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On the Way towards a European Army

SPD Members of the German Bundestag have laid out a plan for the further development of the military dimension of European Foreign and Security Policy. It envisions a series of concrete steps for the deepening of military cooperation in Europe. In the long run, these steps could open up the way to the creation of a European army.

The European Union has 27 member states, 490 million citizens and accounts for a quarter of the world's gross national product, making it far more than a confederation of states: the EU is a global player. The European Union's political and economic significance entails the responsibility of making an appropriate contribution towards the resolution of conflicts, including those located beyond its own continent. The European Union can, and must, contribute towards building a freer and safer world.

A common foreign, security and defence policy is necessary in order to give Europe a voice. Europe must act as a single entity if it wishes to be recognized alongside the United States and the growing powers of China and India.

The paper has been written by members of the SPD parliamentary party's working groups on Europe and defence questions in the Bundestag: Hans-Peter Bartels, Jörn Thießen, Ursula Mogg, Steffen Reiche, Andreas Weigel, Michael Roth, Rainer Arnold, Gerd Höfer, Petra Heß

The European security strategy, passed at the Brussels summit of December 2003, forms a good mutual basis for new impulses in the area of security and defence policy.

Europe's responsibility and possibilities

The European Union is characterised by a great diversity of historically rooted foreign policy and security traditions. The defence policies of the individual member states display substantial differences, in areas such as strategic planning, equipment, structure of the forces or in leadership style.

But there are more factors uniting than dividing us. Europe shares a common set of European values. The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, for which the ratification process should be continued, formulates the fundamental convictions guiding the states of Europe:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the

rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.” (Article 1-2)

“In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.” (Article 1-3, paragraph 4)

Europe stands for a security policy which is based on values, is not restricted to the military, acts multilaterally and is dedicated to upholding and further developing international law.

The security environment in which the members of the European Union wish to attain common goals has changed radically since the end of the Cold War.

There are no longer any specific security problems or threats for Germany or France, Denmark or Poland. Germany, at the centre of Europe, is no longer surrounded by enemies, but by NATO partners and EU members. The classic scenario of national defence, a major attack on Europe with armies of tanks and fleets of bombers, has become improbable.

In Europe today we find ourselves confronted with new dangers which do not stop at national borders. These new strategic threats are “international terrorism”, or more precisely fundamental Islamist terror directed against “the west” on principle, the spread of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology, the instability generated by regional conflicts and so-called failed states, and the dangers resulting from organised crime – because this too has an “external dimension”: trafficking in weapons, drugs and human beings, links with international terrorism.

These dangers do not threaten specific individual countries in Europe – they threaten us all. For this reason we have to find common solutions to these challenges.

National armies within an increasingly strong, supranational EU will gradually develop into relics of the last century. In comparison with the United States our 27 armies (with a total of around two million soldiers) are expensive. The European Union spends around 160 billion euros each year in this area, and we have to employ these resources more efficiently. The states of Europe are also united in this respect: whilst having to adapt our forces to the new challenges, our financial leeway is limited. For this reason a better bundling of resources and capabilities is definitely an urgent requirement.

We should build on the successes of the European unification process, and as an expression of our common security interests we should have the courage to initiate a development at the end of which we have a European army.

Where we stand today

The idea is not as new as it might at first appear. In 1954, nine years after the end of World War II, an attempt was made to form a European defence union. It was probably too early.

So now, half a century later, when we embark on a process towards developing a joint European army, we are not starting from scratch. Especially in the fifteen years following the end of the division of Europe, in other words since 1990, the EU has made great progress in closer cooperation on security and defence policy. Step by step, we have steadily advanced, even if from time to time our achievements are obscured by talk of crises and widespread Euro-scepticism.

The hesitant beginnings of European Political Co-operation (EPC) in the 70s developed into increasingly intense coordination in foreign policy and security questions within the framework of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which was introduced with the Maastricht Treaty (1993) and further developed with the Amsterdam

Treaty. At the turn of the century the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) extended the CFSP. The "European Council declaration on strengthening the common European policy on security and defence" in Cologne of June 1999, which came about under German council presidency, marked the development of ESDP as an integral part of CFSP.

At its meeting in Helsinki in December 1999 the European Council agreed on the "European Headline Goal". This goal enables the Union to mobilise up to 60,000 soldiers within 60 days to meet the requirements of all of the "Petersburg tasks" (humanitarian and rescue operations, peace-keeping missions, military action in crisis management including peacemaking measures). However, these task forces remain a national responsibility; their provision and deployment are based on a sovereign decision of the member states.

