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EUROPEAN DEFENSE CAPABILITIES: A WIND OF CHANGE

European defense capability gaps highlighted by the war in Ukraine

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Introduction

[Quoting The New-Yorker] One year ago, the Russian invasion was a triple surprise. Firstly, for many European observers, it was not rational for Vladimir Putin to launch such an offensive. In the European mindset, war could not be an option and rare are the occasions when the world has observed such a discrepancy between reality and perception.¹ The second surprise was the extraordinary resistance of the Ukrainian people. Russia had expected the brutal collapse of the Ukrainian government, a repeat of 1968, after the Prague Spring. Instead, Ukraine had foreseen the invasion and carefully prepared, and Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) were able to absorb the first shock. Their resistance continues to this day, with the growing support of western equipment, and the war has *de facto* become a laboratory of modern warfare, where military capabilities are improved on the battlefield. The third surprise was the coordinated political response of European countries. It seems likely that Moscow, aware of European nations' dependence on Russian gas wouldn't have expected a unified and strong response. Paradoxically however, the Russian invasion has reaffirmed Europe's status as a geopolitical actor and revitalized transatlantic links within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

"Europe is not at war but war is in Europe"². The return of war as a geopolitical and operational reality has profoundly challenged European certainties as well as defense choices Europe has made in the past decades. War dispels illusions, and this war highlighted the gaps in European defense capabilities. We define the European defense as the defense of Europe, by Europe, for Europe. However, it can be an ambition, but it is not a reality nowadays. To become a geopolitical actor, Europe should develop political willingness, ability to decide and to act. EU has grown as an expending space and not as a territory to protect. This is why Europe has not this strategic capability. For the purposes of this paper, "Europe" will refer to Member States of European Union (EU). The relationship between the EU and the United Kingdom (UK), obviously a major actor in the defense of Europe, and the United States will also be explored. This means that we will be studying national defense policy in Europe as it relates to overall cooperation within EU structures and NATO, along several levels of understanding and responses. We consider defense capability in a broad definition, from the definition of military capacity (doctrine, organization, human resources, training, support, equipment, a large spectrum from equipment)³ to operational contracts and superiority factors (including namely mass, human forces and cooperation⁴). We consider this full spectrum as defense capability, because it allows armed forces to win in a national or multinational framework. Finally, in the context of our work, we will be examining capability gaps first in terms of the lessons learned from the War in Ukraine and second in terms of how Europe has addressed them thus far.

Our paper will be looking at defense capability gaps in terms of national and multinational (EU – NATO) responses and strategic consequences. It does not include the specific capacity of nuclear deterrence and its use by Russia. We must first identify the specific shortfalls in European defense that this war has

¹ (Enrico Letta, Former Italian Prime Minister February 21, 2023)

² (Rapport d'information de MM. Cédric PERRIN et Jean-Marc TODESCHINI, 8 février 2023)

³ Definition of capacity in the French military doctrine.

⁴ Action terrestre future, 2016

highlighted. After exploring the operational level, we will analyze the perspectives of key European nations on this war, as well as NATO and EU responses to it. Fundamentally, the War in Ukraine invites questions as to practical measures Europe can take to ready its defense for wartime.

As we will be taking a broad look at Europe's defense issues and their strategic implications, our analysis will not be able to contain all the nuances of each nation's situation. Instead, we will focus on three countries (France, Germany, and Poland) that represent very different visions. After addressing the return of war in Europe and the lack of European investment in defense, we will delve into Europe's initial responses to the war, what they revealed about its military shortfalls, and the new risks that emerged from these diverse responses. Finally, we will provide recommendations for instituting a more practical and capable European defense.

From our perspective, the War in Ukraine has exposed European military shortfalls for the requirements of large-scale combat operations (LSCO) against peer adversaries. However, there is still no European consensus on defining these military gaps. Each nation's analysis of the War in Ukraine and overall continental defense occurs through the prism of its particular national mindset and tendencies. Fundamentally, this strategic shock has created new risks and areas of improvement for Europe. European investment in capability building and a reinforced solidarity in its collective vision within NATO could lead to a new European defense and security contract.

Part.1 Return of war in Europe facing European disinvestment in defense

The War in Ukraine is accelerating and amplifying a trend we have been observing since the beginning of the 21st century: the return of high intensity war in Europe. The main operational lessons of Ukraine, both in the preparation and execution of the war, have been challenging European force design while highlighting the continent's lack of investment in its defense.

1.1. Main lessons learned from the War in Ukraine

In many ways, this conflict serves as a laboratory of modern warfare. Strategic approaches, tactical choices, and military capacities are improved on the battlefield in peer-to-peer confrontations. From a prospective approach, the main lessons learned must highlight adjustments that could reinforce European defense.

Prepare the confrontation

Understanding the enemy. “This war is a cognitive war”.⁵ Knowing and understanding the enemy is crucial. Neither Russia nor Ukraine seemed sincere in their efforts to implement the Minsk agreements.⁶ Key to Ukrainian resistance was the country's assumption that this invasion was inevitable. This goes beyond military intelligence and points to understanding the rationale of the enemy. Moscow's initial plan relied on the idea of strategic surprise (attack north of Kyiv), which Ukraine was able to face it had been preparing for this war against Russia since 2014. Many European countries, however, were not able to predict this rationale⁷ and one year later, are still finding it hard to anticipate Russian strategic intentions.

Preparing the war against Russia. “Although Western support had been symbolically invaluable in the early stages of the war, the enemy was stopped principally through the employment of Ukrainian arms”.⁸ After 2014, UAF carefully and pragmatically prepared for confrontation against Russia.⁹ For Ukraine, preparation meant observing, fighting, and understanding the enemy on the battlefield¹⁰; engaging in joint tactic training; creating education initiatives, namely by “intention command”¹¹; executing missions in degraded conditions; and implementing war logistics. Physical training was accompanied by mental preparation. For months, Russia launched psychological attacks, notably through anonymous calls and messages to Ukrainian officials and officers telling them not

⁵ (MG Pierre-Joseph Givre 16 février 2023)

⁶ (Céline Marrangé 16 février 2023)

⁷ (Laurent Bansept Juillet 2022)

⁸ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022, 36)

⁹ (Ministry of Defense of Ukraine 2021)

¹⁰ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022, 15)

¹¹ (Laurent Bansept Juillet 2022)

to resist and through President Putin's official statement that Ukraine should not fight Russia.¹² Ukraine responded by targeting Russian military and public opinion.¹³

Domination in battle

Agility on the battlefield. UAF took advantage of their agility by information sharing and subsidiarity. They developed using dual digital tools (commercial and governmental¹⁴) that enabled them to share information more quickly at lower levels. This was possible thanks to international support and the years-long digital transformation being implemented by officials wherein networks and mobile devices were made more secure and individual users received practical guidance.¹⁵ A key factor of Ukrainian tactical successes was also the subsidiarity of joint command and control. Ukrainian brigades are the tactical level of integration, with almost full spectrum of tactical effects for defense in depth (information sharing, effect integration, civil and military connectivity, long-range artillery).¹⁶ Maneuvers are decentralized in to boost the "observe – orientate – decide – act" (OODA) loop. However, the information warfare led by UAF shows that information management remains at the strategic level.¹⁷

Mix of technologies. Balance between advanced technology and the broader scale of lower-level technology is necessary to face the complexity of high-intensity wars. The Ukrainian defense industry made impressive progress before the war developing and adapting new equipment. UAF rely on massive stockpiles inherited from the Soviet era to which they have been consistently adding as well as the full spectrum of weapons and equipment that multiple Western countries have sent for the country's support. Some of this technology has allowed Ukraine to gain tactical and operative superiority, notably through air defense systems, UAS-UAV, deep fires, and hypersonic planes. In such a massive confrontation, success relies on the capacity to produce, integrate, and support large amounts of equipment. Another key factor of success was the UAF ability to integrate different kinds of equipment and adapt them to the local situation.¹⁸ (One example: the renovation of Ukrainian drones to be able to conduct 1000 km wide attacks on Russian soil.)

