

"European defence, today and tomorrow"

During the conference-debate organised by the European Movement in Luxembourg on 19 June 2023, at the Foyer européen in Luxembourg City, Mr Alain Calmes first welcomed the fact that the European Movement in Luxembourg had returned to tradition by bringing together the Union of European Federalists - Luxembourg, the Europa Union Luxembourg, and the Young European Federalists for an exchange of views on a European defence which is all the more necessary in these uncertain times. He evoked the memory of General Patton, who did so much for our liberation, who would have wanted to prevent the Soviets from occupying all Central Europe, and who rests among his soldiers in the American cemetery in Luxembourg.

Afterwards, Mr Calmes introduced the panellists: Mr. Charles Goerens, former Grand Ducal Minister of Defence, Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Alessandro Politi, Director of the NATO College Foundation and Mr. Jean Marsia, colonel military administrator (Retired), founding president of the European Society for Defence INPA (S€D), former academic director of the Royal Military Academy in Brussels.

Finally, Mr. Calmes described how he would structure the debate between orators and with the public, starting from the current situation and then looking to the future, both for defence and for the defence industry. He then encouraged the speakers to situate their remarks in the context of the war in Ukraine, where a liberating counter-offensive has begun, the forthcoming Atlantic Council in Vilnius and tensions in the Indo-Pacific area, expressing the hope that Europe will be able to defend our values and maintain peace.

Mrs. Anne Calteux, Representative of the European Commission in Luxembourg, then spoke to note that if the European Union (EU) remains a peace project, defence has become topical again. Russia's invasion of an independent and peaceful European country on 24 February 2022 changed the EU's approach. The EU has realised that it was a little naïve and recognised the need to strengthen our military capabilities, to be strong and to take concerted action between all its Member States. The EU has become more assertive, more aware of what is at stake and of the role that Europe can play in securing the values that are dear to us and that are the basis of the European project. Therefore, in April 2022, the Commission proposed a strategic compass for security and defence. It is based on 4 cornerstones: *act, protect, invest, and cooperate*.

Ukraine is a key partner of the EU that shares its values and principles. To demonstrate its solidarity, the EU has provided considerable financial, military and humanitarian support to enable Ukraine to win the war against it. For the first time in EU history, 293 main battle tanks have been or will be delivered to Ukraine. It will receive F-16 fighter jets and €6.52 billion under the European Peace Facility.

We invest in our defence and security in order to protect Europe, making it stronger and endowed with strategic autonomy, in all respects, including in the field of defence. A Joint Defence Procurement Task Force has been set up by the European Commission to coordinate and harmonise Member States' investments. €500 million over two years from the EU budget will encourage Member States to respond to their needs in a collaborative way. The European Defence Fund (EDF) set up by the European Commission to support collaborative defence research and development projects and promote innovation in European defence disposes of €1.2 billion.

What we want is a Europe that is strong and capable of defending its values and the security of its citizens. The European Union is about cooperation, mutual support, and unity.

Mr. Goerens said the EU reacted well to the invasion of Ukraine, remaining united in the face of this violation of international law. We sided with Ukraine, to help it defend itself, but without engaging in a conflict against Russia. NATO has done the same.

The Russian attack has brought the defence of European territory back to the forefront, which goes far beyond the so-called Petersberg missions, whereas since the end of the Cold War, the Europeans had increased their defence budgets much less than the Americans, Russians or Chinese.

About our security architecture, Mr. Goerens considered that the Treaties on the EU and on the Functioning of the EU do not contain provisions with the same force as Article 5 of the 1948 Brussels Treaty, establishing the Western European Union and amended in 1954. However, this treaty was denounced by its Member States on 21 May 2010.

Mr. Goerens noted that European citizens have long wanted genuine European defence. They are ahead of the politicians. For Mr. Goerens, we need a political Union, a common will to meet our need for security, because our freedoms and values are at risk, as they are in Ukraine. We can no longer rely on the guarantee given by the Americans. The 2024 presidential election could call it into question if Mr. Biden is not re-elected.

Mr. Politi recalled that for 20 years, European defence has been integrated into NATO. Peace-making operations in the Balkans have demonstrated good cooperation between NATO and the EU. However, Mr. Politi lamented that in European defence, many plans have been published but there have been few achievements. EU Battle Groups, for example, have never been used. Europe will only be autonomous and credible when it has both sufficient military capabilities and the logistics to use them. Standardising armaments would contribute to this, because Europeans spend their defence budgets badly, which means that our troops are poorly trained due to a lack of sufficient funding.

Mr. Politi noted that for Americans, Ukraine and Europe are lower priorities than rebuilding their countries and the Chinese threat. Even if Mr. Putin will emerge very weakened from the conflict in Ukraine, having a credible European deterrent is indispensable. The strategic compass is only a first step. The German strategy is, for Mr. Politi, too weak.