In the following years new committees were created to strengthen the common policy (including the Political and Security Committee [PSC], the EU Military Committee), and arrangements for cooperation with NATO were settled in the "Berlin Plus Agreement" of 2003.

The Feira European Council of June 2000 confirmed that ESDP could only be successful by not restricting itself to the military sphere. Instead, it should also include civilian components. The mixture of civilian and military resources, together with the conviction that contemporary threats are not exclusively of a military nature and can thus only be met by a combination of instruments, is a trademark of European politics. By developing equal-ranking civilian and military capabilities for international crisis prevention and crisis management the EU is making allowances for the broader concept of security and the new types of present-day threats.

The "European Security Strategy" (ESS), which was approved in December 2003 by the European Council in Brussels, is the first EU document to describe common challenges and name common interests.

Meanwhile the EU has successfully carried out its first military operations. In Macedonia the Concordia mission took place

from March to December 2003 under EU leadership after taking over responsibility from NATO. This mission made an important contribution towards peacemaking in the country. The first autonomous EU operation was the Artemis mission from June to September 2003 which aimed at stabilising unrest in the Congolese province of Bunia. After the operation's successful completion responsibility was handed over to the United Nation's MONUC mission. In 1999 in Bosnia-Herzegovina the EU took charge of the Althea mission, replacing the NATO'S SFOR mandate. In autumn 2006 the EU's EUFOR RD CONGO mission successfully backed up the first free elections to be held in Congo for over 40 years. In addition to this there have been several civilian operations, such as the EU police mission Proxima (civilian back-up operation in Macedonia) or the EU police mission EUPOL Kinshasa designed to support the redevelopment of the police force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The agreed development of combined European Battle Groups for crisis intervention purposes marks an important step towards integrating national military forces into future European security structures. Germany is actively involved in putting the concept into practice. The system's practicability will be continually monitored. Initial experiences with the envisaged system of guaranteed provision of specific units for prescribed periods have to be carefully analysed in order to develop it, if and when necessary.

The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, signed in October 2004 and whose ratification is currently on ice, provides for the further development of ESDP. By creating the European Defence Agency the EU members have brought forward a key element of the constitutional treaty. The new agency's role is to improve European collaboration on equipment planning, provision, research and technology, and to create greater coherence.

The European Union already displays elements of a collective security system, similar to the United Nations and NATO. The constitutional treaty's provisions on common security and defence policy also include an obligation to mutual assistance:

“If a Member State is the victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other Member States shall have towards it an obligation of aid and assistance by all the means in their power, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. This shall not prejudice the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States.” (Article I-41, paragraph 7)

In addition to this the negotiated constitutional treaty contains a solidarity clause:

“(1) The Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster. The Union shall mobilise all the instruments at its disposal, including the military resources made available by the Member States, to:

(a)

— prevent the terrorist threat in the territory of the Member States;
 — protect democratic institutions and the civilian population from any terrorist attack;
 — assist a Member State in its territory, at the request of its political authorities, in the event of a terrorist attack;

(b) assist a Member State in its territory, at the request of its political authorities, in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.” (Article I-43)

The solidarity clause was activated after the terrorist attacks in Madrid in March 2004, although it is only politically, and not legally, binding until the European Constitution actually comes into effect.

Things already functioning

Integration of the European armed forces has long since begun. Numerous initiatives point in the right direction. In recent years there have been several good examples of closer cooperation between the EU partners, also partially within NATO:

➤ the German-French Brigade was already founded in 1989,

- the Eurocorps in Strassburg (Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, Luxemburg),
- the European Airlift Centre in Eindhoven, developed from the European Air Coordination Cell which was founded in 2001,
- the German-Dutch Corps based in Münster (1995),
- the Sealift Coordination Centre (2003): nine states mutually guarantee access to three transport vessels,
- the Multinational Corps Northeast in Stettin (Germany, Denmark, Poland) set up at the end of 2000,
- the joint mine clearance association of the Baltic Naval Squadron with its joint headquarters in Estonia,
- the joint naval headquarters of the Benelux states in Den Helder,
- the Dutch example in air transport: instead of procuring their own transport aircraft (with the resulting costs for infrastructure, maintenance, personnel etc.), the Netherlands have agreed with Germany, on a cost-sharing basis, to use German air transport capacities,
- air traffic control in the Baltic states: since the three Baltic republics lack the necessary aircraft, nations of the NATO alliance have been operating an air policing mission on a three-month rotation scheme with the necessary aircraft and ground personnel stationed in Lithuania,
- mutually guaranteed and timely access to strategic air transport capabilities for the transfer of NATO and EU rapid reaction forces: 15 nations, including Germany, have a joint contract with the supplier Ruslan SALIS Company which provides access to up to six Antonov 124-100 heavy transport aircraft for multinational NATO or EU missions,
- the AWACS fleet – although this is a NATO project, it is a good example of joint alliance institutions,

