

## When does a European army become reality?

*- Input by Bernd Hüttemann at the Northern Group Meeting of EUROMIL in Berlin on August 20, 2015.*

“Go East!” – came the latest demand of NATO’s Eastern flank lobbying for **permanent bases** to counter growing Russian aggression earlier this week. Eastern states, from Bulgaria to Poland to Estonia are planning to put a larger NATO presence on the agenda of a summit in November. This demand and **Putin’s visit to Crimea** are the latest developments in a chain of growing instability that have increased insecurity in Europe. Russia’s annexation of Crimea one and a half years ago highlighted this insecurity that has proved a headache for European leaders ever since. Had we met, say, in December 2013 at this place, we would not be speaking so clearly about Europe’s insecurity crisis. Europe has changed – and it is crucial now for Europe to find a solution and finally build up an effective Common Security and Defence Policy structures

Your conference is taking place in historic times and I’m very happy to get the opportunity to discuss views and visions with experts like you. I won’t talk about military details here – these are things you know better. My focus will be on the political dimension of a European Army.

EUROMIL has been a member organisation of the **European Movement International** [since 2011, and has played an active part in our debates on foreign and security policy

I am Bernd Hüttemann, Vice President of the European Movement International. I am also the Secretary General In our German office, the European Movement Germany.

The European Movement International is an international organisation working as a pro-European network for political, social, economic and cultural trends in civil society. We facilitate the active participation of citizens and civil society organisations in the development of a united Europe and provide a foundation for working towards more integration in a democratic Europe grounded in solidarity and the respect for human rights. Our members, 76 organisations in 39 countries, are representatives from European associations, political parties, enterprises, trade unions and our National Councils.

EUROMIL, as the umbrella organisation of military associations and trade unions is an important member and a key voice for us that functions as an example of European cooperation of soldiers and military resources.

Thank you very much for letting me come here today to present to you. I shall attempt to answer the question regards when a European army might become a reality by focussing on the core matters at the European Political level as it stands today.

I will try to reflect on the different aspects this involves and I will try to give insights regarding the point of view of the European Movement International.

At the European Movement International, we believe in the necessity for and further development of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU with the aim of exercising greater responsibility in the world. Therefore, essential reforms need to be addressed so that further integration can be achieved. To tackle all existing challenges in the new international environment, there is a need for a **permanent structured cooperation**. Our president **Jo Leinen** (Member of the European Parliament) underlines the necessity of credibility in the EU as an international player in order to work effectively on achieving

peaceful conflict resolutions. Yet the EU needs to have the means to act militarily when necessary. Consequently, the member states should integrate their military capacities and further strengthen the Common Security and eDefence Policy and the Common Foreign Policy. The European Movement International supports calls for a **European army in light of an increased role of the EU in the security of the continent**. The European Movement has called on the European Union heads of states and governments before to use the existing treaty provisions that allow for closer defence cooperation. The added value of pooled military forces is both financial and political: it will allow the EU to maintain its military capabilities, strengthen its global position and permanently ensure its security. The re-opening of this debate recently, by Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker among others, might give the impetus needed to take the necessary steps towards pooled resources and structured European defence cooperation.

**The unclear security situation in the EU's direct neighborhood is alarming:**

Since the passing of the European Security Strategy in 2003 many things have changed and tensions, most notably on its Eastern flank, are at their most heightened levels in some time. Multiple internal and external challenges have arisen, demanding the EU's redefinition of its role as a security provider in the global context. These external threats demand a common approach for a stronger Union in European Defence. I know it's not easy and treaty changes are a longer process. But even within the existing treaties a lot can be done in the fields of security of supply and Cyber Defence as was highlighted in the 2013 European Council Summit.

The ongoing **Ukraine crisis** has been a wake up-call. The defence situation is more complex than before this crisis. The European Movement International has

been active in Ukraine for a long time – and this ongoing initiative was rekindled in 2013 following a delegation led by our President to build up a Ukrainian branch of the European Movement to help foster other civil society movements and stand up for the European values (and a peaceful Europe) we believe in. We see the benefit of the EU as an institution promoting peace. In fact, we advocated for it to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012, which it did, and it is in our interest to strengthen the stability, security and prosperity of our immediate neighbors to the east and south. The EU as an international actor has a political responsibility in the region, not only an economic one.

