

Our Defence And Peace

Part two: Our defence system in Europe

Louis Gautier

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“The treaty on the European Union made provisions for a foreign policy and shared security. This is a big ambition, an objective which could seem unachievable to some, in any case, long and exacting, needing lots of effort and perseverance. It won’t be easy to harmonise political interests which are built on centuries of military combat, influence, enmity and sometimes even hatred between our people. And yet it must be done”.

François Mitterand, speech given at Strasbourg, 17th January 1995.

Introduction

The 2007 Presidential elections will be a great opportunity for the left to clarify their position on the subject of defence. Under the 5th Republic, the defence policy is at the heart of the Head of State’s responsibilities. Besides, all candidates are inevitably judged on their capacity to take on these responsibilities.

The next five year term isn't getting off to a good start. French authority in Europe and the world is continuing to crumble away. European defence has broken down, politically and military speaking. Our forces are engaged in a number of external conflicts with no prospects of resolving these crises. Our model army and its structural facilities are in virtual bankruptcy. At the close of large-scale organisational reform (professionalisation and a 50% reduction in the number of personnel, withdrawal of the territorial military sites, limited stock of equipment), the French armies are today confronted with a crisis in their model army which can be coupled with a financial crisis. In order to reduce this double crisis, missions and means need to be more appropriate, organisation and the "operational contract" of our forces need to be adapted, and European defence needs to be relaunched. Under these conditions, and so as to see through this necessary recovery, we must regain the diplomatic and financial room to manoeuvre, which implies lifting delicate options and adopting rigorous measures. In all these cases, the military choices will be politically difficult.

I. A project for our defence.

1 Reorientating our positioning.

Following the 1991 Gulf war, France's military position changed radically. We changed from being an army keeping watch on the East, to an army on the offensive, manoeuvring under coalition. The French armies, from Afghanistan to the Ivory coast, are engaged in numerous operations. Today, this priority of external action needs to be reconsidered in the light of changing threats and how we see these dangers after 11th September and the conflicts that have followed.

After the 11th September terrorist attacks, from London to Madrid, it seems that prevention and protection have been wrongly relegated to a position of secondary importance, leaving projection missions in first place. Our model army, the light of these missions, is derived from its definition in the White Book, written in 1994, more than twelve years ago! We should devise a new doctrinal framework for our defence policy in the hope of creating a European White Book.

French doctrine is based on four notions: projection, dissuasion, protection and prevention. Re-examining our doctrine means, first of all, giving defensive strategic functions (dissuasion and protection) more power when working on strategy and being more coherent when programming means. Following this, political and military fundamentals of offensive strategic functions then need to be re-examined (intervention and prevention).

Regarding these four ideas, an analysis needs to be carried out on the protection and security imperatives of an expanding European space. Due to external intervention having the priority in France's and other Union partners' defence policies, all thought on future European strategic dimensioning has been almost practically ousted. Also, concerns relative to the protection of the territory and the security of European populations have been marginalized. These problems have been insufficiently considered at a national level, and they have been neglected at a European level.

Concerning intervention, it is essential to reaffirm an approach focusing on the legality of resolutions made by the Security Council and on the legitimacy of decisions taken by the Union Council. It is important under all circumstances, to remember that the use of force, whatever the nature of the crisis and if legitimate defence or a humanitarian emergency are not at stake, should not be contemplated

if there isn't prior collective agreement or political prospects of an end to crisis.

Nuclear arms are, henceforth, less significant and less central in the struggle for power. They are ineffective as a means of bargaining in the management of current crises. They are essentially arms of sovereignty, very difficult to "Europeanise". It would, however, be very dangerous to abandon dissuasion: atomic arms aren't out of the game; we can't "uninvent" the bomb. Whatever anybody says, dissuasion is still an essential asset for the security of our country and that of Europe. Finally, reducing our vigilance would be hard to justify when the threat of proliferation is still high.

