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Anniversary of the Common Security and Defense Policy overshadowed by continued stalemate.

On December 19, 2013, the European Council reviewed the decade-long efforts by the European Commission and the EU member states aimed at developing the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). It comes as no surprise that the proponents of establishing a common European military force and of adopting an integrated EU-wide approach to security and defense involving all of its member states cannot be satisfied with the progress achieved so far in formulating CSDP. While “Europe’s strategic and geopolitical environment is evolving rapidly”, the Union itself remains impotent (European Council, 19-20 December 2013, Part I, paragraphs 1–22 of the European Council conclusions (adopted), p. 2, paragraph 1, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/PL/ec/140227.pdf). Faced with highly divergent security interests of individual states and their highly constrained budgets, successive European Councils find it utterly difficult to formulate a joint position. Despite the round anniversary, the present European Council is far from achieving a breakthrough. The Council has demonstrated the persistence of European divisions and left CSDP initiative in the hands of a small “coalition of the willing” which, in the longer term, may contribute to gaps in the security and defense integration among the member states.

In the European Council Conclusions adopted on the first day of the summit (December 19, 2013), heads of state and governments reaffirmed that in order for the European Union to become a credible major global player, the EU and its member states need to assume more responsibility for global peace and security, especially in the EU’s nearest neighborhood.

As stated in the Final Report, on December 15, 2013, the EU's High Representative on CSDP Catherine Ashton identified priority actions designed to meet the goal built around the three axes: increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of CSDP; enhancing the development of defensive capabilities and strengthening Europe's defense industry (*Final Report by the High Representative/Head of the EDA on the Common Security and Defense Policy*, http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131015_02_en.pdf).

The essence of the first goal is to strengthen the EU and extend its impact at times of crisis by, among others, conducting more peacekeeping and stabilizing missions, assuming a comprehensive approach to security challenges and, with a view to stabilizing crisis and post-crisis regions, resorting to soft diplomacy and the use of regulatory trade and financial instruments and tools and methods for post-conflict restoration and political and military stabilization, as well as adopting common policies towards regions in crisis and those of strategic importance for the EU and common policies for coping with challenges in international relations (regional/thematic strategies and strategy frameworks). The EU has adopted the principle of multilateralism in its efforts with particular emphasis placed on collaborating with organizations associated with the United Nations and harmoniously cooperating with the North Atlantic Alliance. To that end, the EU will additionally streamline its planning and deployment of civil and military rapid response (initial entry) forces and improve the Athena mechanism for mission funding. To meet that goal, the Council stressed the need for capacity building for cyber defense, maritime and energy security and ensuring a social dimension of the approach to security (mainly migration), and for combating organized crime and acts of terrorism. It also committed the High Representative to present a report on such challenges and the proposed EU actions before the Council (but only as late as 2015).

The second goal, in its essence, is geared towards adopting a community-wide approach to European defense and developing a joint procurement system and the joint deployment of the EU's military capabilities (Pooling & Sharing). The Council conclusions on the matter are only incentives for cooperating more closely, coordinating the defense policies of the member states and engaging in increased collaboration with the European Defense Agency. Although the EU member states have been increasing their defense capacities, such capacities remain at their sole disposal with any coordination of defense plans and plans to build up military capabilities at the CSDP level remaining purely theoretical. Substantial support is required for the key capability requirements postulated in Catherine Ashton's report, such as air-to-air refueling, satellite communication, cyber defense and remotely piloted aircraft systems. The relationship with NATO's Smart Defense still needs to be defined.



The third goal is to strengthen Europe's defense capabilities, help establish “an integrated, sustainable, innovative and competitive European Defense, Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB)” and ensure Europe is self-sufficient and more competitive vis-à-vis non-European countries. Within this realm, the Council is supporting the implementation of the European Commission’s plan of July 24, 2013 “Towards a more competitive and efficient defense and security sector” (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, COM(2013) 542 final, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2013:0542:FIN:PL:PDF>). Although the member states agree that the total R&D funding needed to develop new technologies largely exceeds their individual budgets, the rivalry among individual national defense sectors and their governmental support (which includes establishing exorbitant charges for military certification and blocking the mutual recognition of such certificates) makes any cooperation very difficult.

In view of the poor progress in formulating CSDP and the fact that all recent efforts by the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to reform this common policy sector have proved ineffective, the EU member states determined to develop the policy have resolved to engage in cooperation for security within the enhanced framework provided for the willing states under the Treaty of Lisbon. Examples of such actions include the Weimar Plus initiative which adds Italy and Spain to the original trio of France, Germany and Poland. Such cooperation rests on EU law and observes the “open-door” principles for all Union members interested in working together. Another type of integration for security is the cooperation between France and the UK. As opposed to Weimar Plus, the French-UK alliance, if brought into life, may jeopardize the further development of CSDP. This is because in their military relations, France and the United Kingdom avoid any references to the Common Security and Defense Policy and the Lisbon Treaty in the context of establishing permanent structured cooperation within the CSDP framework. Neither do they allow the option of ever involving further states in the sharing of such jointly developed capabilities.

Initiated in 2003, the development of the Common Security and Defense Policy has ground to a halt and remained in a standstill over the last five years. Despite turbulence in the European Union’s neighborhood, including the strategically important change in the viewpoints of the EU's trans-Atlantic partner, the United States’ rebalancing towards the Asia-Pacific and the unrest and armed conflicts brewing since 2011 in the EU's immediate neighborhood, work to further develop CSDP has not been resumed. The absence of action coordinated by the European Commission towards the development of CSDP may cause



major gaps in the defense capabilities of individual EU member states and leave different parts of the EU building their security and defense capacities at different speeds.

The theses and opinions included in this text do not constitute an official standpoint of the Institute for Western Affairs; they express the opinions of the author only.

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