Petersberg tasks’, including peace enforcement and post-conflict stabilization, in its strategic neighbourhood, the EU should target “*capacity in deterring and countering conventional and hybrid warfare...[and] political and military autonomy to conduct intervention operations in order to respond to or deter crisis.*”

Instead of waiting for 28 member states advancing together the report recommends making use of Article 46 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU). This article allows a group of member states to ask for the creation of a permanent structured cooperation (PESCO). A decision on setting up PESCO will be taken by qualified majority in the Council. Other recommendations of the report include a biennial thematic session on CSDP in the European Council, an upgrading of the EP subcommittee for Security and Defence, the creation of permanent EU military headquarters in Brussels and the introduction of a ‘European semester’ for defence planning and expenditure of member states in order to increase mutual transparency.

### **“In Defence of Europe”**

The EPSC Strategic note “*In Defence of Europe*”<sup>2</sup> was conceived in cooperation with Michel Barnier, the special adviser on CSDP to President Jean-Claude Juncker, and published on 15 June. The report makes a special case in respect of waste and shortfalls in European defence budgets. Thus, the combined military spending of EU countries over the past ten years has decreased by 9% to 210 bn € whilst China’s military budget has grown by 167% over the same period to reach its current level of 163bn €. Because of its lack of integration in defence, EU-28 uses 154 different types of weapons, where the US uses 9 types.

In order to operate a change of paradigm “*in line with exponential increase in global threats and the volatility of our neighbourhood*”, the Note also recommends making full use of the Lisbon Treaty’s potential with the possibility of using PESCO under Article 46 TEU. It should be stressed that PESCO is created on a strictly voluntary basis and that other member states can join the initial group at any time. Another priority to be worked out by the end of 2015 is “*a joint framework to counter hybrid threats*” which combines the use of regular and special forces and information campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup>The full text is available under: <http://www.ceps.eu/publications/more-union-european-defence>

<sup>2</sup>The full report is available under: [http://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/epsc/publications_en.htm)

## Conclusion

Despite the convincing arguments of the above mentioned high level reports and the political support of leading EU figures, the June European Council failed in providing Europe with the collective leadership needed to strengthen CSDP. The proposal for creating a European Defence Union and to focus especially on setting up PESCO under Article 46 TEU deserves the support of Justice and Peace Europe. Recalling the outbreak of the First World War, Pope Francis in a message sent in 2014 to an International Peace Meeting in Antwerp emphasised that "*War is never a necessity, nor is it inevitable. Another way can always be found: the way of dialogue, encounter and the sincere search for truth.*" However, Pope Francis also made it clear when he returned last August from his pastoral visit to Korea that in the face of contemporary terrorist threats « *it is licit to stop the unjust aggressor.* » The European Union needs to be better prepared in dealing with an unjust aggressor.

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