

A launch window for European Defence and Security

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As an outcome of the NATO summit held on 3-4 December 2019 in London, Europe is experiencing an alignment of planets that favours the development of its strategic autonomy in the fields of security and defence. The American withdrawal from Syria and Turkey raised many questions and caused deep frustrations within the European Union. Keeping his desire for European sovereignty, Emmanuel Macron thus observed "NATO's brain-dead". Beyond the effects his announcement has engendered and the angry reactions it provoked, within the EU, his idea highlights the fact that a new agenda for Europe is needed. It portrays that the simple opposition between Euro-sceptics and pro-Europeans on issues of respect for sovereignty can be overcome; but if the EU fails to act, then the EU risks to appear devoid when a threat arises.

In terms of security, Europe's judiciary (with the European arrest warrant since 2002) and the police (with Europol since 2010) seems logical, legitimate - and effective - for many citizens. The same should apply to defence issues. Emmanuel Macron's "drop in the ocean" is therefore explained first by the relevant observation of the blockages that still hamper European Defence and, second, by the desire to identify priorities.

The first is political. At a time when the United States is turning away from Europe and its neighbourhood, when Turkey is ignoring its partners, when the United Kingdom is locked in a sterile debate on Brexit, when threats are increasing and when citizens are questioning the usefulness of the European Union, it is time to relaunch the European Security and Defence Policy.

The second is industrial, to contribute to the material autonomy of European Defence. It makes no sense to continue promoting several fighter aircraft at the risk of favouring American equipment. And the same is true in many other cases.

The third is operational, to ensure that European armies are better integrated and more complementary on the ground.

The fourth is strategic, because the Union must gradually develop a common perception of its strategic interests in the world.

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Finally, the fifth is financial. Beyond the European Defence Fund, the European Union should develop available sufficient budgetary resources to carry out its Security and Defence Policy, including the protection of its borders (Frontex).

Indeed, Europe's defence has made more progress in the last eighteen months than since the bitter failure of the European Defence Community, in 1954. These have included the establishment of the military planning and leadership capacity, the launch of the European Defence Fund (EDF) and, of course, the launch of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). On this issue, its members, in search of security, have never been so united.

In the words of Elmar Brock, the former Chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, "*we have achieved more in twelve months than in twelve years*". Moreover, the United Kingdom's exit from the Union will not necessarily discredit the construction in progress but could even accelerate it. Firstly, because the British will no longer be able to hinder its development, but also because they may want to remain within the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Remaining an associate member will enable the United Kingdom to sustain a strong relationship with the Union, which is very valuable in terms of security and information exchange. A major player in terms of its military potential, the United Kingdom will thus maintain its position between the old and the new continent.

Beyond the semantic quarrels over the status of NATO, time has come for more clarity on our needs and precise objectives. There will be a succession of meetings, from this NATO Summit to the Conference on the Future of Europe in 2020; the opportunities must be seized. It is from this launch window that the Union must take advantage of, in order to clearly affirm its will in terms of strategic, technological, operational or financial sovereignty and therefore geopolitical autonomy, as the new President of the European Commission wishes.

EuropaNova and its partners believe that the future of the EU depends on its public support. So do EU security and defence policies today. **Between the 14th and 16th of February 2020, our first Young Munich Security Conference will connect young innovative thinkers with experts from policy & research in a dialogue on the future of European security and defence.** Three main key-topics will be addressed. **First, the new security challenges and roadmaps for Europe. Second, European migration and internal border policies. Lastly, new technologies, hybrid and security challenges.**