

Position paper on the Europeanisation of the armed forces

More than seven years have passed since the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon. The security environment in which the members of the European Union wanted to attain common goals has changed radically since then. With the US shifting more of its focus to the Asia-Pacific region due to the growing security risks there, with the increase in international terrorism and the crises on our doorstep, the EU has a growing responsibility to play its part in resolving conflicts – including those located beyond its own continent. A common foreign, security and defence policy is more necessary than ever.

1. Fundamental matters

With 28 Member States, 500 million citizens and its significant economic strength – it accounts for a quarter of the world's gross national product – the European Union is a global player. The state of play regarding the **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)** does not reflect this, however, and improvements are urgently needed. The aims of peace-keeping, conflict prevention and enhancement of international security, formulated back in 1999, have not been achieved, and little progress is being made towards the prospect of a common defence, enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty.

The **Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)** also used to be a dynamic policy area. Following our experiences in the Balkans, catalogues of civilian and military capabilities were drawn up, a **European Security Strategy (ESS) was adopted** in 2003, and civilian and military missions were carried out, as well as integrated missions. Unfortunately, the individual countries still interpret the strategic and political orientation and the spectrum of tasks in different ways, as is vividly illustrated by the various white papers and Defence Policy Guidelines. There is still no consensus among the Member States as to whether a military or civilian-military headquarters for EU operations is needed. The ESS is in need of revision, and this is now to be put back on the agenda. The 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal – that the EU should be able to deploy up to 60,000 service personnel within 60 days – has never been met. The EU battle groups are impractical and tie up forces unnecessarily. Every real mission requires a specific set of forces, which never coincides with what is on standby at that time. In addition, no country is prepared to take on an operation simply

on the basis of a random rotation principle. At best, the battle groups could serve as the nucleus of a future European army.

Even today, key aims have not been achieved. The capability catalogues are implemented on a voluntary basis. Only a minority of Member States are willing and able to provide the necessary funding to create the defined capabilities. The pressure to consolidate national budgets has exacerbated the situation further.

It is time to develop a new definition and description of the CFSP, to be agreed by the European Parliament and the Commission. The common EU perspective of national defence and the force posture it requires, reaching all the way to the tactical level, offer an opportunity to add a new pillar to the Common Security and Defence Policy, with implications for the Member States' industrial base.

The time is ripe for this. With funding limited in all European defence budgets, there is no alternative to a division of labour when it comes to military capabilities. In comparison with the United States, our 28 national armies (with a total of around 1.5 million service personnel) are too expensive: the European Union's Member States currently spend 190 billion euros on defence each year. There is little to show for it in the current missions; the Europeans' capability gaps in strategic areas speak volumes.

In the face of the pressure to consolidate their budgets, all large EU Member States are reducing the size of their armed forces. And they are doing so without consulting or coordinating with their partners.

Within the European Union, there is still a great deal of costly overlap between defence programmes; for example, there are more than 20 armoured vehicle programmes, six different submarine programmes, five surface-to-air missile programmes, and five combat aircraft programmes.

Agreed European systems, standards and licensing procedures, together with larger orders, could help not only to reduce costs but also to enhance the interoperability of the European armed forces. The European Defence Agency (EDA) has so far not prevented the number of variations in joint procurements from increasing in line with the number of countries involved in any project. Yet cooperation at the equipment planning stage is essential if Europe wants to close the gaps in its capabilities. Europe's defence industries, which are organised largely along national lines, can no longer survive on demand from

a single country. That is another reason why there is a growing focus on the question of the competitiveness of the European defence industry.

For the coming years, the European Union has announced improvements regarding four key capabilities, which have been endorsed by the European Council and the European Parliament: air-to-air refuelling, satellite communication, cyber defence and the development of drones.

Joint European efforts are urgently needed, and offer the opportunity for further integration. In future, we should not only combine command structures and capabilities, but also share tasks or carry them out together.

The German requirement of parliamentary approval for Bundeswehr missions abroad has proved its worth, and does not pose an obstacle to deeper European integration. The German Bundestag has tasked a commission with examining how Parliament's rights can be safeguarded as we move towards greater Alliance integration.

NATO has the expertise with regard to resolving high-intensity conflicts. We believe, however, that the EU has better means of resolving medium- and low-intensity challenges. The two are complementary, not competitors. Twenty-two of NATO's twenty-eight members are also members of the European Union.

2. National shortfalls

Coordination and capability development in the military components of the CSDP have lagged far behind what is required in recent years. Take Germany as an example: an integrated European security policy played no role in the recent restructuring of the Bundeswehr; the reform was a purely national matter. In addition, the current Defence Policy Guidelines do not set out any measures to further develop and enhance the CSDP. A new white paper now offers an opportunity to further develop the aims of German foreign and security policy in Europe.