Information is everywhere but not enough. According to Major General Robert Scales, it is necessary to "capture the psycho-cultural rather than the geographical high ground."¹⁹ This war has taken place among huge amounts of data and huge populations, hence the importance of open sources.²⁰ UAF have certainly won in

¹² (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

¹³ (Laurent Bansept Juillet 2022)

¹⁴ GIS Art for Artillery¹⁴ or ePPO¹⁴ (an app used to follow and report drones or missiles to air defense)

¹⁵ (Col. Theodore W. Kleisner, U.S. Army, Trevor T. Garmey April 2022)

¹⁶ (Col Jordan January 25, 2023)

¹⁷ (Col Jordan January 25, 2023)

¹⁸ Attack against the cruiser Moskva (April 14, 2022), Snake Island (April 30, May 8 2022)

¹⁹ (Maj. Gen. Robert H. Scales, former U.S. Army War College commander and deputy chief of staff for doctrine 2006)

²⁰ (General Sir Jim Hockenhull, Commander of Strategic Command, UK Ministry of Defence November 7, 2022)

this domain,²¹ by identifying two areas in which Ukraine must dominate: Western public opinion (to gain support) and Ukrainian public opinion (to enhance the fighting spirit). However, this is not enough to win the war. There is a risk that information warfare can act as a restraint on the conducting of operations. For example, the choice to position Ukrainian defense in Donbas was primarily based on informational criteria²² that restrained tactical opportunities.

Conducting the war

Critical resilience. The resilience of critical infrastructures (energy, information, command and control) is crucial. Military and civil actors have provided multiple paths of Internet connectivity, especially in space, cyber and information. The Ukrainian government and UAF have been able to integrate multiple actors, so that even when Russia has attempted to jam or deny access to Ukrainian operators, the country's connection infrastructure seems to have always allowed the Internet to work²³ and provide services. The invaluable support of private actors like Starlink, Microsoft and Google has raised the broader question of data sovereignty for Ukraine while the attack against the Nord Stream pipeline illustrated that hybrid warfare targets infrastructures outside of Ukraine.

The violent rule of size. Attrition tends to become an operational objective and exhaustion is a mid-term threat for UAF, regarding human forces and equipment. "When guns fire, cyberwarfare reaches its limits".²⁴ Size remains a key factor of success. At the tactical level, the Ukrainian offensive in Lyman was conducted with a seven to one ratio. At the strategic level, the size of a country's stockpiles matters: Russia started the invasion with 18,000 armored vehicles and now still has 13,000.²⁵ In July 2022, Russian artillery fired 50,000 shells per day; only 6,000 came from the Ukrainian side. Size was also the determining factor behind Ukraine's decision to mobilize as many of its people as it could. At the beginning of the Russian invasion, Ukraine mobilized its cadets, and reserve units to balance out Russian power.²⁶ One of the surprises of this war turned out to be the number of reservists Ukraine could rely on as well as their operational capacities.²⁷ The decisive rise in power of Ukrainian forces gave the country initiative and the ability to absorb the first shock.

Moral forces, *sine qua non* condition. The Ukrainian people's fighting spirit undoubtedly goes a long way toward explaining their resistance. It finds its origins in the feeling that temporarily united the whole nation, of being the target of an unjustified aggression. Each small victory, each example of ingenuity, national

²¹ (LTG Michel Yakovleff, Michel Goya November 23, 2022)

²² (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022, 36)

²³ (Col Jordan January 25, 2023)

²⁴ (MG Aymeric Bonnemaïson December 7, 2022)

²⁵ (Col Jordan January 25, 2023)

²⁶ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022, 36)

²⁷ Four reserve brigades were the structure for 25 territorial and National Guard brigades able to maneuver. (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

solidarity, international support, and Russian failure has probably helped strengthen the Ukrainian people. The violence Ukrainian soldiers are facing on the frontline is hard to imagine. “It was not uncommon for a company position of the UAF – occupying a frontage of approximately 3 km – to be subjected to 6,000 rounds per day of fire.”²⁸ Russia has been deliberately and directly targeting cities, energy infrastructures, and other critical capacities to strike at Ukrainian people’s morale. Even so, Ukraine has withstood dozens of thousands of people killed in action, wounded, or disappeared.²⁹ What would be the tolerance threshold for other European countries in the face of such a war?

1.2. European disinvestment in defense

Europe is facing the return of high-intensity war after decades of disinvestment in defense. In 2020, EU member states collectively spent over €200 billion on defense; 2021 estimates have grown to €220 billion.³⁰ These developments follow a prolonged period of substantial cuts in defense spending.

Years of underinvestment

At the end of the Cold War, the so-called “peace dividend”,³¹ combined with the consequences of the economic and financial crisis in 2007-2008, led to a significant overall reduction in defense spending, and the progressive reduction in size of the armed forces. This has been a long-term trend for 60 years³². European defense expenditures went down from €183 billion in 2008 to €159 billion in 2014, only reaching pre-crisis levels by 2018-2019. Between 2009 and 2018, EU member states’ cuts amounted to an aggregated under-investment of around €160 billion, compared to 2008 spending levels. This led to European defense suffering from a lack of Research and Technology (R&T). Only 1.2% of total defense spending was dedicated to R&T, below the 2% benchmark agreed upon in the European Defense Agency (EDA) framework.³³

²⁸ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

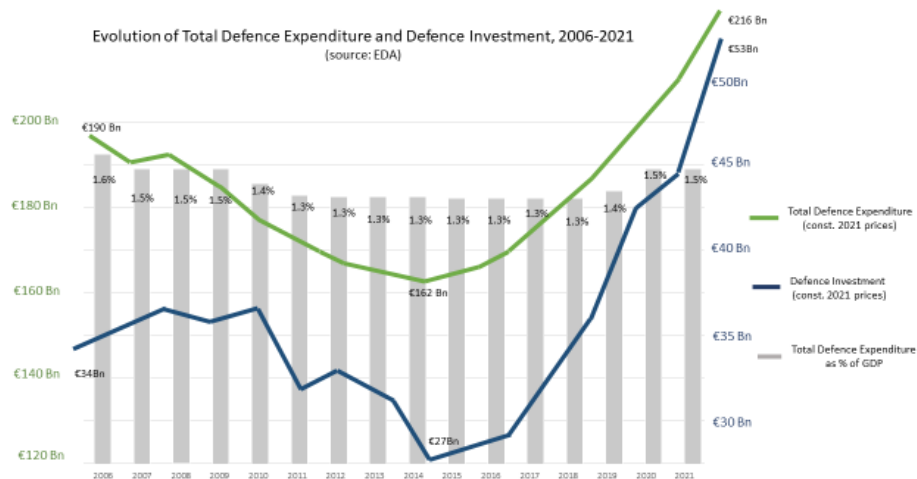
²⁹ (Laurent Bansept Juillet 2022)

³⁰ (European commission May 18, 2022)

³¹ (Laurent Fabius June 10, 1990)

³² For instance in France in 1960, defense expenditures were around 5,5% GDP, under 3% at the early 80’ and around 1,5% in the middle 2000’.

³³ (European commission May 18, 2022)



Evolution of total defense expenditures and defense investment, 2006 – 2021³⁴

Reduction of high-end capabilities

We are now seeing that European capabilities for full-spectrum and high-intensity operations have long been neglected, the idea being that if necessary, shortfalls and the lack of high-end capabilities would be covered by NATO allies, notably the US. This reduction of defense spending was combined with the structural trend of increasing costs in defense systems and a focus on expeditionary operations. The focus on counterinsurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan led European militaries to give greater weight in their structural reforms to operational branches set up for those engagements, including the light infantry and the Counter-IED systems. At the same time, the costs of developing, acquiring, and maintaining the latest defense systems, including 4th/5th generation fighter jets, have been consistently on the rise until very recently.³⁵ Those tendencies have led to heavy reductions in overall national force volumes, equipment quantities, and stockpiles, which are being depleted by support provided to Ukraine. In the meantime, operational shortfalls led to industrial shortfalls. Years of underinvestment led to countries focusing on their own national industrial interests, which in turn resulted in the creation of the European Technological and Defense Base (ETDB) which has fragmented along national borders.