Despite this the EU's limits in foreign policy became evident as a result of Ukraine as well as the Arab Spring and the ongoing Civil War in Syria. Federica Mogherini, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, has indicated that as a result of increased threats in the EU neighborhood, which makes more cooperation among the 28 member states a necessity, the military dimension has to be further developed. As of now, the EU has some joint missions abroad (as for example Somalia), yet it lacks the capacity to speak with one voice in most cases. This was highlighted perhaps most recently in Syria or in Mali in 2013 where France went in with its military on its own. The new threats are transnational and the 'traditional' limitation to state boundaries is no longer accurate in most conflicts. This calls for a solution on European level and a European capacity to respond to crisis. Therefore, Mogherini is preparing a new **EU Global strategy on Foreign and Security Policy** showing that the EU is aware that global challenges can only be tackled on a European level. We as the European Movement International have advocated for a White Paper with a more strategic approach successive papers in both 2013 and 2014.

All in all, both of our papers call for a more comprehensive approach and a clear strategy in European Defence. The European Commission emphasises in its

*European Agenda on Security* common actions to achieve and guarantee fundamental rights. The *European Council on Defence* in December 2013 also identified the need for more cooperation, though further elaboration on measures to advance the integration in this field fell short and didn't contain any new approach despite the shared security interests across our continent.

The European Movement is in support of a comprehensive approach to defence via the strategic use of the various EU instruments. This means achieving a better integration of civilian and military structures; and developing regional strategies for more efficient regional coordination. In addition ensuring closer coordination between the various European instruments and bodies under the Common Security and Defence Policy is essential.

Currently little meaningful action has been carried out in this regard, despite the treaty competences having been clarified in the aforementioned summit in 2013. Nevertheless, the comprehensive approach envisioned by the Common Security and Defence Policy needs to be further developed, and this includes the **dimension of a European Army**. Europe needs to speak with one voice when it reacts to international conflicts to stay credible and to protect the values it stands for to the inside and to the outside. Jean Claude Juncker statement at the beginning of the year outline a clear vision for a European army to deal with the new global challenges and we say that Europe must be able to focus on its security and stability.

## Economic Scope

There is not only a political dimension to this. There are a lot of studies showing that **the pooling and sharing**, meaning the wise distribution and use of resources and responsibilities, could decrease the costs for all the member states and increase the capability of the EU to react. On one hand, member states are cutting their defence budgets because of the current economic crises;

on the other hand, they are spending money on the same things that could be distributed better among members according to existing resources. This could increase efficiency without necessarily increasing spending. Cutting down national defence budgets will leave European countries, and thus the EU, unprepared for the worst case scenario of dealing with conflict. The member states alone cannot deal with such matters in a meaningful manner on the international scale and therefore need to combine their resources to be more efficient in their capability to respond to crisis.

## Political Dimension

In order to do so, the *European Council on Defence* in December 2013 decided that the **effectiveness, visibility, impact and capabilities of the Common Security and Defence Policy need to be increased** and strengthened in order to firmly establish European defence. This is inspired by the idea of a European Defence Community in the early 1950's as *the* leading idea after-World War II-Europe to create indefinite peace on the continent, yet the EU still hasn't managed to define a coherent foreign affairs agenda.

The new Commission focuses more on political cooperation and foreign affairs and demands more political integration. The idea of a more integrated European Defence was, at one time, the core of the European project. **Following WWII-Europe**, when the European Integration had just started, Germany was especially in favor of it as that would have helped to end disarmament. In the end, the idea for a European Defence Community failed as it didn't pass in the French Assemblée Nationale in 1954 because France feared the weakening of its own army and Germany gaining power again.

