

ARMED EUROPE

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This Tribune has been published in *The Eyes* (November 2013), who invited Nicole Gnesotto to analyse the evolution of Europe's defense: What assessment over the past years? What is its role in relation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the revision of the United States' strategic doctrine? And what ambitions in the medium term?

Just for a change, at its meeting in December 2013, the European Council - which brings together the heads of state of the EU Member States - will be debating the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). True, the subject is not entirely unrelated to debates traditionally devoted to coping with the economic crisis, given the importance of the defence industry in Europe - an importance borne out by the media coverage of the failed EADS/BAE Systems merger.

The interest of this meeting, though, is much more than just economic: its aim is to take stock of Europe's defence 10 years after the EU's first crisis management operations in Macedonia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Bosnia. These were missions intended to "pacify" other states, mostly in the vicinity; not to defend its own territory, this now being mainly a NATO responsibility.

1. A mixed assessment

Europe's defence record is a mixed one. On the one hand Europeans have successfully built ex nihilo a substantial capacity for civil and military intervention in regional crises, backed up by the financial means required for post-crisis reconstruction of the countries concerned. So far this has meant 28 civil and/or military crisis management operations in the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, involving some 10,000 soldiers and 5,000 police, all from Europe and exclusively under EU mandate and control. The Atlanta operation against pirates off the Somali coast was one of the CSDP's most accomplished. In relation to the United Nations and the Atlantic Alliance, the EU's added value in this type of operation lies in a mix of military and civilian resources - notably in terms of police numbers and considerable financial backup - which can be mobilized immediately for crisis management and subsequent reconstruction. The EU is

currently the number one donor of humanitarian aid (50% of the world figure) and the leader in public aid for development (60% of world PAD). It is this "global approach" that makes the EU a major player on today's security scene, and one well adapted to the politico-military complexity of present crises.

On the other hand it has to be recognized that the EU is absent from many crisis areas (Israel-Palestine, for instance), and only intervenes belatedly (Libya, Mali) when it is not quite simply divided on how crises should be handled (Libya, Iraq). With regard to the use of force, the need for external military interventions and the capacity for autonomous action in relation to NATO, the European countries are split by differences of culture and historical heritage. In addition, there is the habit, developed during the Cold War decades and beyond, of waiting for the United States and NATO to take care of security issues and relieve Europe of the cost, worry and risk inherent in all external action. In other words, despite the creation of the CSDP in the early 2000s, Europe cannot be counted on for the necessary political will in defence terms. Since 2008 the economic crisis has been an additional damper, severely reducing available public finance and focusing leaders' attention on internal priorities at the expense of exporting security outside the EU.

2. America calls for « more Europe »

Nonetheless, new dynamics do exist which might lead Europeans to shoulder more responsibility in the security and defence fields. For the most important of these we must look to America. Under Barack Obama, the United States is undertaking a significant revision of its strategic doctrine and posture, with increased emphasis on the Asian theatre, special forces, and drones and other non-human techniques, and professing a degree of selectivity in its military commitments:

in plain English, America no longer wants to do everything everywhere when it comes to crisis management. When a crisis does not directly affect American strategic interests or threaten world balance, the United States reserves the right to a non-intervention option. Like it or not, then, Europeans are going to find themselves de facto in the front line when it comes to pacification of crises in nearby regions. In contrast with the 1990s, when America was denying Europe autonomy and the duplication of NATO, it is now calling for "more Europe" from its allies. Washington's task is now to provide "leadership from behind", that is to say the logistical backup for such European operations as the Franco-British intervention in Libya in 2011 and France's move into Mali in 2013.

3. Less money means more cooperation

The economic crisis is a second factor conducive to European cooperation in the defence field: given the current financial shrinkage, Member States have adopted the principle of increased sharing and mutualization of certain scarce and costly military capabilities: the aim is to consolidate the industrial base of European defence by identifying priorities that are both urgent in military terms (in-flight refuelling aircraft, for example) and vital to maintaining the European industry's technological excellence in the future. In addition, the ongoing instability of the EU's periphery both to the east and the south demands greater strategic vigilance and more rapid reactivity than under the old status quo, notably with respect to the Arab world and all the more so in that the American helping hand can no longer be counted on. In other words, the new strategic formulation for Europe could be written as follows: less America, more crises and less money = more European defence capacity.

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