³⁴ (European commission May 18, 2022)

³⁵ (Sebastien Roblin 2021)

Part 2. Responses of European nations

The Joint declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation signed in January 2023, sets the stages for the different actors in European defense³⁶ facing the return of war. The political will of these nations and organizations must be understood to identify the real axis of progress and convergence regarding defense issues.

2.1. Supremacy of NATO's collective defense

For NATO, no major capability gaps have been highlighted by the war. However, two challenges are identified: the long-term commitment of allies to build capability (with a good technology-mass balance) and strengthening technological superiority and interoperability between allies.

The strategic shock of February 2022 has clearly spotlighted NATO as the only western defensive alliance. Its strength lies in the credibility of Article 5³⁷. At the political level, the application for membership of two EU member states (Sweden and Finland) sent a powerful political message. NATO's new Strategic Concept³⁸ reaffirmed the "enduring bond between Europe and North America" and the "single and essential forum" regarding the security of allies. Deterrence and defense, crisis prevention and management, and cooperative security are the core of NATO's response to common threats. At the operational level, NATO has been responding in multiple timeframes since the beginning of the Russian invasion: reinforcing defense and deterrence under escalation threshold³⁹ (picture 2 below), updating defense plans (new deterrence and defense of the euro-Atlantic area concept) and then preparing new capacities. This last domain appears as field to invest in.

³⁶ "In signing this declaration we will take the NATO-EU partnership forward in close consultation and cooperation with all NATO Allies and EU Member States, in the spirit of full mutual openness and in compliance with the decision-making autonomy of our respective organizations and without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defense policy of any of our members. (Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation 10 January 2023)

³⁷ (Gen Philippe Lavigne, SACT 6 February 2023)

³⁸ (NATO strategic concept 2022 29 June 2022)

³⁹ North Atlantic council (NAC) quickly validated the deployment of high-readiness elements of the NRF that are playing a deterrence and defense role for the first time³⁹. In addition to the four multinational battle groups deployed since 2017 in the Baltic States and Poland (in accordance with the conclusions of the 2016 Warsaw Summit), four new battle groups were quickly set up in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia and integrated into the NATO command structure

The second challenge for NATO is a sustainable commitment of all Allies to maintain the superiority of technology and mass. Despite this proven organization and renewed thinking, defense capabilities still depend on what allies will be able to bring to the table. Indeed, NATO defense capability fundamentally depends on all Member States. NATO budget and common programs (€3.27 billion in 2023) are very lower than the amount of all member states budgets⁴³. The Alliance is above all a collective defense organization and a coordinator of defense policy. In the industrial field, NATO conducts limited industrial developments. It has largely attempted to incentivize each nation to develop its own capacities and therefore enhance its own budget. This is where we arrive at the critical subject of burden sharing: each nation must increase its defense capabilities to provide the required forces and reach NATO targets. This is the role of the NATO Defense Planning Process (NDPP), which has proven robust and efficient. In accordance with operational lessons learned, the orientation of political decisions changes every four years so as to best represent the shared ambitions of member nations.⁴⁴ Once validated by every nation, this ambition will be reflected in capacity requirements and capacity goals divided between member states. Then, each nation will be expected to comply with the goals it has assigned itself to make sure that its equipment fits with established standards.

There is indeed a crucial need for capacity building and some Allies see an opportunity to promote NATO capacity building. The Alliance could try to extend its scope to support capacity developments, through more common funding⁴⁵ and more innovation, especially to develop multi-domain operations (for more interoperability)⁴⁶. It is also an opportunity for dual industry, as show digital revolution and new private actors. For several Allies, this context seems to open a window of opportunity for NATO to develop capacity building, which was not previously an ambition.

2.2. European Union's response: the quantum leap forward?

The EU does not provide security for the benefit of its member states, as it has accepted that NATO ensures the collective defense of Europe.⁴⁷ However, the Covid-19 pandemic and now the Ukrainian crisis have pushed the EU to assert itself as a geopolitical actor and strengthen its role in defense, and especially in the development of defense capabilities. This European ambition on security has to be confirmed regarding defense issues.

The European Union now places defense and security issues at the center of its concerns and is mobilizing existing structures in the process. Along with NATO military reassurance, the EU quickly decided to apply unified and unprecedented economic sanctions against Russia.⁴⁸ On September 27, 2021, at a summit in Versailles, the European Council created a *Defense Joint Procurement Task Force*, involving the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS)

⁴³ (NATO 2022)

⁴⁴ (NATO 2022)

⁴⁵ Decision to increase common funding per 4 (Madrid's summit). (French representation to NATO (interview) 23 January 2023)

⁴⁶ Conference of national armament directors (CNAD)

⁴⁷ (European council 21 March 2022)

⁴⁸ (Consilium Europa 2023)

and the European Defense Agency (EDA), to draw up an inventory of Member States' military weaknesses and a set of proposed solutions to address them. In its final report, the Task Force provided an exhaustive inventory of weaknesses in all domains, including space and cyber-defense.⁴⁹ In addition, European defense policy took a major step forward with the adoption of the EU Strategic Compass. Drafted before the invasion and amended to take into account the new security context, this framework document sets the objectives of the common defense and security policy based, for the first time, on a common threat analysis. However, for all member states, the EU's efforts are complementary to those NATO, which remains the center of collective defense. Recently, the EU and NATO announced a strengthening of their cooperation.⁵⁰

The Strategic Compass aims to strengthen the EU's capabilities in a comprehensive approach toward security, especially in new domains of confrontation. This document takes into account the extended confrontation domains of space, cyberspace and information, and globally addresses defense and security issues, from development of capabilities to the strategic framework. It also reaffirms the necessity of a global European strategy as the continent faces omnidirectional threats, including terrorism on the southern flank and strategic competition with China.⁵¹ It displays ambitious objectives by proposing the strengthening of the EU's capabilities in the framework of the CSDP Missions and operations known as the Petersberg Declaration, including the development of a Rapid Deployment Capacity (5000 troops). Regular exercises were supposed to start in 2023 under the Spain presidency of the Council of the European Union.⁵² It also proposes the strengthening of command and control structures and the increase of military mobility. The Strategic Compass also provides for the creation of specific toolboxes to reinforce collective defense capabilities in new areas of vulnerability highlighted by the War in Ukraine. Toolboxes for hybrid warfare, influence and space will have to be made available to member states in the event of a threat⁵³. This capacity building is also associated with an ambitious timetable for increasing its power. Further development will show exactly the level of ambition and involvement needed from member states.

Through its support of Ukraine, the European Commission has taken on a new role and is working to develop increasingly effective tools to reinforce European capabilities. Member states have agreed to an evolution of the European Facility for Peace (EFP) so that it can finance support to Ukraine, including both the transfer of lethal and non-lethal equipment and an assistance mission, the European Union Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM).⁵⁴ As announced in Versailles, in July, the European Commission established the European Defense Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act (EDIRPA) for 2022-2024, with a donation of €500 million.⁵⁵ This mechanism aims to rationalize the addition to stockpile of

⁴⁹ (European council 21 March 2022)

⁵⁰ (Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation 10 January 2023)

⁵¹ (European council 21 March 2022)

⁵² (European council 21 March 2022)

⁵³ As an example, EU identified 250 existing tools available to address an instrumentalisation of migratory flows at its borders. (SE Mme Ambassadrice Claire Raulin 14 mars 2023)

⁵⁴ (Compte rendu Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées Mercredi 16 novembre 2022, Séance de 11 heures)

⁵⁵ (European Commission 2022)

ammunition, CBRN, and general military equipment.⁵⁶ More significantly, the Commission could propose a European Defense Investment Program (EDIP) regulation, which “will serve as the anchor for future joint development and procurement projects of high common interest to the security of the Member States and the Union”.⁵⁷ In addition, the European Defense Fund (EDF) will receive €8 billion from 2021 to 2027.⁵⁸ The EDF will therefore be able to sustain projects developed in the framework of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), including major technological blocks of joint programs like the so-called “Eurodrone” and the FCAS.⁵⁹ In the near future, all these instruments could provide an important advantage for the consolidation of the EDTIB and the increase of European defense capabilities.