Due to these risks caused by nuclear and ballistic proliferation in the world and on the perimeters of an expanding Europe, good sense forbids us to go any further than unilateral disarmament¹ already agreed upon without anything in return, without any new measures of multilateral prohibition, discipline or control and especially without any guarantees concerning the growth of European strategic means. In fact, none of these conditions are considered likely today.

Our country must hold on to dissuasion, for the defence of its vital interests, and for its classic principles of prohibition and retaliation against other States. If not, we are taking a risk, as in the President of the Republic's speech in January 2006 at Long Island, of letting others believe that France would commit itself to a doctrine

¹ From 1990 to 2000, France started unilaterally reducing its nuclear arsenal by decreasing the number of nuclear carriers and nuclear heads. It did this by cutting back on spending for the modernisation of its striking force, by dismantling experimentation sites and production sites of military fissile materials, and by completely stopping nuclear testing. This reduction of French nuclear weapons led them also to dismantle the strategic missiles on the Albion Shelf, and lead to the disappearance of pre-strategic arms, notably the Hadès system. Funding for nuclear weapons now stands at less than 3 billion euros per year.

commending a reduced nuclear threshold and range of counter-attacks. This would go against the concept of not using our arms, devised to rationalise, under the worst threats, the behaviour of an aggressive enemy. This theory of non-engagement, putting off using nuclear arms to the last possible minute, assumes however, that a strike with ultimate warning aiming at the nerve centres of a country but avoiding a maximum of human lives, can be carried out.

This recent move to a doctrine not exclusively anti-demographical, and all the hypotheses behind it, notably that of electromagnetic shock, aiming at making the most possible damage but reducing the lethality of the strikes, mustn't lead to the "undoing" of dissuasion in favour of battle strategies. French nuclear dissuasion's main objective is the "sanctuarisation" of our vital interests. This political guarantee covers, in fact, the populations and territories of the Union with whom we have built a common future.

Concerning protection, we urgently have to consolidate coordination procedures, and national and European means. Today, it is the weak link in European defence policies that are directed exclusively towards peace-keeping and the reestablishment of peace operations. Our country's security implies a clear identification of needs, and the "mobilisation" of certain military means to a zone in order to help security missions in sensitive areas or help populations at risk. This mission also concerns saving our French nationals throughout the world.

This too ambiguous concept of prevention, is a glory hole, bringing together both military action of accompaniment (observers, disarmament control) and pre-emptive action (intimidating strikes or the destruction of dangerous sites), and it should be reformulated and redesigned. However, the logic of prevention is still essential. In particular, we can notice that it is indispensable to be able to deploy units of force to certain troubled zones as a means of stabilisation

after conflicts, or within the framework of disarmament operations, or to fight against arms dealing.

This reformulation of French doctrine should lead towards the writing of a European White Book of defence with our partners. This also implies the diplomatic repositioning of our country regarding its partners and allies.

France cannot continually please everybody. Firstly, it needs to put a stop to certain confusions. It is particularly necessary to clarify the positioning and the context of French external military action. The consistent policy over the past five years has, in fact, complicated relations and set us at odds with our partners and allies.

We need to lay down the lines concerning French military engagement in the European Union, and NATO and regarding the countries, notably the African States, which are linked to us by defence agreements.

Whatever the future for European institutions, France will build its security system in close union with its partners, and in agreement with the concepts, models and means that they define together. On a political but also military level, the European security and defence policy (ESDP) bears a brighter future than that of the alignment of NATO to the American system, created for other tools, other usages and other responsibilities. Our agreement to the European security policy must prevail over our expeditionary action in NATO. This means that we must concern ourselves more with the equation of defence for Europeans, regarding their strategic interests and their security stakes. We should also, from now on, give greater importance to the European Union political framework in order to define and control external military action, whether it be inside or

outside of NATO. Carrying out responsibilities in the Security Council will mean prior close dialogue within the European Union.