- the multinational armed forces commands EUROFOR (European Operational Rapid Force) and EUROMARFOR (European Maritime Force) with France, Spain, Italy and Portugal as participants.

The examples show what is already possible and functioning today. Soldiers from all of the European states are experiencing day-to-day multinational cooperation in their headquarters and units.

Equipment planning and acquisition will also have to be carried out with a greater level of coordination between the European members in the future. The increasingly expensive development of new military technology has already stimulated strong moves towards integration – almost all of the German armed forces' major acquisition plans are multinational projects. Despite this, there is still much room for greater efficiency. Agreed European norms and larger orders can contribute towards a lowering of costs, as well as improving cooperation between Europe's armed forces. The European Defence Agency EDA represents a step in this direction. It is designed to prevent what sometimes presented a problem in past multinational projects: variations in equipment increased in relation to the number of countries involved in the cooperation project.

Coordinated cooperation, beginning at the equipment planning level, is essential if Europe wishes to close the gaps in its capabilities. The list of European deficits is long. With the European Capability Action Plan (ECAP) of 2001 the EU member states declared themselves in favour of utilising synergy effects to close military capability gaps.

The Europeans will be unable to overcome their equipment deficits at a national level – not least because of the limited budgets in all of the states. Joint European efforts are needed, and they offer the chance of further integration. We have had good experiences with the existing multinational cooperation in Europe. In future we should combine not only command structures and capabilities but also share or join together in fulfilling tasks more than in the past – every army does not have to be able to fulfil everything.

The age of the national universal army is drawing to a close.

The next steps

A European army, embedded in a new European Union, cannot be a short-term objective. A series of measures are conceivable in order to get started and provide the integration process with new impulses, namely:

- the setting-up of a European Air Transport Command which replaces the appropriate national commands in all of their functions, i.e. including education and training, maintenance and logistics, as well as joint air transport squadrons (the coordination of planning and operations of existing air transport capacities within the EAC framework can be seen as an intermediary step).
- at the moment there is no independent council of ministers for military matters in the EU: a "genuine" council of defence ministers should be formed on the way to a joint European army.
- a European Parliament defence committee should be formed. At the moment questions surrounding defence policy are only dealt with by a sub-committee of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs. A defence committee which accompanies the ESDP and the process of increased integration of the European armed forces as an independent committee would signal the strengthening of parliamentary responsibility at the European level.
- a European Military Academy or University should be created. This could also be a step towards formulating common educational and training standards for future leading personnel in the European armed forces.
- a Baltic Naval Headquarters developed from the Baltic states' successful cooperation in the joint mine clearance association.

- joint manoeuvres irrespective of borders are already part of the European armies' everyday activities. In order to continue improving cooperation between the various armed forces the number of joint European manoeuvres should be increased.
- based on the well-practiced experience of close European cooperation in civil aerospace programmes, military space programmes should also be started together (reconnaissance and communications satellites). Combined operations in this field would be of benefit in view of the high costs involved.
- European coordination of the available capabilities. The smaller EU states in particular are unable to provide the whole capability spectrum. They could use their limited resources to specialise in niche capabilities.
- existing resources and capabilities within the member states can be combined with the aim of setting up a communications base / communications network to support ESDP.
- the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF), which was called into being by France, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal (headquarters: Vicenza, operational since the beginning of 2006), is a reaction to experiences during previous EU missions. It should be expanded because, as a police force with military status, it can be the appropriate answer in conflict situations where the military is no longer required, but where conditions are not yet stable enough for a standard police mission. In the case of Germany, which cannot participate because of its strict division between the military and the police, we should seek a solution that enables us to contribute to the EGF.
- now that Poland and the Baltic states have joined the Schengen Agreement, there is an urgent need for joint activity in carrying out the necessary control of the external maritime borders, since these states' national resources will be insufficient for this purpose. In an

enlarged "Schengen for the Baltic Sea" the resources of the states bordering on the Baltic Sea could be bundled, and the territorial waters and economic zones in the Baltic Sea could be increasingly monitored in joint operations.