2.3. National priorities

The different responses of the Weimar Triangle (France, Germany, and Poland) have underlined the differences of perspective within Europe.

Poland on the frontline: a massive arsenal to reinforce collective defense

Urgency

Poland seems to follow three main objectives: resolute support of Ukraine; reinforcement of its presence inside NATO as a credible partner; and unprecedented capacity development. The roots for these goals can be found in history and geography.⁶⁰ Poland has only enjoyed liberty for a few decades and wants guarantees that it will not lose it again. It is on the frontline and fears being the next country to be invaded. Its motto today is urgency. Ukraine is a buffer zone and it is determined to do everything possible to support it. This explains why Polish officials are so proactive in demanding international efforts to support Ukraine.⁶¹ Poland is third in military support to Kiev and first in humanitarian aid.⁶²

Europe’s military superpower⁶³

To deter any invasion on its soil, Poland has taken on an unprecedented capacity building effort to reach a 5% defense budget⁶⁴ with the aim of building a robust army (with enough critical equipment) that can participate in large-scale combat operations. By 2022, 2.4% of its GDP was dedicated to defense; this number will probably reach 4,2% this year.⁶⁵ By 2035 it will have built a sixth division and bulked up its territorial defense (15 new brigades since 2016). Regarding equipment, Poland’s aim is to become “the strongest ground force in Europe” according to its defense minister and it has already signed impressive

⁵⁶ Interview RPUE, 23 January 2023

⁵⁷ (European Commission 2022)

⁵⁸ (European Commission s.d.)

⁵⁹ (French Representation to European Union (Interview) 2023)

⁶⁰ (President Duda 10 February 2023)

⁶¹ (Tanks for Ukraine: Polish PM urges German bravery on Leopard 2 decision 24 January 2023)

⁶² (Interview with French Defense Attaché in Warsaw 3 January 2023)

⁶³ (Matthew Karnitschnig and Wojciech Kość 21 November 2022)

⁶⁴ (Laurent Lagneau 31 August 2022)

⁶⁵ (Interview with French Defense Attaché in Warsaw 3 January 2023)

industrial contracts: 316 Abrams, 189 Korean K2 tanks (in a contract of 1000), and around 700 howitzers in 2026. For long-range artillery, the US should provide 200 of the 500 HIMARS that Poland has requested. Korea could provide almost 300 Chumnoo launchers, if interoperability is guaranteed. Poland is also aiming to go from 100,000 to 300,000 soldiers before 2030.

Interoperability with NATO

The keyword is interoperability. Through its military effort, Poland intends to reinforce its presence inside the Alliance and be a member whose voice counts. There are thousands of US soldiers stationed in Poland at the NATO Joint Force Training Center in Bydgoszcz, which feels like a massive guarantee of security for the country. For Poland, the EU's Common Security and Defense Policy notwithstanding, NATO is the real provider of security, both present and prospective. However, Poland appears to want to maintain practically beneficial relations with Brussels institutions and takes part in EU initiatives, mainly as a way to procure funding.⁶⁶ Political developments since 2022 have made certain sensitivities come to the surface, namely with Germany: WWII reparations, delivery of Leopard tanks to Ukraine, the Nord Stream.

Germany: new leadership in Europe?

The Russian invasion is a change of strategic paradigm for Germany. The German Chancellor Olaf Scholz summarized the consequences of this shock as a "*Zeitenwende*, an epochal tectonic shift".⁶⁷ The fall of the Iron Curtain paved the way for German reunification and ushered in an era of peace and prosperity based, among other things, on reduced military spending and cheap Russian energy and basic resources for its main industry sector.⁶⁸ The return of war at the border of Europe has prompted Germany to announce important measures to reduce strategic dependence and strengthen its own military while reaffirming its position in favor of NATO. Germany is also positioning itself as the new European leader in the field of European territorial defense.

The first response to the Russian invasion was to rapidly strengthen the capabilities of the German armed forces. In the short term, the issue is to "repair" its military with better results than the first attempt in 2016, after years of underinvestment by rapidly reinforcing or modernizing certain critical capabilities, including the purchase of off-the-shelf equipment. Announced on February 27, and recently anchored in the constitution, a special fund of €100 billion for expenditure investments has been added to the annual budget of the Ministry of Defense.⁶⁹ This

⁶⁶ (Interview with French Defense Attaché in Warsaw 3 January 2023)

⁶⁷ (Olaf Scholz January/February 2023)

⁶⁸ "As a result, most European countries shrank their armies and cut their defense budgets. For Germany, the rationale was simple: Why maintain a large defense force of some 500,000 soldiers when all our neighbors appeared to be friends or partners?" (Olaf Scholz January/February 2023)

⁶⁹ The largest share of this fund is dedicated to the air force, with €33.4 billion. It includes the development of the Eurofighters ECR (electronic warfare) and the replacement of the Tornado fighter fleet by F35 fighters, capable of carrying the American B61 bombs, for the benefit of NATO. It also includes €16.6 billion for the land sector, €8.8 billion for the maritime sector, and €20.8 billion for the "command capability and digitization" component.

is where operational urgency meets budgetary urgency, as the Ministry of Defense will have to consume those investment credits within the next five years.⁷⁰ Those investments are on a continuity with the major equipment programs of the *Bundeswehr*. The German government also announced in Prague its coordination of the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), to reinforce European protection against land cruise ballistic missile (LCBM) (tbc). ESSI now has 17 members⁷¹ and aims to function as a platform for the joint purchase of existing ground-to-air defense systems,⁷² especially the US System Patriot. Poland, France, and Italy have not joined this initiative, and the latter two countries are jointly developing their own shared air defense system.

However, in the medium and long term, Germany remains involved in the development of European capabilities. Despite the difficult agreement between the various industrial groups, Germany has always reaffirmed its political support for the two major Franco-German equipment programs: the Future Air Combat System (FCAS) and the Main Ground Combat System (MGCS), which aim respectively to develop a 6th generation fighter and main battle tank. The FCAS program passed recently to Phase Two.⁷³

For Germany, the second step is to strengthen its strategic posture as a credible host nation support. In a context of what appears, for many observers, to be a "Cold War 2.0", Germany should publish an updated national strategy in early 2023.⁷⁴ Facing hybrid strategies that can go as far as high-intensity confrontation, this national strategy, following political declarations,⁷⁵ would first reaffirm the primacy of NATO, not the EU, as the central framework for the defense of Europe. In this context, Germany could double the number of troops (around 35,000 soldiers) it would place under NATO command. Moreover, Germany considers that Europe's strategic depth is the US. Consequently, its strategic vision is to put itself in a position to welcome and reinforce American forces as a credible host nation support. On the model of the *Drehscheibe* (railway rotating switch), this would mean being able to host, secure, and provide support to allies, especially American follow-on forces. This implies command and control capabilities, which were recently built up with the creation of a *Territoriales Führungskommando* for operations on German soil, similar to the *Einsatzführungskommando* in Potsdam for external operations. The German proposal for ESSI, beyond its capability dimension, is in line with this strategic orientation.

