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IS THE EU ARMY A PIPE DREAM?

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The Brexit had at least the advantage of forcing Europeans to propose multiple projects in order to better pool their military capabilities. Admittedly, in this situation, there is a combination of favourable circumstances for initiatives that aim to revive the CSDP. First of all, Europeans made this decision to revive CSDP in 2013. The initiative came from France, jointly with the new President of the European Commission, Jean Claude Juncker. This led to the December 2013 European council dedicated to defence, the determination to develop new cooperative programmes, such as EUROMALE in which France in Italy are stakeholders, and the decision to develop a new security strategy, the EU Global Strategy, which was unveiled in June 2016 after the Brexit. The growing concern generated by a potential resurgence of the Russian threat, combined by a tangible and durable jihadist terrorist threat, also explains the Europeans' desire to better protect together. The guarantee of American security becoming uncertain due to the upcoming presidential election is also a concern for Europeans, especially since during Barack Obama's two terms. In consequence, the US have constantly asked that Europe better take into account their security interests.

Finally, the Brexit has been viewed as a dual window of opportunity.

It is a window of opportunity because the British were known to block any progress in terms of integration of defence policies. They rejected the permanent EU headquarter for military and civilian CSDP missions, they refused to increase the European Defence Agency's budget and therefore to increase the role of this agency responsible for developing the European Union's military capabilities.

It is a window of opportunity because it is necessary, while the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union, to prove to European citizens that Europe can contribute something to their lives and that it is not time to leave it. Now, the international situation offers this opportunity, in the sense that every threat that European citizens face today can no longer be dealt with at national level only. There needs to be concerted responses, especially because no European has the resources to develop all military capabilities on its own to ensure its security anymore. It is necessary for these military capabilities to be pooled.

Given this situation, several initiatives have been launched or will be launched in the coming weeks.

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The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission will present a roadmap at the end of November 2016. The French and German Ministers of Defence published a joint letter and Italy also introduced proposals during the Bratislava Summit at the end of September 2016.

One of the most original and innovative Italian proposals is the creation of a joint permanent military force as the core of a future integrated European force. These are therefore the early stages of a future European army, a project supported by part of the German political class, and also mentioned by President of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker in 2015. From a practical perspective, the proposal appears difficult to implement. In 1989, France and Germany established a French-German brigade made up of 5,000 men, integrated to the European Corps in 1993, their main characteristic being that they served very little. In addition to the legal aspects relating to the various statuses of soldiers, it became clear that the requirements for a joint engagement in the field with Germany were difficult to meet. The need to intervene quickly in high-intensity operations, as was the case in Mali, also explains France's reluctance to allocate military units to this type of initiative. It also explains why France decided to develop a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force with the British as part of the Lancaster House Treaty, considering that the probability of intervening alongside the British was higher than with the forces of other European countries. This decision was made following the intervention in Libya, where the French and the British fought together. However, there is no certainty

that such a situation will happen again in the coming years, especially since the United Kingdom was not willing to intervene in Syria following the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime in the summer of 2013.

Does this mean that projects of common European armed forces are pipe dreams? Certainly not. On the contrary, the Italian project must be viewed as salutary. The European Union will only be able to make progress towards the objective of a common security and defence policy if the proposals put forward reflect a clear political project offered to European citizens. European Union countries are facing common threats? They then need common armed forces, and that is how the European project must be presented to citizens if leaders want to give them the feeling that the European Union brings added security compared to their national armies. Moreover, this is how it was done in terms of EU border security with the recent creation of a European Corps of Border Guards. Such initiatives must therefore be transposed in the field of defence. The project of a joint permanent military force must be favourably received, because such a military unit would lead participating armed forces to work better together, thus causing them to acquire the same equipment. We need more cooperation in the field of armaments, in order to develop the European Union's military capabilities with defence budgets that will remain limited. From a political proposal that may seem very utopian, major pragmatic progress can be achieved in the construction of the CSDP with reinforced EU military capabilities. One does not exclude the other, and that is why the Italian proposal must be welcomed.