- in the case of Air Policing, and against the background of the short flying times between the European sovereign territories, it would be practical to develop a form of close cooperation or a joint solution to the tasks. NATO's air traffic control in the Baltic states can act as a model for other smaller states. Joint air traffic control not only be more effective, it could also help to lower the costs.

Our proposed direction – and what has to be discussed beforehand

Many questions still have to be answered on the road to joint armed forces. There are still many structural differences within Europe, for instance in the formation of the military forces, parliamentary participation or principles of leadership of the armies.

If we want to reach our desired goal, we should begin by discussing it and talking it over with our partners in Europe. A European White Paper would be an appropriate form to promote and structure this process of clarification and understanding.

For the preparation of a European white paper on security and defence policy we would like to discuss the following aspects with our European partners:

- the various national parliamentary decision-making processes regarding deployments make it necessary to seek a common denominator.
- the creation of a common military order and/or a common military law is necessary.
- we have to develop a standardised model of leadership and education.
- it is necessary to determine the decision-making procedures for declara-

tions of war and peace (jus belli et pacis). The powers and responsibilities of the Commission (executive), the Parliament (legislature) and the European Council must be clarified.

- the handing-over of sovereignty by the EU states and the transfer of powers to a democratically legitimated European level must be discussed. Armed forces are a powerful expression of state sovereignty. The EU is not a state. It is something entirely new, and at the present time it is a kind of confederation of states with its own status in international law. How will, and how must, the EU be constituted to enable it to have joint armed forces? The national conditions for the handing-over of sovereignty must also be regulated. For instance, in the case of Germany, are the regulations in the Basic Law (Article 24) sufficient to this purpose?
- questions of finance have to be clarified. There has to be a fair distribution of costs between the EU and the member states, and among the member states.
- in analogy to the national defence ministers, a defence commissioner could head the military structures at European level.
- the role of the nuclear armed forces of France and Great Britain in an integrated European army should be discussed.

Our objective: European armed forces

Germany's Council Presidency offers a good opportunity to take the initiative towards creating joint European armed forces. This is an ambitious objective and its realisation still seems to lie in the distant future. There could well be parallel structures during a transition period, but the objective is an integrated European army.

If we don't start now, we will never reach our goal. Other, similarly ambitious European projects, ranging from a common market to a common currency, did not happen overnight either. They stood at the end

of a long process which, in the case of the euro for instance, lasted thirty years.

Greater integration of the national armed forces in multinational structures is, for instance in Germany's case, not a new experience: during the Cold War era the level of integration was greater than it is today – it was essential because of the brief early warning intervals. Germany's armed forces were an integral part of NATO from the very beginning and they were completely aligned to the NATO structures.

The handing-over of sovereignty in a key area of state politics, such as that of national defence, may well come up against many reservations, but there are precedents: with the introduction of a common currency the participating states gave up considerable decision-making powers in the fields of economic and monetary policy – in the interest of strengthening Europe.

We can learn from the introduction of the euro in another respect, too: not all countries joined in the euro at the start – be it because the preconditions were not satisfied, or because there were political reservations. In a similar way, the joint army project does not have to be a "Europe of the 27" project from the very start.

It would be possible to pick up a suggestion from the Joint Declaration of Germany, France, Luxemburg and Belgium of April 29th 2003 on the creation of a "European Security and Defence Union" (ESDU). According to the declaration the task of the future ESDU should be "to bring together those member States that are ready to go faster and further in strengthening their defence cooperation. (...) ESDU would be open to all the current and future member States that are ready to join. We wish this concrete cooperation to be integrated into the constitutional Treaty of the European Union so that, in the end, all current and future member States could be a part of it."

A European army would alter the network of relationships between the European Union, the member states and NATO. For us Europeans NATO will remain the strategic link between the EU and the United States of America. But like the United States, Europe must also be in the position to act independently if necessary. The United

States and the EU under the umbrella of NATO – in the best case these are two highly efficient partners. The way in which this partnership can create stability and new security was demonstrated in the Balkans. As Social Democrats in Europe we want to take the initiative of embarking on the road

to a European army. For decades Germany has lived in peace with its neighbours, many are our fellow members in NATO and the EU. We are ready to enter into a process at the end of which we integrate our national armies into a supra-national army, a European army.