Through these various initiatives, Germany assumes a new leadership and asserts itself as a key player in European territorial defense. "Germany's size, its geographic location, its economic power, in short: its heft makes it a leading power whether we want it or not", stated Christine Lambrecht, former German Minister of Defense⁷⁶ in September 2022. In its new position of leadership, Germany will have to publish its analysis of the threats and strategic orientations for addressing

(Missions Allemandes en France 08.06.2022)

⁷⁰ (Interview in the Centre des hautes études militaires (CHEM) 2023)

⁷¹ (NATO 2023)

⁷² (Fondation Jean Jaurès, Ernst Stetter 2022)

⁷³ (Sabine Siebold and Michel Rose November 19, 2022)

⁷⁴ (Interview in the Centre des hautes études militaires (CHEM) 2023)

⁷⁵ (Olaf Scholz January/February 2023)

⁷⁶ (Federal Ministry of Defense 2022)

them. Germany might be in a better position to assess and understand the security dilemma of Eastern Europe, as the RFA was on the frontline during the Cold War. More pragmatically, it also intends to defend its national interests, including those in the industrial domain, which is now essential for Europe.

France's balancing power

French and European sovereignty

For France, the question of sovereignty is crucial and inseparable from the capacity for partnership. The exit from NATO's command in 1965 is probably an example still hard to understand for other Allies⁷⁷. For partly historical reasons, France intends to be a balancing power able to take on its responsibilities and to cooperate with its Allies. France has a singular status and is a major contributor to security and the EU budget. Hence the ambition to remain "a leader in Europe and a reliable NATO ally" as the French President said.⁷⁸ Therefore, European defense capability gaps are not only a matter of collective defense but also of being able to understand, decide, and operate no matter the level of conflict, from competition to dispute and confrontation.⁷⁹

In the framework of the War in Ukraine, this approach relies on different aspects that were recently presented by last French national strategic review and the presentation of next Military programming law 2024-2030.⁸⁰ He spoke first about "consolidating the core of our sovereignty" implying deterrence, intelligence, autonomous capacity of decision and action, overseas territories, and operational reserve. He noted that the "move toward high intensity" is "the ability to evolve in challenging environments, against battle-hardened adversaries, who are technologically skilled across a wide range of conflicts". Also important is the protection and action of our interests in "shared space" and "international partnerships" reinforcement, a model which he summed up as focusing "on coherence over size⁸¹ and responsiveness without compromising endurance". The goal is to strengthen the credibility and coherence of our military power. Hence, France is dedicated to the long-term work of building up the resilience of our military structures, multi-domain operations, and a new joint command and control.

Win the war before the war

Maintaining a complete army model. "I want armed forces which participate in France's exercise of responsibilities and in its ambition to be a balancing power, through alliances, partnerships and co-operations, able to integrate or lead coalition operations or interdepartmental crisis set ups.", as French chief of defense staff said.⁸² This means being able "to turn training into a new dimension of combat to be conducted with our partners and to capitalize and weigh more on the works

⁷⁷ Decision taken by Charles de Gaulle.

⁷⁸ (French president Macron's speech 20 January 2023)

⁷⁹ (Strategic vision of the French chief of defense staff October 2021)

⁸⁰ (French president Macron's speech 20 January 2023)

⁸¹ Army in 2030: 1872 armored vehicle Griffon; 978 light Serval armored vehicles; 300 Jaguar armored reconnaissance vehicles; 200 Leclerc tanks.

⁸² (Strategic vision of the French chief of defense staff October 2021)

conducted within the EU and NATO.”⁸³ One of the main challenges for the French armed forces will likely be strengthening coherence, continuing to promote interoperability (namely for land forces through international exercises), and avoiding the duplication of expenditure and work (prospective studies, doctrine, lessons-learned exercises).

The French armed forces anticipated a war between peer adversaries: “The confrontation happens when a stakeholder, deciding to push his advantage forward, and persistently using the force to reach his objectives, provokes an equal reaction. It can take place in one or more areas of conflict, depending on the capabilities of the various parties. The prime objective of the confrontation is to force the opponent to accept our demands, especially by undermining its will and its ability to respond. The armed forces need to be able to detect the low early warning of confrontation enabling to anticipate the turn towards confrontation.”⁸⁴

In 2023, preparation is conducted through an unprecedented exercise. ORION is a multi-domain exercise, one part of NATO collective defense that aims to show France’s ability to train and gather foreign partners to conduct large-scale operations and high-intensity confrontations. It involves actors and entities beyond the scope of the armed forces to demonstrate France's ability to be the first to enter a theater of operations and lead a multinational coalition. It is unprecedented because of the scale (12,000 members of the military), the interdepartmental scope, and the number of combat spaces taken into account (space, maritime, cyber, informational warfare, etc.).

⁸³ (Strategic vision of the French chief of defense staff October 2021)

⁸⁴ (Strategic vision of the French chief of defense staff October 2021)

Part 3. Future balances and increased risks for Europe

We can see specific strategic risks emerging from these different reactions, which might compel European countries to take definitive action.

3.1. Blind spots of European responses

The various initiatives of European nations and the common structures in charge of their defense have focused their response on the capacities Europe still has to acquire. Perhaps, however, the main lesson to be learned from this war, like in the past, is that the real military capabilities we must build up are human resources and morale.

The real gap in military capabilities is human resources. At the beginning of the conflict, UAF had a definite advantage over Russian forces, thanks to the quality of the human resources at their disposal. In Ukraine, despite the UAF's difficulties to retain their soldier since 2014, when they were asked to come back in 2022, they were already battle ready.⁸⁵ However, the European response has not especially focused on the human resources necessary to face the challenges of a potential high-intensity conflict and accompany the reinforcement of military capacities. The issue is first a matter of size. Some nations are addressing this issue by increasing the number of their reserve units or national guards, such as Poland⁸⁶ and France⁸⁷ which has officially prioritized the consistency of the military model.⁸⁸ This is also an issue of how to attract quality human resources to the armed forces in a free market economy as most European militaries were experiencing recruitment difficulties even before the war.⁸⁹ A capability model must have a human resources model capable of supporting it, from recruitment to training.

For European militaries, the risk would be not acknowledging how the scale of a high-intensity conflict changed, and thus not responding with better reinforced mental and operational preparation. Winning a war is not all about equipment, tactics, and procedures. Strategy remains "the dialectic of wills using force to resolve conflicts."⁹⁰ The tireless resistance of the UAF comes from a fighting spirit born from the conviction that they are defending themselves against an unjustified attempt to annex their country. Conversely, the failure of the first offensive in February can be partly explained by Russia underestimating Ukraine; its troops⁹¹ were not prepared to face a determined resistance, as they had believed themselves to be conducting a "special military operation" in a country that would welcome them as liberators. Further reflection might be critical in terms of the moral forces needed to wage a war of this intensity, especially when engaging European militaries that are used to operating in so-called "operational comfort" in counter-insurgency wars. We have observed that the general European response

⁸⁵ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

⁸⁶ (Interview with French Defense Attaché in Warsaw 3 January 2023)

⁸⁷ (French president Macron's speech 20 January 2023)

⁸⁸ (French president Macron's speech 20 January 2023)

⁸⁹ (L'OBS, Quentin Lazeyras 2018)

⁹⁰ (General André Beaufre 1963)

⁹¹ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

has not taken into account the connection between threat perception, the feeling of defending something worth fighting for, and the will to fight.

The resilience of European companies will remain crucial in the coming years. At the beginning of the Russian invasion, coordinated cyberattacks targeted Ukrainian civilian infrastructures, without achieving significant operational results, due to the effectiveness of Ukrainian cyber defense.⁹² As winter approaches, Russian forces have changed their operational strategy, targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure essentially with Land cruise ballistic missiles (LCBM), to strike at the population's resistance. The resilience of civil society, i.e., its capacity to accept the deprivation and suffering associated with conflict, will be key. The moral resilience of civilian companies will also be important, although this will require significant financial investment in a context of economic turbulence, where military spending must prioritize allocations.⁹³ The risk to avoid is believing that strengthening military capabilities will address all the challenges posed by hybrid warfare. This will affect and involve many sectors (especially economic) and essential public services like critical energy infrastructure. It is clear that this will represent a huge challenge for European countries, where many critical infrastructures, among them hospitals, would be particularly vulnerable to this kind of attack.⁹⁴

3.2. EU permissiveness to invisible hybrid warfare

European involvement in the conflict has already important consequences for the European people. Namely, it implies the real risk of escalation and the growing threat of hybrid warfare targeting western nations.