Finally, the current change in our military relations with Africa must be carried through to a successful conclusion, in completely standardising the conditions of our interventions on this continent and in revising our existing military plan of action (disengagement of our personnel and the Europeanisation of bases maintained and backed by African multilateral forces).

2 Redefining our capacities.

From the moment that we look for more adequate missions and military means, within a national or European framework, we must delicately arbitrate the distribution of forces regarding their levels of strategic autonomy, especially nuclear, strength, projection and means of operational coherence.

Our nuclear arsenal has been deeply modernised, reorganised and reduced in ten years.² In withdrawing, French nuclear forces were

² Currently, nuclear forces are broken down into two components, one oceanic component comprising four Ballistic Missile Nuclear Submarines (SSBN) and one airmobile component comprising a squadron of Rafales. The SSBNs are currently equipped with M45 missiles, which will be progressively replaced by the M51 around 2012 when the fourth SSBN NG, “The terrible”, comes into active service. Concerning the airmobile component, the current midrange air to surface missiles will be replaced by an improved version, the ASMP/A with a longer range. The 2000 N Mirages and Rafales will be equipped with these missiles from 2008 onwards.

supposed to regain their coherence. Internal coherence in our dissuasion in terms of doctrine and facilities has been, effectively, reinforced by arbitration over the past ten years. However, our dissuasion is less and less progressive regarding strategic and technological transformations.

For our country, the options are limited: major programs are in the phase of completion; or they might just be feigning it. Concrete applications are still to come.

However, we must admit that French dissuasion in twenty-five years time will be in great danger if it doesn't consider the prospects of a European defence system.

Dissuasion isn't a desperate all or nothing, it is built on credibility, it is a test of self-will. We can understand that in a multi-nuclear world, France can no longer act as it did the day before yesterday in the cold war, or even yesterday, after the fall of the Berlin wall, in a world dominated by a small nuclear club with controlled dialogue and globally convergent strategic interests. In the next twenty years, France needs to reconsider the position of its nuclear capabilities in relation to the capacities of its allies.

In the end, the French nuclear striking force, if it wants to remain credible, has only two choices. It can either progressively align to the architecture of defence systems of the United States, this being due to the development of detection and interception systems, the main one being the American anti-ballistic shield, but also maybe one day Russian and Chinese systems. This alignment with American defence systems implies giving up the idea of autonomy, which has been here since the beginning. Or it can integrate into a future European defence system, which supposes, however, that institutional, political and military development of the Union has

succeeded in providing Europe with a strategic dimension. This strategic dimension is totally lacking today.

We can clearly see, in spite of very big communication problems, that we must open discussions again with the British who are confronted with the problem of modernising their nuclear forces. We must also, in spite of German reticence, start strategic talks with Berlin again. All these discussions should then be widened to a broader context of both European security and disarmament, extending the strategic concept introduced by Javier Solana in December 2004, and the long-term vision developed by the European Defence agency.

Without the prospects of European support, the French strategic position, in twenty five or thirty years time, will be in the dark. Of course, France will be able, between now and then, to keep at sea "at least one" SSBN armed with 16 strategic missiles. The range and versatility of missiles will increase from 2015 onwards with the introduction of the M51-2 missile, so that dissuasion will remain coherent with the "distant scenario" of China gaining in power, and also India and Pakistan, and maybe even Iran. But the modernisation of our facilities hides badly the underhand, long-term risk of slow degradation of our position without European strategic support. The debt of renewing long-term European strategic capacities, collective dead ends in technological innovation, and limited spending for the preparation of the old continent's future, make it hard to sustain the current technological and strategic levels of French dissuasion.

We can't evade the question of dissuasion, nor as some do, lie to avoid nuclear debts, without asking ourselves about the European equation of defence, and the conditions of European subordination and vulnerability. If we don't give in to weakness, all savings made

on current nuclear facilities should, in principle, be reinvested into the study and realisation of new strategic projects.