From our perspective as Social Democrats, German foreign and security policy is a policy for peace. Germany's caution regarding the use of military force, an approach consistently followed and supported across party lines, is important and right. Nonetheless, there are situations where the use of military force is necessary and proportionate in order to prevent a greater evil. It is also true that Germany's caution must not consign it to the political sidelines in Europe

and must not be misunderstood as Germany going it alone. We stand clearly and unequivocally by our Alliance commitments, and we will also seek to ensure that other countries do not go it alone either. The prerequisite for this is for our European partners' trust in Germany's reliability to be restored. Several decisions taken by the last Federal Government led our partners to develop doubts as to whether Germany would stand by its commitments in the decisive moments of a crisis.

Anyone who is working towards a European army must be a dependable and reliable partner. Shared European standards and values are a good starting point for this. They inevitably lead to similar interests, or ideally identical interests. There will always be times when it is necessary to make compromises in order to strike a balance of interests. Only in this way can diverse interests be channelled and translated into joint, coherent action. Close coordination with France, in particular, is key in this context, and is essential if further progress is to be made. To date, the UK has not been an engine of greater European integration – and this is also true in relation to defence, unfortunately.

3. Existing cooperation

The integration of the European armed forces has long since begun. More capabilities are already integrated than is generally realised. In recent years, there have been many good examples of closer cooperation between EU partners, in some cases within NATO. These examples include:

- the various **multinational headquarters** with clear regional competences;
- the **airspace surveillance** in the Baltic states;
- the **AWACS** fleet – although this is a NATO project, it is a good example of joint Alliance institutions;
- NATO's planned **AGS** force, to be based in Sigonella, Italy, which the EU will also be able to use.

Some capabilities are duplicated within the armed forces of the EU, while others are interdependent, i.e. only one instance of them exists in the EU or NATO, and the countries involved are dependent on each other in making use of them. In the case of such capabilities, just one partner choosing not to

participate could render their use impossible. Processes with the highest possible degree of reliability are needed. Only in this way can further progress be achieved in this area.

We want greater prioritisation in the Bundeswehr, in consultation with our European partners. This means, however, that the necessary financial and human resources for these priorities must be freed up in other areas. Capabilities which Germany cannot forgo can also be supplemented by other countries' capabilities.

4. New impetus for integration

Specifically, we are proposing the following measures:

- The establishment of a separate 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 **defence committee in the European Parliament**. At the moment, questions relating to defence policy are only dealt with by a subcommittee of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs. A separate defence committee which supports and scrutinises the ESDP and the process of increased integration of the European armed forces would signal the strengthening of parliamentary responsibility at European level.
- **European coordination and management of the available capabilities**: the smaller EU states in particular are unable to provide the whole capability spectrum. However, they could use their limited resources to specialise in important niche capabilities.
- The preparation of a **common European white paper** on security and defence policy.
- The **establishment of a permanent EU military headquarters with all primary staff functions**. This would have the advantage of constant operational readiness, and allow missions to be planned and conducted centrally, with analysis capabilities available.
- In the case of **Air Policing**, given the short flying times between national territories in Europe, it would be sensible to develop a form of close cooperation or a joint solution. NATO's airspace surveillance in the Baltic states can serve as a model for other small states.

- The **further development of existing resources and capabilities** in the field of information technology, with the aim of ensuring European interoperability.
- The **expansion of the existing European Air Transport Command (EATC)**, currently involving Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Luxembourg, which coordinates and manages the individual national air transport fleets.
- A **Baltic Sea naval headquarters**, building on the Baltic states' successful cooperation in the joint mine countermeasures force.
- In order to further enhance the cooperation between the various armed forces, the **number of joint European manoeuvres** and exercises should be increased further.
- The creation of a **European military academy or university**. This could also be a step towards formulating common training standards for future leading personnel in the European armed forces.
- The expansion of the **European Gendarmerie Force** (headquarters: Vicenza, operational since the beginning of 2006). In the case of Germany, which does not participate because of its strict division between the military and the police, we should seek a solution that enables us to contribute to the European Gendarmerie Force. As the Federal Police have so far not managed to play a significant role in EU and UN missions abroad, the Bundeswehr's military police, in particular, could conceivably fill this gap.
- The accession of Poland and the Baltic states to the Schengen Agreement has led to an urgent need for joint surveillance of the external sea borders, since these countries' national resources are insufficient for this purpose. In an enlarged "**Schengen for the Baltic Sea**", the resources of the states bordering the Baltic Sea could be pooled, and surveillance of the territorial waters and economic zones in the Baltic Sea could increasingly be handled jointly.

As Social Democrats, we want to be the driving force in Europe on the road to a European army subject to parliamentary control, and we want to make steady progress towards this goal. The budget constraints in all European Member States and, to some extent, the current international situation mean that there have rarely been more favourable conditions for greater European cooperation

in the field of security and defence policy than there are today. That said, Germany, as the EU's largest economy, must not view European cooperation as a way of saving money. If we want the declarations of a "supporting partnership" to be translated into action, then we must first make the necessary financial resources available. Savings will only be made over the long term. For decades, Germany has lived in peace with its neighbours; many are fellow NATO and EU members. We are ready to enter into a process at the end of which we integrate our national army into a new and better supranational army – a European army. We believe that this aim, which is enshrined in the coalition agreement, should become a project supported by the entire Federal Government.