European countries have been involved in hybrid warfare against Russia from competition to dispute.⁹⁵ First, the adversary (Russia) was identified, then the objective, which was “making Ukrainian victory possible”.⁹⁶ NATO's Secretary General stated, “We must sustain our support for Ukraine for the long-term, so that Ukraine prevails, as a sovereign independent nation.”⁹⁷ Russia has not neglected to notice, as its Minister of Foreign Affairs stated, “it is no secret that the strategic goal of the US and its NATO allies is victory over Russia on the battlefield [...]. Member states of the alliance have de facto become a party to the conflict already, with Western private military companies and military instructors fighting alongside the Ukrainians.”⁹⁸ Secondly, huge means were implemented (mostly by the EU) to reach the goal of defeating Russia in Ukraine. Almost ten batches of sanctions were levied, aimed at deeply weakening Russia's war economy. Nearly €12 billion of equipment was supplied to Ukraine, along with promises for a training mission of 30,000 soldiers before the end of 2023, intelligence support, and political support through the EU membership process.⁹⁹

⁹² (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

⁹³ (Le Monde, Elise Vincent et Cédric Pietralunga 2023)

⁹⁴ (Conférence du Secrétariat général pour la défense et la sécurité nationale 2023)

⁹⁵ (Strategic vision of the French chief of defense staff October 2021)

⁹⁶ (European Union External Action 2023)

⁹⁷ (NATO 2022)

⁹⁸ (Anadolu Agency, Elena Teslova 2022)

⁹⁹ (Bruxelles 2, Nicolas Gros-Verheyde 2023)

This level of conflict is very unstable and presents a high risk of escalation. Western countries have been careful to remain under the threshold of co-belligerence but the longer the war lasts, the greater the risk of polarization and escalation. Member states have been encouraged to give more and heavier-duty equipment.¹⁰⁰ The question of threshold becomes critical when rocket launchers, air defense systems, and main battle tanks are involved. As Olivier Zajec put it, “moving up the spectrum of capabilities, at what threshold do the suppliers of military aid to the Ukrainians, whether individual or collective (NATO and the European Union), become unequivocal co-belligerents”?¹⁰¹ The escalation can move vertically up to the nuclear threshold but also horizontally by opening a second front. In either case, the battlefield would be in Europe.

Hybrid warfare endangers the resilience of European nations. The subject of this paper could have been “European defense capability gaps highlighted by the War of Ukraine”, because Ukraine is not the only possible site of warfare. European defense and security can be understood as “new surfaces” for the defense of both military and civil assets. A large spectrum of activities can be used in new domains and still remain under the threshold of confrontation. Hybrid warfare is a way to target the resilience of western nations and the continuity of critical infrastructure services like energy, information systems, cyber,¹⁰² space,¹⁰³ maritime domains,¹⁰⁴ because it is difficult and politically sensitive to officially attribute any attack. According to President Macron, “war is no longer declared; it is background noise, insidious and hybrid. The targeting of civilian infrastructure critical to the nation is our common plight – I am thinking of things like cyber-attacks.”¹⁰⁵ This invisible conflict in Europe is very real and certainly growing.¹⁰⁶ EU member states have recognized this threat and they are willing to fill gaps in cyber and critical infrastructures resilience. “In December 2022, the Council also adopted a recommendation on critical infrastructure resilience to respond to acts of sabotage against the Nord Stream pipeline.”¹⁰⁷ Critical infrastructure resilience is crucial.

3.3. The risks of an unsustainable (false) burden sharing

European awareness of its military shortfalls led to certain nations announcing that they would be buying capacities off the shelf mainly from non-European suppliers (especially the US and South Korea). This makes Europe more dependent than ever for its capacities and security. This situation could present risks for the defense of Europe and therefore for US global strategy.

Greater dependence on non-European suppliers is a loss of industrial resilience. To absorb the first shock of the Russian invasion, Ukraine was able to rely on equipment whose production and therefore maintenance it had mastered.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ (Olivier Zajec January 2023)

¹⁰¹ (Olivier Zajec January 2023)

¹⁰² (Capital, Solina Prak 2022)

¹⁰³ (Le Monde, AFP 2018)

¹⁰⁴ (Reuters 2023)

¹⁰⁵ (French president Macron's speech 20 January 2023)

¹⁰⁶ (Euractiv, Benjamin Fox 2022)

¹⁰⁷ (European Council s.d.)

¹⁰⁸ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

Despite their advantages, the diversity of western equipment presents challenges in sustainability for Ukrainian forces. The UK is looking at the possibility of producing equipment directly in Ukraine¹⁰⁹ as the Covid-19 crisis showed us how easily the supply chain of raw materials and manufactured products could be disturbed or interrupted. In the contestation phase, and even more during a conflict, lines of communication with non-European suppliers would be vulnerable and securing them would require using important capacities that might be needed elsewhere. Additionally, producing equipment in Europe would reinforce the resilience of European defense and help transform EITDB into an “economy of war.”¹¹⁰ Licensed production based in Europe, as was done with the F35 fighters in Italy or more recently in Germany¹¹¹ could partly address such an issue.

Enhanced dependence could also result in a loss of operational efficiency for European defense. Development, production, implementation, and deployment is a continuum that allows for the building of operational capabilities like doctrine, organization, human resources, and training. Put differently, the development of capacities results in the agility to develop capabilities. This agility is one of the key factors of operational superiority¹¹² in a peer-to-peer confrontation. As an example, the Turkish-made UAV Bayraktar was an important addition to UAF capabilities on the battlefield. At the same time, the war helped identify ways in which this system could be improved¹¹³ and a 4th generation-UAV¹¹⁴ will soon be implemented. Using off-the-shelf capacities, European militaries risk adapting to the equipment available rather than developing the capabilities they need, both for sustainability and operational use. In addition, there are the risks inherent to using a single system. The duplication of interoperable systems would allow for the reinforcement of operational resilience in the cyber or electromagnetic fields.

More fundamentally, burden sharing that is only a matter of cash sharing between Europe and the US would only prolong what we could call a Europe's strategic nap. With the war, Europe might benefit from a mass purchase of US military capabilities. However, this tactic is likely to run out of steam quickly, tempting European countries back to delegating the security of their continent to the US. It is unlikely that Europeans will massively invest in the defense sector until there is a return on investment for their economies and the European Defense Industrial and Technological Base (EDITB). On the contrary, investment in defense industry could result in a virtuous circle of real burden sharing. In this case, Europe could be a more autonomous actor in its security and the stability of the continent. On the contrary, European defense that is dependent on the US could threaten the Pacific Pivot and disrupt US policy toward China. Paradoxically, the loss of market shares in Europe's defense sector could be a strategic opportunity for the United States.

3.4. Reduced strategic vision focused on the east

¹⁰⁹ (The Telegraph, Howard Mustoe and Camilla Turner 2023)

¹¹⁰ (Rapport d'information de MM. Cédric PERRIN et Jean-Marc TODESCHINI, 8 février 2023)

¹¹¹ (European Defense and Security, Ole Henckel 2023)

¹¹² (Etat-major de l'armée de Terre Septembre 2016)

¹¹³ (Les Echos, Timour Ozturk 2022)

¹¹⁴ (Col Jordan January 25, 2023)

What would be the current situation if EU had been able to deal with this crisis before the invasion, especially if it had deployed Battle Groups to enforce the Minsk Agreement? Current western strategy to support Ukraine at all cost could conduct European nations to become unable to deal with other strategic threats. Contrary to that, European nations need to implement a long-term and a global strategy.