The sanctuarisation of spending reserved for nuclear arms, space, superior missiles and antimissile capacities would allow pertinent arbitration without insulting the future. Investment is necessary in these areas. It will structure European strategic autonomy. Without the impetus given by our country, an increase in military capacities will probably never happen. If there still exists a wish for European Union independence, and France claims to embody it, the effects of a European military programme still in limbo should be anticipated. Our country, counting on shared means and the division of tasks, must specialise as purveyors of strategic facilities. This option is, furthermore, coherent with the consolidation of a technological and research base in Europe.

Today, big and small European armies, except France and the United Kingdom, all roughly do the same things but slightly differently. They are general armies without collective means of preparation and strategic command for operations ensuring European strategic autonomy. On the other hand, there is an overabundance of conventional, classic capacities.

This should lead us to concentrate our efforts on military means, by reinforcing, on the one hand, strategic capacities of command and information collection so as to carry more weight in Europe, and on the other hand, by reinforcing operational capacities, thus, improving deep penetration, firepower and air and naval carriers, so as to carry more weight in military coalitions where we are the instigators. We must, in fact, be able to really and permanently influence military action carried out in zones where the strategic interests of our country and those of Europe are directly involved and even threatened. We must push for rationalisation and Europeanisation of

our model army so as to limit physical and financial constraints. We will, however, have to be very determined when imposing certain choices, so as to eliminate redundancies in different armies, according to the advanced logic of “combined arms” of forces and the application of specialisation and sharing of means between armies and our European partners.

3 Reforming our model army.

The financial stakes of our defence system are fundamental. The idea of military spending simply being an adjustable variable of our public deficit must be ruled out.

Through budgetary arbitration, we must make choices directly concerning our future security, the international stature of our country and missions assigned to our armies. We must also, through spending on research and big military programs, allocate resources to research organisations and the arms industry. This concerns, therefore, the autonomy of our military supplies.

We must recognise that the coming era is not going to be very prosperous. All the while public spending is out of control in our country, all the while the economy remains sluggish, and all the while synergies, regarding spending on security and defence, aren't completely removed from the European scene, military budgets of the different countries of the Union will, at their best stagnate without being collectively optimised.

Never, over the past ten years, has the financial effort for French defence been politically promoted so much as today. However, at the close of the large-scale organisational reform in 2002, the French armies were confronted once again, in 2006, with a crisis situation

regarding their model, coupled with a latent financial crisis owing to incompetent management of military funds over the last few years.³

This situation stems from unrealistic commitments made between 2002 and 2006. Thus, at the end of 2000, 25% of existing investments was still left to pay, rising to 45% in 2005. Orders were placed with a vengeance by the leaders and leading States, severing all connections with the future. This situation results from an insufficient selection of classic programs already underway and a lack of priority regarding modernisation facilities. Under these conditions, new programs creating a sensation over the past few months (a second aircraft carrier, a UAV programme, multi-mission frigates) are lacking in the necessary funds to be put into action. All the programming objectives concerning the main programs must, therefore, be inescapably revised. Military programming must be sent back to the drawing board for the 2008-2012 period. The cost of professionalisation has been largely underestimated and long-term financing of the current model is a problem. The professional army is expensive.⁴

³ France is, in fact, with the United Kingdom, the European country which spends the most on defence. France: 33 billion euros, the United Kingdom: 35 billion euros, Germany: 21 billion euros, according to NATO's norms which include military pensions. Military spending represents 2% of France's GDP, and 2,6% if we include military pensions. At the end of the eighties, this ratio was slightly higher at 3,5%. With the United Kingdom, Sweden and Greece, France is a member of the little group of Union countries that spend more than 2% of their GDP on defence.

Source: *l'Economie de la défense 2005*, Conseil économique de la défense, Paris, 2006.

⁴ The long-term burden of professionalisation was underestimated. Civil and military defence personnel total 425 000, the personnel of the three armies total 280 000, of which 33 000 are civil. The Personnel Budget is under pressure due to military recruitment (35 000 per year), rapid changes in social security contributions and remuneration, and general extra costs for external operations.