Now, the idea of a European Army is in the German coalition treaty of 2013 of CDU, CSU and SPD, as it was also in 2005 and 2009; yet it is still to be carried out.

I am very curious as to what Germany's leaders will do with this item. A couple of points on the coalition treaty have already been accomplished. But how will Germany's leaders follow-up on this point of the treaty? After Juncker's statement concerning the necessity of an army, Germany has shown positive reactions. Defence minister Von der Leyen even called it a natural step of integration that has to follow at one point, yet no one gave a time frame to put it on the actual political agenda.

The political implications are deep: A European army means more political integration. Security is a core matter of state sovereignty, and this is a point where most member states make clear that this cannot be a competence of the EU as it is not a state. Especially **Eastern European** countries and **Great Britain** are against a community army. First of all, having an army on the European level implies changes to the Lisbon Treaty as the mandate to send troops would have to be given to the European Parliament. States and national parliaments are resistant to this as they still want to have a say in this core matter. Having to go through 28 national parliaments extends the decision making process and adds more bureaucracy to the bureaucratic jungle of the EU. Consensus would have to be achieved. As the structure, size and importance of armies are different in every member state, reaching this consensus could be really difficult. Also, many doubt whether the EU could react fast and efficiently to threats. As of now, the non-existence of a real common foreign policy hampers these efforts.

Nevertheless, on a political level, the idea has a very huge integrational aspect. Symbolically, it would be a step to be one voice on the outside and increase the EU's credibility. It would show that that all member states are striving together for Europe's values and peace. It is true that there is **NATO** for armed conflicts, but regionalism in this matter is becoming more and more important. The European Movement does not believe it is necessary to duplicate existing

structures, but believes in working with existing partners, such as the OSCE, NATO and the Council of Europe to advance the position of the EU as an institution promoting peace and security. The difference today is that the most concerning conflicts are indeed in the immediate European Neighborhood. If we adopted a more comprehensive approach to security, Europe could present itself to the world as a unified entity standing behind its values of peace and prosperity in the region. It wouldn't only include clear positioning of the Union as a whole; it would also create a great contribution to internal stability. **Any prospect of war between member states would effectively be dimmed.** The dream that laid the foundation for our Europe today could see fruition. Working towards a more integrated security community will help ensure the peace, security and stability of our European continent. The European Movement is committed to promoting Europe's role in conflict prevention, promoting human rights all over the world and strengthening democratic and pluralistic societies in Eastern Europe.

As of now, **many questions remain unanswered and this is where your expertise comes in:** It is unclear which extent a European Army could take. How successful can the idea be if national armies are kept? Would further defence integration consequently mean the abolishment of national armies? Of course, the majority of member states could never favour that. It would fundamentally change the definition of what the EU is as a concept.

Also, not only would there be changes to be made in the treaties, a real European Army might include changes to the institutional organisation of the EU. As a consequence, the question of who to put in charge of a European Army would arise, and the discussion could go towards big member states versus small member states. This could lead to a lot of bureaucratic arrangements and quotas, confusing everyone and feeding the ever-growing "institutional monster"



as the EU is often viewed from the outside. The creation of an independent institution without any state quotas whatsoever could be a solution, but would expand the already huge institutional organisation of the European Union.

Having mentioned just a few thoughts about the necessity albeit difficult implementation of a European Army, it becomes obvious that the political dimension we are speaking of is very intertwined and conflicting. However, from the political perspective, this project holds a huge potential. The further integration of the Common Security and Defence Policy necessitates further completion of the political union. The global playing field has changed and the EU finally needs to react adequately on this. Global challenges have to be tackled together. The European Movement International therefore believes the EU should have a greater role in providing peace and security on the European continent and as a global actor, which also points to the need for a common European Army, only to be used when non-violent means don't succeed. The goal should be to achieve, preserve and contribute to peace and to secure the values the Union stands for in the first place.

It was only 3 years ago that the European Union won the Nobel Peace Prize. This Prize implies responsibility for the future. Europe can still be the big peace project the founding fathers meant it to be. Let's live up to it and set the course for a European Army – sooner rather than later.