Divergent European responses to the war could induce new strategic balances.

Proxy war is not a solution to all strategic challenges and presents the real risk of slowly “transferring” military power from the West to the East, leading to the over-militarization of the eastern flank. In addition, Poland has the ambition to become the first land power in Europe¹¹⁵, which is currently understandable for Poland, however from observation Ukraine seems to be more likely to be the first¹¹⁶. Nevertheless, it is necessary to think about prospective questions. If Ukraine joins the EU, it would drastically shift the center of gravity.¹¹⁷ Western nations might find it harder to have their voices heard.

There is a risk of being blind to global defense threats for Europe. The necessity of supporting Ukraine could prevent Europe from tackling other strategic risks it is facing. The current lack of interest in the Mediterranean and Africa on the part of diplomats and soldiers from Eastern countries must be brought into question.¹¹⁸ This is especially the case since the Russian dispute has already spread to other theaters of war and the risk of horizontal escalation leads to the possibility of second front that Russian actors weaponized.¹¹⁹ This is the reason the EU could be “the great loser”¹²⁰ of this polarization and dismantling of the world.¹²¹ The threat Europe is facing surpass merely Ukraine and extend to the Balkans,¹²² the Mediterranean Sea, North Africa, the Baltic Sea, and the North Atlantic. As Thierry Breton said: “Since I have become European Commissioner, I have been realizing Russian willingness to weaken the European project.”¹²³

This is why urgency is not a long-term strategy. The decision to support Ukraine were made with urgency. What must European countries do now? All European countries implicated in the conflict have the right to decide, but it seems that the middle-term answer is not clear.¹²⁴ European countries could lose this war and those to come. Not only because of hybrid warfare and possible escalation (namely if China begins to support Russia), but because it has failed to monitor the crisis.¹²⁵ The EU must learn to speak the language of power.¹²⁶ The support of Ukraine by European armies will become too risky if that support is endless and provided no

¹¹⁵ (Matthew Karnitschnig and Wojciech Kość 21 November 2022)

¹¹⁶ (LTG Michel Yakovleff, Michel Goya November 23, 2022)

¹¹⁷ (Interview with Daniel Fiott 13 February 2023)

¹¹⁸ (French Representation to European Union (Interview) 2023)

¹¹⁹ Wagner en RCA, Libye, Mali. Et burkina.

¹²⁰ “Europe is the big loser of the war in Ukraine” Nicolas Baverez

¹²¹ (Grand entretien avec Ivan Kratsev 30 september 2022)

¹²² (Grand entretien avec Ivan Kratsev 30 september 2022)

¹²³ (Thierry Breton February 2022)

¹²⁴ (Institut Montaigne, Analyses 2023)

¹²⁵ “since 2009, the EU evades crises instead of solving them” (Grand entretien avec Ivan Kratsev 30 september 2022)

¹²⁶ (Enrico Letta, Former Italian Prime Minister February 21, 2023)

matter the cost with the primary goal of securing Ukraine's national defense.¹²⁷ A broader and long-term strategic approach is paramount.

¹²⁷ (Euractiv, Sarantis Michalopoulos 2023)

Part 4. Recommendations / messages

European allies have to implement a long-term and global strategy. What does a strategy mean? “Fighting for your freedom of action,” answered General Beaufre¹²⁸. Currently, the threats mentioned above could, in a short term, deny European nations from implementing a strategy. European defense capability gaps could be addressed through a pragmatic defense and security contract.

4.1. Critical capabilities needed

Alongside the EU’s exhaustive inventory of weaknesses in its defense, we would like to emphasize the operational capabilities that appear crucial to us for Europe to conduct successfully large-scale combat operations.

Gain air superiority. Ukraine has demonstrated the importance of robust A2AD systems, capable of handling threats from tactical UAV to ballistic missiles. This situation has neutralized the action of both Ukrainian and Russian Air Forces. On the one hand, this means Europe will need air combat systems tailored for Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD) as well as air superiority. It also means that land forces, following the maritime component model, would benefit from a mobile, strong, and multi-altitude air-defense.

Gain fire superiority in artillery duels. The War in Ukraine is a reminder that often in a confrontation of peer adversaries, firepower allows forces to maneuver, reinforce deep strike capabilities (jointly and in each component), and reinforce overall resilience. That also means that all recce units and intelligence assets, especially drones, would allow for a “fight for precision”.¹²⁹

Gain information superiority. The importance of open-source intelligence (OSINT) in information warfare is also a key lesson learned from Ukraine. In a defense development perspective, this means investments in the electromagnetic, space, and cyber domains are strategic battlefield enablers, which requires a new *modus operandi* with civilian actors in those domains. At the operational level, it underlines the fact that multi-domain operations (MDO) are a key factor of superiority. Beyond the specific assets of each domain, MDOs require the strengthening of joint force connectivity, which also means reinforcing the resilience and survivability of C2 structures that will ensure the integration of multi-domain effects at every level.

Gain mobility superiority. Europe will probably never face a situation like the one Ukraine is currently facing because of the strength of NATO, which is based on nuclear deterrence. Large-combat operations would likely be conducted at the border of Europe or even overseas, which would require the development of strategic and operational mobility of a full spectrum of land, maritime and air assets to ensure resilience.

Gain moral superiority. From a military perspective, Ukraine has demonstrated that morale is the intangible key capability of combat. Troops can only be calm and

¹²⁸ (General André Beaufre 1963)

¹²⁹ (Royal United Services Institute, Mykhaylo Zabrotskyi, Jack Watling, Oleksandr V Danylyuk and Nick Reynolds, November 30, 2022)

determined in combat if they feel confident in their own forces. That confidence must be developed during peacetime operational preparation. At the strategic level, there could be greater resilience of companies, *inter alia*, with greater porosity between the civilian and military communities.¹³⁰

We would also like to emphasize the three priorities that might give us the advantage in any high-intensity conflict.

- Invest in new domains of confrontation;
- Increase interoperability among allies;
- Strengthen moral resilience through solidarity.

4.2. For a pragmatic and more capable European defense

A new European security contract could be based on following ideas.

Idea 1: From a European pillar to European leadership / vision in NATO

EU must promote its strategic vision into that of NATO to avoid overlapping strategic ambitions and to develop coherent prospective and capacity building. This boils down to a question of burden sharing and efficiency.

European allies will have to be able to take greater responsibility for collective defense. With more than 445 million inhabitants, Europe has a voice that must be heard and a key role to play. “Most would agree that it is in the U.S. interest for Europe to be able to defend itself to the greatest degree possible without a large U.S. military commitment”.¹³¹ Madeleine Albright once stated, “our interest is clear: we want a Europe that can act”. The EU has shown itself willing to move in this direction, which, given its status in NATO¹³² seems to us like the right level of response.

The timing seems to be right for greater European leadership within NATO. The current strategic framework demands specialized coordination between NATO and EU. Beyond recent political announcements that have confirmed this intention,¹³³ existing structural difficulties can be overcome to rise to the situation.¹³⁴ The overlapping ambitions of NATO and the EU will have to be better coordinated, because member states of both entities will not be able to afford increasing efforts conducted in parallel.¹³⁵ EU capacity development should be pragmatically oriented toward NATO needs to put EU machinery at the service of collective defense needs¹³⁶.