It is, of course, possible to reasonably reduce the number of personnel in the Ministry of Defence, but this solution, very likely necessary, isn't equal to the needs of the current model.

Military facility funding, such as that anticipated by the Military programming law of 2003-2008 of 14.7 billion euros per year, is very high. But this financial help, without having any choice, has run into a dead-end. The dissipation of financial help, the underestimated cost of current programs, the difference between announced spending and the real funds spent already amounts up to more than 2.5 billion euros. The "2015 model army" already seems out of reach. It is structurally under-financed. It would be wiser therefore, to draw conclusions from this situation by acknowledging that our model army, the "2015 model army" is no longer valid.

Even if we put back the deadline to 2020, we would still need to spend more than 20 billion euros per year to keep up with payments. In other words, we need to find an extra 70 billion euros to finance, at the present rate, the 2015 model.

Nobody is ready, neither the right nor the left, for this breathtakingly high growth in military debt. Especially as nobody really sees the need for it. This model, stemming from the ideas of the 1994 White Book, must be reconsidered in the light of today's strategic context. Is it still reasonable to envisage the deployment of 50 000 men for a combat in Europe? Is it indispensable to have a stock of approximately 400 fighter planes in the air and at sea, when even at the height of the air campaign in Kosovo, we only mobilised about 60? Is a second aircraft carrier as well as all the air and sea capacities that go with it well justified when interventions requiring this type of means are now only carried out under coalition with other States having similar capacities? How are we going to

finance the FREMM frigate and Barracuda submarine programs which have just been launched, when we haven't got a penny to bless ourselves with?

At the same time, we can notice the dramatic drop in spending on space, information and command programs. These programs of high priority in terms of strategic dimensioning, crisis prevention and autonomous management of manoeuvres in the field have been sacrificed.

Furthermore, we can observe an explosion in unit prices of large programs⁵ which coincides with the drop in the number of orders. Besides, the outlay that these programs meet when exported, the Rafale case being one particular example, cancels out any partial paying off of the development costs of sales outside France. Therefore, the budget consecrated to military facilities is suffocated from the outside by the constant increase in running costs. It is reduced from the inside by extra costs run up by certain large programs. If we want to start breaking even again, then we need to loosen this double noose.

This all comes back down to questions concerning the suitable number of personnel at the Ministry of Defence, those targeted by most big facilities, concerning the stopping of too expensive production, concerning the calling into question of the development of certain programmes, all the more so if they aren't subject to European cooperation, and questions concerning the scrapping of old equipment no longer allowed to be used. In short, we must

⁵ Out of 14,7 billion euros invested, only 6 billion euros go on the major facilities, the rest is used for the purchase and upkeep of installations. Of the 61 large facilities, 6 major programs (SSBN, Rafale, Tigre, Leclerc, Horizon, Syracuse, A400M) use alone 2,5 to 3 billion euros per year, or 50% of the budget given to research, development and production.

revise the format of operational contracts assigned to the forces, and, of course, the 2015 model, in making sure that we don't damage the operational coherence of our capacities and that we don't weaken the technological and military advantage that France has in numerous sectors. It's a big wager!

II. French defence engaged in Europe.

1 Relaunching European defence.

The rationalisation of our military machine is influenced by the European option. However, France is still hesitating whether to fully integrate its defence system into Europe. Our country is at a fork in the road, it can either maintain its national pre-eminence or agree to military interdependence with its neighbours.

Certainly, the objective of a common defence policy, written in the Maastricht Treaty, has grown in strength over the last few years. The Treaty of Nice, following the declarations at Saint-Malo, Cologne and Helsinki, in establishing autonomous Union forces and a political-military chain of decisions, has allowed us to breakthrough historical barriers. But today, European defence is at a standstill: an institutional standstill with the failure of the project Treaty on the Union's constitution, a political standstill due to the unhealed division of Europeans concerning Iraq, a military standstill with the collapse of the objectives contained in the Nice and Laeken Treaties, and an industrial standstill due to unfinished restructuration of the arms industry.

