



THE DECEMBER EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON SECURITY AND DEFENCE

THE DESIRED OUTCOME

*A Proposal for a “Memo” for your Head of State/Government
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Main Political Message: Defence Matters

It's about Europe's place on the world stage and the overall expectation that Member States ought to achieve the autonomy to launch crisis management operations, whenever required, that can make the difference on the ground. It's also about industry, jobs and growth. And austerity matters as well. It's about creating more effective and more efficient (and budget neutral) security and defence capabilities in Europe. Time has come to handle these issues at the Top Level.

Required action: Underpin this message by some key decisions.

(1) If Defence Matters, the Question Why Must Be Answered

The new geopolitical context leaves Members States no other option than to become a security provider collectively, to protect their interests and values, to protect their own citizens, to ensure security in neighbouring countries, and to become a relevant actor in the international community. This requires at least achieving consensus on a broad Strategic Concept. The future will make clear if and when additional steps may be required to develop a more elaborate new security strategy.

Required action: Task the HR to develop a European Strategic Concept, building on the 2003 European Security strategy, to specify: who has to do what, when, where, how and with which means, in particular when launching crisis management operations. And: to define priorities. In developing this concept ensuring ownership of all stakeholders is important.

(2) Defence Capabilities

The shortfalls in our European defence capabilities have been identified, and we are pretty well aware of the redundancies. The same holds true for the cost of addressing the shortfalls. The study period is over. Austerity requires once more injecting innovative solutions, top down, right now.

Required action: Instruct our respective national defence planning authorities to coordinate any plans and projects with European partners, through the EDA, prior to presenting them for national scrutiny and approval, with the aim of reducing redundancies and addressing shortfalls at the EU level. The EDA is to be empowered as was envisaged by the Lisbon Treaty. Ministers of Defence – in formal Defence Council meetings – will steer these processes.

(3) Defence Industry

Austerity is jeopardising the European defence industry, at the risk that their military activities will eventually evaporate. Moreover, if we want industry to survive we are in need of creating at the global level a “level playing field” for all of their activities.

Required action: Decide to launch some specific longer term projects (flag ships) such as unmanned aerial vehicles that are of multiple use and can support several policies at the Member State and EU level and, similarly, cyber capabilities. Task the Commission to put in place a specific policy to strengthen the defence industry and to forge a more global “level playing field”.

(4) Partners

In our globalised world, security and defence can only be optimised in consultation and coordination with our partners, in the first place our American allies.

Required action: In the run up to the 2014 NATO summit request a report on how the CSDP – NATO relationship can be strengthened, based on the principle of supporting and supported organisation whenever either the Union or NATO has the lead in a given crisis management operation.

(5) Public Opinion

The lack of any solid communication policy on CSDP is a strategic shortfall in its own right. All CSDP operations so far have achieved their objectives: quite unique on a world scale, but rather unknown to our public opinion. If defence matters, it matters first of all to our citizens. The ultimate goal of CSDP is to defend their interests, their values and their society, a message that addresses the older and younger generations alike. Defence ought to be seen as an investment.

Required action: Task the Commission and the HR to develop a specific communication policy on security and defence by translating the European Security Strategy and the new Strategic Concept into an new and attractive narrative adapted to the 21st century.

(6) Follow-up

Our strategic environment is one of regional and even global volatility. A sense of urgency is justified. However, on issues of strategy, capability development and defence industry, we are in for a long haul. Top down steering by the European Council will remain vital.

Required action: Decide on the date of the next European Council meeting on security and defence, to take place in December 2015. Underline that results are expected, even before that date.

P.S.: If events prevent us from taking decisions during the December 2013 meeting, or worse, if only lip service is paid to its agenda, be prepared: (1) to remain irrelevant at G8 and G20 meetings, in the UN, and in particular in the eyes of the US; (2) to lose NATO eventually; and moreover (3) be aware that we will disappoint our citizens for maintaining at their expense large defence forces that are no longer fit for purpose.