¹³⁰ (Rapport d'information de MM. Cédric PERRIN et Jean-Marc TODESCHINI, 8 février 2023)

¹³¹ (Max Bergmann, Pierre Morcos, Colin Wall, and Sean Monaghan August 2022)

¹³² “The EU is a unique and essential partner for NATO. The two organizations share a majority of members, have common values and face similar threats and challenges”. (NATO 2023)

¹³³ (Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation 10 January 2023)

¹³⁴ (Mathieu Droin January 2023)

¹³⁵ “the only real battle is the one for financial resources, which nations are not able to duplicate” (Mathieu Droin January 2023)

¹³⁶ (Luis Simon 3 February 2023)

Duplication is a risk indeed. As already mentioned, duplication is already an issue for major defense contributors like France, which are used to acting autonomously. Duplication between EU and NATO induce overlapping and divergent assessments, notably in terms of lessons-learned, doctrine, innovation and capability planning. For instance, DIANA investment fund (NATO) and European defense agency (EU) should be closely coordinated to avoid competition. The European Commission could have to shift its efforts from crisis management to deterrence and defense. Airlifting and tanker capacities, among other components, have already shown potential.¹³⁷ This could ensure the EU a seat at the leadership table and confirm its ability to assume a broad strategic vision that includes the reality of current wars.

Proposal 1: Converge the capability development and innovation processes of the EU and NATO (EU HLG – NDPP). NDPP assigns capacity goals to Allies, and EU HLG identify opportunities of joint development. There is indeed a room of convergence improvement.

Proposal 2: Exchange strategic assessment, doctrines and operational lessons learned.

Idea 2: Invest as far as possible in European capabilities development

An ally cannot be credible without developing and improving its own capabilities. Otherwise, your survival depends on another actor. Producing capacities are the only way to develop major capabilities in the long term and in a large scale. Capability building is a full continuum from planning to conception, production, lessons-learned, adaptation and innovation. Contrary to that, some European industrial actors have been facing a vicious circle of lack of visibility of potential outlets and lack of investment.¹³⁸ Sustainable burden sharing requires greater production, as even the US has been and improving its own facing ammunition shortages since February 2022. Capability building allows a greater commitment defense and a better burden sharing.

With EU commission ambition and the European defense fund, the EU is able to boost industry of Member states at the service of collective defense. There is a need for funding to incent European industry to develop capacity in a large scale. Through recent Strategic compass, the European Union has shown Galileo and COVID vaccine proving that it is possible. The aim is to assume a broader strategic vision that includes defense aspects.

The EU has specifically a potential in dual sectors to put at the service of collective defense and security. This is in alignment with the spirit of the Versailles declaration: “encouraging dual programs, reducing dependences and building a more robust economic base”.¹³⁹ The European Commission’s new defense and security commitment is a significant opportunity. It can support dual civilian-military investment, including in satellite networks, which would ensure global security against hybrid warfare. This domain requires massive investment, and the European Commission has the legal and financial instruments needed to increase

¹³⁷ (Interview with Daniel Fiott 13 February 2023)

¹³⁸ (Col Jordan January 25, 2023)

¹³⁹ Déclaration de Versailles

the EU's advantages. The European Defense Fund (€8 billion to €40 billion) could unfreeze this status quo and break the consumption mentality. "We need to have a more sovereign participation."¹⁴⁰

Proposal 1: Support the development and extension of EU tools like PESCO, EDIRPA and EDIP for joint development of military and dual capability for collective defense and security. Ex: technological devices for IS / connectivity for NATO armed forces.

Proposal 2: Invest in the promotion of dual projects that might be useful in filling certain military gaps. Ex: future satellite constellation, cyber security of European critical infrastructure.

Proposal 3: reinforce the strategic culture of EU Members of Parliament and officials, as done at the national level. This is a requirement to transform the sub-committee in charge of defense in the European Parliament into a full committee.

Idea 3: Common capability building means strategic solidarity

Building together next generation equipment requires some dependence, but solidarity cannot be dictated. European defense capability gaps will only worsen if we cannot work on them together. The challenging and targeting of European solidarity is more than a risk: it represents a real threat.¹⁴¹

Solidarity means interoperability. To build credible capability, European countries can take advantage of their numbers (important for expanding industry as well). It is a question of scale. MDOs require the right balance between sharing information, cyber vulnerability, and data sovereignty, a tremendous challenge for NATO and one that requires major investment in networks and connectivity. (France is currently working on a future command and control information system.) Next-generation equipment needs connected platforms that permit the integration of effects at the tactical level, redundant networks and classified data, open source treatment, and the cloud. Western countries will have to make choices about dependence as they promote cooperation with trustworthy private actors.¹⁴²

Solidarity means mutual recognition. Be it between European states, East and West, France and Germany, we must understand each other's point of view to effectively consider interests and biases, which are often linked to history.

Proposal 1: As much as possible and in accordance with national interests for a capability or region, encourage the development of multinational units. (Some examples to look at are the French-German brigade or the German-Dutch Corps.) As the land component is historically and structurally the least interoperable, encourage the "subscription" of brigades within divisions of neighboring countries to systematically develop shared training experiences.

Proposal 2: Develop a European war college. Even more ambitious would be after successfully implementing a European course, expanding that to a common program and then developing more exchanges among European War Colleges.

¹⁴⁰ (Thierry Breton February 2022)

¹⁴¹ (Thierry Breton February 2022)

¹⁴² (Outsourcing the Cloud January 2023)

Conclusion

We are certainly heading towards a new order, or sustainable disorder. This strategic shock makes it impossible to predict what the state of the world will be in its aftermath. This shock is perhaps similar to that sustained between 1956 and 1962 (Berlin, Cuba, Suez, Budapest) and 1989 and 1991. This new state of the world is hard to predict since this war is still going on. Russia will seek exploitable success at any cost in Ukraine and will continue to target the resilience and solidarity of western allies. Ukraine war could be a training war.¹⁴³ The heroic Ukrainian shield will continue to depend on the moral strength of its people and the strategic depth provided by western countries, as Eastern Europe continues to arm itself and ask for reinforcement of the Eastern flank. Up until now, NATO has been able to provide the necessary guarantees for the defense of its members, thanks to American involvement. Our collective defense will be certainly challenged and targeted.¹⁴⁴ The EU will maintain its support for Ukraine and continue to build up its security and defense tools. Together, Europeans are stronger, as shown by Europe's collective decision to officially condemn Moscow and end its dependence on Russia. Nevertheless, European countries are still not working together enough when it comes to defense, certainly not in the face of such uncertainty.

To be responsible allies, European nations have no choice but to more cooperate. However, the defense of Europe resembles a prisoner's dilemma for its members: how can it join forces without being overly dependent on others for its defense? Most European nations have put their defense in the hands of the US, but they know that this cannot last forever. Quoting a US president. With the War in Ukraine, this knot seems in some ways to be tightening: the real threat to Europe (kinetic and non-kinetic) makes American support more necessary than ever, while Chinese ambitions are already pushing the United States to look elsewhere.

Greater visibility of a European vision with NATO could lead to a new defense and security contract in Europe, greater European investment in capability building, and reinforced solidarity. Europe, with its American ally, has no choice but to build this new architecture for itself. These same states can now bring together the efforts already expended within the frameworks of NATO (to appoint, organize and command a common defense within a tried and tested structure) and the EU, which is asserting itself as a capable player in financing and designing the security and defense tools of the 21st century. This convergence will only be possible with strategic solidarity that is based on operational interoperability and shared cultural understanding. This solidarity is all the more important now that it's being targeted by the enemy.

The history of European defense is paved with examples of misunderstanding and mistrust that have trapped European nations in similar dilemmas.¹⁴⁵ It might be a good time to remember the words of one of the great thinkers of Europe, Robert Schuman. "World peace cannot be safeguarded without creative efforts commensurate with the dangers that threaten it [...] Europe will not be made in

¹⁴³ (Thomas Gomart 10 March 2023)

¹⁴⁴ (Thomas Gomart 10 March 2023)

¹⁴⁵ (P. Vial 10 March 2023)

one go, nor in a general construction: it will be made by concrete achievements creating first of all a solidarity."¹⁴⁶

The question is one of mutual knowledge and understanding, from Paris and Berlin and Warsaw right up to Washington and Kiev. Bridging this gap will bring no further fatalities. "The strength of the city lies neither in its walls nor in its ships, but in the character of its citizens."¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ (Robert Schuman 1950)

¹⁴⁷ (Thucydide s.d.)

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