However, everybody in Europe believes that the Union alone has enough power to influence the world, so that the objective of leading the international society towards higher security and greater justice doesn't go unheeded. The European building site of defence, its forces and arms are still fallow land. There is a lack of determination, especially at a financial level.

It is indispensable, for the Union's autonomy in decision making and action taking, to make European defence more efficient by rationalising existing means and by revising certain strategic capacities. Even though the military budget is continuing to decrease in nearly all Union countries, the Europeans spend both badly and collectively a lot for their defence: 170 billion euros. European armies are superfluous, duplicated and for the most part not very well equipped. Individually, for those who still claim to be, but also collectively, their capacity to manoeuvre and their working efficiency are quite limited.

Not only is Europe continuing down the road to structural disarmament but it is paying dearly for this division.

There are a little less than two million soldiers in the European countries (compared to a little less than one and a half million in the United States), but it's a struggle to even conjure up an emergency intervention force of 20 000 men, and as we can see from the Congo, we can only just manage to deploy and support a European detachment of 2000 men.

Each year, Europe spends the equivalent to 40% of the United States military budget (345 billion euros). Its military capacities, on the other hand, represent less than 20% of those of the Americans.⁶

⁶ (In billions of euros)

This gap is doomed to get bigger. The defence budgets of the member States of the Union are eroding away. Financing is being soaked up by running costs and external operations, which are forcing the Europeans, due to the lack of strategic capacities, to "do the dishes", so certain American commentators kindly say.

In all the areas that are structuring today's military power (nuclear dissuasion, information control, commanding capacity and the collection of information, and air strength and firepower capacity) Europe will never be ahead of the others, and in fact, is struggling just to keep up. It's not only a question of the size of funding, but it's first of all a question of where the funds are going, and a question of the rationalisation of spending and the organisation of means.

Europe's defence system remains the result of policies followed by each of the member States endowed with a particular status (neutral States, or members or non-members of NATO). It is dependent on funding given by States, who seek no prior coordination with their military capacities. European defence is finding it hard to combine aspiration with autonomy and Atlantic solidarity.

In order to bring European military capacities up to date, in an unfavourable financial climate, there is no other solution but to adopt a common discipline and choose our priorities better. This implies

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Facilities			
United States			112,4
European Union			46,1
Research and Development			
United States			65
European Union			12
of which	France		3,8
	the United Kingdom		4
	German		1

more cooperation to stop useless and costly overlapping. A large part of the funding, which is true for all the member States, consists of financing the structure of forces and supporting them. Each country has its own Ministry of Defence, its own military command, its own military schools and its own infrastructure. There is a political reality hiding behind all these figures: the inadequacy of European nations regarding today's geopolitical and military stakes. On paper, since the Nice summit in 2001 and the Laeken summit in 2002, the Union has had autonomous forces at its disposal. But its ability to bring them into play, politically and military, has remained poor. In relation to the ambitions of the Laeken declaration, the Europeans are, in fact, in the middle of restoring their intermediary objectives. The plan for a long-term force of 60 000 men for eighteen months, still remains theoretical, and thus we can only foresee the deployment of rapid battle groups of 1 500 men. The explanations behind this change in project are finding it hard to hide the signs of abandonment.

The relaunching of a European defence system is urgent and imperative. We shouldn't, however, delude ourselves. This new start won't be easy as the first fruits gathered between 1998 and 2002 have been wasted. In order for France to be heard, it must gain authority and also its partners trust. This new start will, first of all, be intense diplomatic work, so as to bring together different views, especially concerning the United Kingdom and Germany. Firstly, it means saving certain notions from the European constitutional treaty project, which started with the mutual defence clause and the solidarity clause regarding terrorism. It must then focus concretely on the facet of military programming⁷ and on the industrial facet because one of the major stakes in the construction of a European defence system is the rationalisation of production costs and the

⁷ Complementary roles of the OCCAR and the European Defence Agency, recently created to that effect but with limited ambitions and means.

level of performance of military facilities. The coordination of purchasing policies of the Union's countries is a priority.

