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Issue Brief

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European Union: Shaping of a Common Security and Defence Policy Reasserted

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In a joint press conference with French President Emmanuel Macron on September 7, 2017, German Chancellor Angela Merkel vowed to pursue a closer co-operation with France, and supported the creation of joint European defence fund,



calling it an "important pillar of the integration of the European defence sector."¹ The fund was originally created by the EU in August 2017, with an annual budget of 5.5 billion euro (\$6.1 billion),² and lays the basis for permanent European military cooperation and is meant for an autonomous military capacity for the EU to respond to crises.

The French leader had also asked Merkel for a financial and military contribution to a joint anti-'jihadist regional force' under the rubric of G5 Sahel made up of forces from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.³

Later, in his State of the Union address to MEPs at the European Parliament on September 13, 2017, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called for the EU to have a defence union by 2025, something anti-EU voices refer to as a European army.⁴

The idea of a Common Defence Policy for Europe dates back to 1948 soon after the realization of the post WWII damage. The UK, France, and the Benelux countries signed the Treaty of Brussels on Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence. A mutual defence clause laid down the foundations for the creation of the Western European Union (WEU). It remained in practice

¹ "Merkel, Macron vow closer co-operation; pledge to reform eurozone ", *France24*, July13, 2017 www.france24.com

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Rebecca Perring & Joey Miller, "Juncker's absolute rule: All powerful president, EU-Wide Euro, EU Army- All without Money", *Express*. September 14, 2017. www.express.uk.com

until the late 1990s together with NATO. Reinforced by the “**Berlin Plus agreement**” signed in December 2002, the EU was given an access to NATO assets and capabilities under certain conditions.⁵

The forum provided a principal platform for consultation and dialogue on security and defence in Europe. After the subsequent conflicts in the Balkans at the end of the Cold War, the need for conflict prevention and crisis management arose with further vehemence for the EU. The post of the “High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy” was created to allow the Union to speak with ‘one face and one voice’ on foreign policy matters.

The Lisbon Treaty of December 2009, was however, a cornerstone in the development of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The treaty includes both a mutual assistance and a solidarity clause and allowed for the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/ Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP).⁶ The two distinct functions of the post give the HR/VP the possibility to bring all the necessary EU assets together and to apply a "comprehensive approach" to EU crisis management.

The "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" presented by HR/VP Mogherini in June 2016 laid down the foundations for comprehensive package of measures in the areas of security and defence. It consists of three major pillars:

- I. New political goals and ambitions for Europeans to take more responsibility for their own security and defence.
- II. New financial tools to help Member States and the European defence industry to develop defence capabilities ("European Defence Action Plan").
- III. Set of concrete actions as follow up to the EU-NATO Joint Declaration which identified areas of cooperation.⁷

It is expected that since implementation of these three elements is ongoing, it will boost the security of the Union and its citizens collectively.

With the building up of offensive scenarios along the borders of the Eastern European countries in the recent past, Europe fears old Soviet-era situation once again. According to Sean Gallup/Staff reports, Moscow sent as many as 100,000 troops close to the Eastern European states while ignoring NATO

⁵ Lawrence S.Kaplan, “A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program, 1948-1951, OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE HISTORICAL OFFICE Washington, D.C. • 1980. <http://www.dtic.mil>

⁶ “Shaping of a Common Security and Defence policy”, *European Union External Action*. eeas.europa.eu

⁷ Ibid.

observers guidelines agreed upon between the two powers for exercises of more than 30,000 troops.⁸ Russia executed one of its biggest military exercises since the end of the Cold War between September 14-20, 2017. The Zapad-17 exercise took place in Belarus, Kaliningrad, the Baltic Sea, and western Russia. So far, NATO believes on the face of Moscow and has not strengthened its forces for the defences of its eastern European members such as, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.⁹

On the other hand, Erdogan and Putin are also getting closer. Turkey has purchased 2 billion pounds of weapons from Russia that have fraught relations between Russia and NATO.¹⁰ Already, Europe has not yet recovered from the double paradigm shift it has experienced since 2014: first, Russia smashed the European security order and brought back the importance of NATO, territorial defense, and deterrence; and second, US President Donald Trump has questioned NATO's utility and is ready to moderate the US commitment to European security if Europeans don't show more vigour.

Nonetheless, any offer by the mutual assistance to member countries in resisting any policy of external aggression against the EU and to promote unity and encourage positive integration in Europe, immensely require the health and synergy of Franco-German relations. Merkel has already promised a genuine incitement to re-launch the European Union. Germany is also implementing its own vision of European defense cooperation anyway through the **Framework Nation Concept**. The Concept was launched in 2013 as a systematic approach to solving the problem of Europe's ever-shrinking national armed forces. The core idea was to set up multinational units in which armed forces that are powerful enough, such as the German Bundeswehr, serve as a backbone that smaller armies can plug into. The larger units would thenceforth arise which are more capable and deployable for longer periods of time.

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Macron has also been promoting the idea since he became president. On September 28, 2017, France and Germany have agreed to develop a "new generation" of European fighter jets together that will replace their current fleets, which French President Emmanuel Macron called "a profound revolution" in their defence relations. The two partners also hope to finalise a joint roadmap by mid-2018. The aim

⁸ Andrew Higgins, "Russia's war games with fake enemies cause real alarm", *The New York Times*, September 13, 2017. www.nytimes.com

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Christopher Woody, "Turkey's purchase of Russian Missiles has ratcheted tensions to a new level", *Business Insider*, September 15, 2017. <http://www.businessinsider.com>

¹¹ Claudia Major, "A Franco-German Defense Deal for Europe", *Carnegie Europe*, March 23, 2017. <http://carnegieeurope.eu>

of this joint fighter jet project is to do research and development together... to use it together.. and to coordinate on exports.”¹²

If France and Germany cooperate seriously, it would make a difference to Europe’s security: the two countries represent about 40 per cent of Europe’s overall capabilities and of Europe’s combined defense budgets.¹³

¹² “Paris, Berlin to develop European fighter jet pilot”, *The Express Tribune*, July 13, 2017. tribune.com.pk

¹³ Claudia Major, op.cit.