EVROPSKÁ OBRANNÁ AGENTURA NENÍ PANDOŘINA SKŘÍŇKA, ALE VELKOLEPÝ EXPERIMENT DOBRÉ VŮLE

THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE AGENCY, NOT A PANDORA´S BOX BUT A GRAND EXPERIMENT OF GOODWILL

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When the member states of the European Union, 19 of which at the same time belonged to NATO, created the European Defence Agency (EDA), they exposed themselves to bigamy. A double life that for a number of them meant the break of concentration on national defence build-up already hard hit by military disengagement of the post-Cold War era. For many observes, the establishment of the EDA was equalled to opening the Pandora's Box. The fear of overlaps, confusion and rivalry between the two supposedly benign partners, the Agency and the Alliance, was well voiced both within the EU and NATO. It would be wrong to assume that there is no duplication between the work of the EDA and NATO. Yes, there is some, but it is limited in range and confined only to certain areas. This is both necessary and justified, given the differences in membership between the two respective organizations and the distinction, yet the compatibility, in the focus of their missions.

When the EDA came into being in July 2004, it was tasked, along the lines of the European Security Strategy adopted a year before, to support the member states and the Council in their effort to improve EU defence capabilities in the field of crisis management and to sustain the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) as it stands now and develops in the future. In practice, it means to help the EU develop military effective, credible and coherent forces, including EU Battle Groups as a key element of the EU rapid military response capabilities. These forces should be able to respond autonomously and with rapid and decisive action to a whole spectrum of crisis management operations, including humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, peacekeeping and possibly joint disarmament operations, the support for third countries in combating terrorism and security sector reform.

But the mandate of the EDA went well beyond the request for developing military capabilities indispensable for ESDP operations. Within its broader tasking, the EDA was ascribed four specific functions: to develop European defence capabilities, to promote European defence research and technology, to advocate European armaments cooperation, and to create competitive European defence equipment market and strengthen the European defence technological and industrial base. In line with these responsibilities, the EDA developed four strategies, corresponding to each work strand of the Agency, all of which seek to induce a structural change in the way armed forces of the EU member states function, are trained, maintained and equipped. In doing so, the EDA tries to create incentives for the member states to opt for indigenous "European solutions" to most capability shortfalls, and to make the EU more autonomous and less dependent on non-European resources and technologies. Last but not least, the EDA, in collaboration with the European Commission, seeks to develop projects that can be used in military and civilian crisis management operations, such as unmanned air systems or software defined radio.

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For its part, NATO has not seemed to make significant progress in the non-capability related areas of the EDA's work. In the sixty-year timeframe, NATO has not managed to ensure a sufficient harmonization and integration of defence industries between Europe and the United States, or succeeded in streamlining research and technology spending, not to mention, to become the hub of cooperative armaments projects. Improving defence capabilities with smarter spending through cooperative armaments, research and technology programmes, and creating transatlantic, if not European, defence market through the harmonization and integration of defence industries in Europe and the United States was simply out of NATO's reach. Indeed, it was neither its task, nor ambition.

In the capability development area, the forces required for the NATO Response Force (NRF) are intended to be compatible with those earmarked for EU Battle Groups. It is because they are expected to engage in the same types of operations, except those related to collective defence which is not part of the EU's remit. Thus, the build-up of the EU Battle Groups in no way compromises the ability of concerned member states to undertake the operations within NATO's much broader mandate and vice-versa. In effect, the EU is complementary to NATO in the cases where NATO does not seek the involvement or simply cannot undertake the given crisis management operation.

When it comes to the question of participation, the difference in membership between the EDA and NATO is rather of an advantage than weakness. In the case of the EDA, most of the so-called "neutral" member states are significant contributors to EDA's efforts in research and technology and important players in all other three remaining areas. Although the most preponderant partner in NATO, the United States, is not present in the EDA, there is no lack of leadership and nobody can blame others for the lack of progress in key programmes, as the participation is voluntary and related decisions are made by qualified majority. That is one of the main reasons, why the EDA is viewed by the majority of the member states as a more effective framework than NATO to mobilize political will and marshal necessary resources to improve European defence capabilities.

The EU has also a comparative advantage of having the full spectrum of non-military ("soft-power") instruments, such as financial, judicial, police and administrative capabilities at its disposal. While NATO is focused on collective defence and in crisis management aims mostly at operations that are limited in its scope and time, the EU undertakes the full spectrum of crisis management operations, which are always part of a medium or long-term political project.

Against this backdrop, it is in our interest to ensure an effective and transparent dialogue between the EU and NATO and to create a synergy between the focus and capacities of the two respective organizations. The relationship between the EU and NATO should be of a cooperative and complementary, but not of a competitive nature. We all are building one single set of forces either through Battle Groups or NRF concepts, preparing for compatible if not similar type of missions, and having the same relatively low level of defence spending, which is not likely to be significantly increased in the years to come. Therefore, a close coordination between the EU and NATO is essential to avoid redundancies, overstretch and not to divert our limited resources from our joint effort to improve European defence capabilities.

Clearly, the existing EU-NATO relationship should be strengthened through the establishment of an open and constructive dialogue between the EDA and NATO working bodies with the aim to build strong and compatible defence capabilities. Otherwise, the EU and NATO will continue to develop independently from each other, increasing the possibility of overlaps, confusion and rivalry. And, this is neither politically acceptable, nor financially affordable. The EU also needs NATO to maintain a healthy transatlantic relationship with the United States, which is the closest European ally and since the Second World War the final arbiter of European security, stability and well-being. Without their support, the EU will not be able to fulfil its global ambitions and play an active role, it seeks, in maintaining international peace and security.

The establishment of the EDA in 2004 was just the beginning in building European defence capabilities in a more comprehensive fashion. The EU needs to continue developing its strategic

culture, encompassing both institutional and conceptual frameworks. Indeed, the EU still has a new reform treaty in its pocket that aims to bring the EU defence and security framework on a new basis by stipulating the principle of collective self-defence in case of armed attack against any EU member state, by providing for the role of the EU as a regional arrangement in line with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, by promulgating permanent structured cooperation in military matters, and by codifying ESDP practices with the role of the EDA in the forefront. Although the new reform treaty was intended to bring the protracted EU institutional reform process to a rapid conclusion and to focus on the global challenges facing the EU, it is still more of an ambition, for which the EU has to find the way to realise.

To conclude with one final thought, a continuous review of the level of ambition based on the European Security Strategy will be indispensable in the years to come. As the EU defence capabilities will improve over time, demand for EU military and civilian crisis management capacities will grow accordingly. Therefore, the EU has to foster its institutional set-up to include military and civilian crisis management structures, possibly a permanent EU operation headquarters, and to promulgate conditions under which its enhanced defence capabilities ("hard-power") will be used. Without a full-fledged crisis-management structures and a comprehensive crisis-management concept, encompassing the questions of why, when, where and how the EU action will be taken, the EU will be more prone to fail in realising its ambitions to deliver on global agenda. It would risk that its possible incoherent and inefficient actions could alienate the outside world, lead to the development of a two—or three—tier Europe inside it, undermine EU's legitimacy and make it suffer from double standards fatigue.

It is, therefore, our principal objective to add to the credibility of the EU's external actions by developing autonomous full-fledged and transparent European defence capabilities both internally, within EU structures and policies, and externally, with the help of other benign partners, such as NATO and the United States. In this respect, the creation of the EDA was equalled to a grand experiment of goodwill, helping the EU share the burden for maintaining international peace and security and defend values, interests, principles and aspirations, it represents for both its citizens and people around the world.