2 Towards a European defence system.

Creating efficient European forces implies, in fact, that we must make an effort in two areas. First of all, in standardisation: the forces must be trained together and use the same equipment to be able to operate together. Then, in the joint purchase of equipment, so that European countries can avoid contradictory choices when purchasing equipment. The European's inability to agree on the choice of future military facilities (fighter planes, UAVs, aircraft carriers, frigates, submarines) is particularly worrying.

In order to obtain economies of scale and favour the restructuring of the European defence industry, the preference must be for buying "European". A real industrial policy can only be set up by favouring industrial grouping which still seems necessary, by financing the development of strategic technologies and by supporting industrial activity through placing orders when considered necessary.

In order to bring the Union's military facilities up to standard, there is no other solution but to adopt a European discipline structured around three principles: specialisation, cooperation and joint purchasing. Joint programming is, therefore, the key to rationalising the European military tool and the key to combining national armies. It must concentrate its efforts on research and development. In this respect, we should contemplate the introduction of European funds, supplied through VAT or voluntary donations from the States, so that we can finance research and development of certain dual technologies, civil and military, in the security domain.

Such an arms policy is ambitious and implies the consolidation of financial outlay. The question of sharing the financing of this policy cannot, therefore, be avoided. The European Union's security and defence policy has been implemented for the benefit of all European citizens. Therefore, it is logical that the cost of this insurance should be shared amongst all the member States. Just like the institution for a single currency, convergence criteria should be set up in order to guarantee the full participation of everyone concerning European defence.

“Reinforced or structured cooperation” should be organised with all the countries who wish to go further down the road of cooperation, leading, then, to the integration of their forces. The financial logic of programming and the purchasing of military equipment should converge to further this project. The project should foreshadow and then allow us to institute the first forms and elements of an integrated European defence system: the setting up of permanent units under unified command, the coordination of strategic and operational planning, the setting up of shared programs for officers' initial training; the application of convergence criteria to military budgets; the harmonised programming of large military facilities, notably in the domain of Space and strategic extension; the grouped command of large military facilities.

Reforming our model army, relaunching the idea of a common defence system, and consolidating our European technological and industrial foundations, in reality, all of these priorities and all their constraints are heading all in the same direction, towards Europe.

All the changes on the international scene are reinforcing our fellow citizens' wishes of seeing Europe capable of operating independently from the United States. The demand for a European defence and security policy is clearly affirmed.

Conclusion

Who could have predicted at the time of the Gulf war twelve years ago, that Europe would have hurled itself headlong, without a plan of action, into the two distant conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq? Who could have predicted such a deterioration in the international climate, notably in the Near and Middle-East?

Everything at that time was self-evident, including the long-term reform of our defence system. Today, the choices that we must make for our security and peace in the world are much more demanding and constraining. We must get back onto track by organising a favourable “European date”, by resolving a difficult equation in terms of military means, and by facing up to the responsibilities of engaging our forces in numerous operations.

In this respect, the future Head of State should obviously come to a decision quite quickly, in 2007, about the external deployment of our forces. In fact, our forces have never been so in demand outside of our territory. Today, more than 16 000 of our soldiers are deployed abroad.⁸ Never have the motives for these interventions been so unclear, their results so mixed, their appropriateness so questionable and the hypotheses to end crises so unlikely. Within the scope of clear international mandates, there is hardly any doubt to the usefulness of the participation of the French troops in stabilising the Balkans. We must consider handing things over. However, political conditions are still not united for this withdrawal.

⁸ 16 000 soldiers, 4 000 of which are permanently based abroad, and without counting the personnel that could be called up to form an international force in Lebanon.

On the Ivory Coast, our intervention is still marked by an outdated post-colonialism, symbolised by the Marcoussis agreements. Fixing the combat lines and political ways-out, operation Licorne, prisoner of its own mission, is getting bogged down. Even worse, if a solution were to be found, it couldn't even go through France because it has lost all political credibility today. In Chad, a stone's throw from the Darfour massacres, the mission and the instructions given to our units are embarrassingly vague. If we want to come out of these interventions with our heads held high, then we should no longer feed provocations and suspicions. We can't, therefore, escape the changes in our military relations with Africa, and the straightening out of certain defence agreements which hold us hostage or accomplice.

In Afghanistan, the conditions of the use of special forces against the Talibans call for urgent explanations. More generally, how can we not question the Westerners' political and military motives for being in these countries? The French contingent is growing at a regular rate at the heart of a security force, which in fact, doesn't bring hardly any security, but only helps to incite more and more hostility. Why and for how long are we going to be over there: five, ten, fifteen years?

In any case, we need to face up to the fact that this situation not only involves us, but eludes us, controls us and outmatches us.

Finally, determining the conditions of possible French participation in a multinational force in South Lebanon, is somewhat problematic today. In the event of deployment, the supervision and modalities of the action of this force would remain particularly laborious.

During the first year of his mandate, and, in particular, in the scope of the French presidency of the Union, the next Head of State will have to take important political decisions and diplomatic initiatives in the domain of security and defence. First of all, he will have to find a way of bringing together different European positions, capacities and military engagements in the crises in which the Europeans are a party. If the Europeans are collectively incapable of facing up to their responsibilities concerning security, especially in the light of the lessons learnt in the Balkans when the Europeans were engaged without a common line in numerous military interventions, then they risk, in fact, suffering violent kickbacks.

Whilst the European crisis, stemming from an institutional crisis, is taking a firm, long-term hold, the United States seem to be winning a little uncertainly, due to the conflict in Iraq. In a situation of possible improved transatlantic relations, due to protagonists losing strength, the circumstances, if they are well exploited, are paradoxically favourable for the progress of the European Security and Defence Policy, whose expectations have been hardly called into question, but on the contrary, have given everybody, both inside and outside of the Union, hope.

Europe has enough power to influence the world, so that the goal of leading the international society towards higher security and greater justice doesn't go unheeded. From this angle, the European Union must firstly ensure the protection of its States and the citizens that live in them. It must then be capable of efficiently intervening outside, in particular, on the periphery of its territory, so as to be able to restore peace when it is threatened. Finally, it must contribute to and restabilise international relations, by combining its moral and political authority, its economic efforts, and its civil and military means of managing crises. To do this, it needs to make European defence more efficient through the rationalisation of existing means

and by bringing certain strategic capacities, indispensable for the Union's autonomy in decision making and action-taking, up to standard. Defence and security are Europe's number one building site. The objective of a united Europe equipped in the future with an autonomous army will determine major political and strategic choices over the next fifteen years. We must try and do the same for defence, that we did for the single currency.

On a world-wide scale, in an era of continental States, the Union's defence policy must enable it to recapture its room for manoeuvre and action concerning European diplomacy. On a European scale, the project could help the Union get out of its institutional crisis.

As François Mitterand recalled: "the building of a political Europe can't happen without the building of a military Europe".⁹ For France, attached to its independence and the autonomy of its military means, the choice may seem difficult: it is, however, vital. But this project implies a new approach, abandoning certain dreams, and having consistency and a will of iron. The next five year term is a key period in this respect. The relaunching of European defence must be one of the first objectives listed in the French diplomatic diary. During the next five years, the European Security and Defence Policy will either become stronger or will join the other projects of the European Defence Community and the Western European Union in the graveyard of lost illusions.
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⁹ François Mitterand, *De la France et de l'Allemagne*, Odile Jacob, Paris, 1996.

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