Mr. Marsia recalled that the Cold War was managed entirely by NATO as a result of the failure of the European Defence Community. The Single Act of 1986 founded the EU based on the European Communities. We know how much they have increased our well-being and freedoms and that they neglected our security and defence. The Single Act gave the EU the ambition to play a role on the international stage, but the EU showed its inability to manage crises: remember the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in 1991; the financial crisis and the war in Georgia in 2008; the monetary crisis in 2010; the invasion of Crimea and Donbass in 2014; the migration crisis in 2015; the health crisis in 2019-2021 and finally the war in Ukraine since 24 February 2022.

The reason for this incapacity is that the EU is not a State, it is an association of States. It cannot, therefore, have an army. European defence is an illusion. The EU only implements politico-military institutions: a Political and Security Committee, an External Action Service, a Military Committee, a Strategic General Staff, but not an operational staff, a Defence Agency, a Satellite Centre, but it has only commercial, imprecise images, an Institute for Security Studies, a Security and Defence College. It has neither a government, nor a politico-military command, nor military capabilities. It therefore has no weight on the geopolitical scene. Its "strategic compass" is only a statement of intent.

For Mr. Marsia, there is no European pillar in NATO. It is therefore impossible to use European defence budgets, which are close to half of the American defence budget, efficiently. These budgets are mainly used to pay the one million two hundred thousand European soldiers, of which only a few tens of thousands are sufficiently instructed, equipped, and trained to intervene in high-intensity operations. Therefore States find it so difficult to meet the demands for personnel for EU missions.

European military capabilities are about 5 to 6% of those of the Americans. Without U.S. support, they would have resisted a Russian attack much less well than the Ukrainian armed forces, due to a lack of motivation and a sufficient number of operational weapons systems. To change this, Europe needs a Pentagon, not 27 defence ministers and staffs. These have required our armed forces to implement and maintain 178 types of weapon systems compared to 30 in the United States of America. This penalizes our operationality and our defence industrial and technological base.

In response to a question from the public on transatlantic relations, fortunately restored by President Biden, which does not prevent the urgent need for European defence to restore our credibility, Mr. Politi replied that we must remember that the interests of the Americans and Europeans are different. The European States, with the possible exception of the Baltic States, do not take enough account of this, nor of the war in Ukraine.

For Mr. Goerens, Europe has reacted properly to the war in Ukraine. He recalled that in 2003, four European States refused to participate in the invasion of Iraq. They have decided to allocate 0.4% of their GDP to the acquisition of new European military capabilities, but this will have not been sustainable enough. It has shown, however, that joint programmes are possible.

Mr. Goerens then wondered why it seems impossible to federate Europe. He expressed concern about the lack of political will in Europe, and he considered the German Defence Minister, Mr Pistorius, to be a happy exception: he is doing his job well.

Mr. Goerens considered that Europe needed a common budget, which would lead to a convergence, to which Mr Marsia replied that this budget was certainly necessary, but insufficient, particularly for sending soldiers on operations at risk.

Mr. Goerens replied that the Luxembourg A-400M military transport aircraft that he bought in 2003 when he was Minister of Defence and which went to pick up Afghan refugees in 2021 is an example of what needs to be done, it is an example of federalisation. It is regrettable that the EU Member States have so far not wanted to federalise foreign policy. We need to change that.

Mr. Politi considered that federating for example fifteen countries would be an excellent idea and that France, Italy, Spain and Germany should agree, particularly on the question of which geographical area Europe should intervene. He estimated that it could be the territory of the EU, its eastern neighbourhood and its southern neighbourhood up to the equator, as well as the Atlantic.

Mr. Marsia said that in the long term, Europe will face conflict between the United States of America and China, insecurity in our neighbourhood, but also uncontrolled migration caused by natural disasters, including those related to global warming, insecurity, and poor governance.

To ensure our security and defence effectively, including that of our borders and coasts, we must, according to Mr. Marsia, create a European federal State and a European defence, the European pillar of NATO. NATO would consist of the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States of Europe.

The United States of America, where the US Army, US Navy, US Marines, US Air Force, US Coast Guards, but also the National Guards coexist, can inspire the distribution of competences in Europe. It is not a question of destroying the national armed forces, which have the merit of existing, but of filling our capability gaps and avoiding duplication. To this end, a single Defence Staff and a single Ministry of Defence should express the re-equipment needs of the

European armies, including those of the Member States, supervise their preparation and, if necessary, use them.

On 21 August 1849, Victor Hugo proposed to the Peace Congress in Paris the United States of Europe, on the American model. Since then, we know what to do, but the politicians did not want to. This has cost life or health to millions of military and civilian Europeans.

The process of union in America began on May 9, 1754, when Benjamin Franklin published a cartoon, Join, or Die, in the Pennsylvania Gazette, illustrating how to resist British oppression. Twenty years later, the first Continental Congress, consisting of 55 representatives from 12 of the 13 North American colonies (Georgia did not send delegates until 1775), met in Philadelphia to discuss legislation passed by the British Parliament to quell the Boston Tea Party. On 20 October 1774, this first Continental Congress drafted the Articles of Association, which founded the alliance between the thirteen States.

The Second Continental Congress met from 10 May 1775 to 1 March 1781. In June 1775, during the siege of Boston by the Insurgents, the Congress created the Continental Army and appointed General George Washington as its commander. On 4 July 1776, the Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America and the Articles of Confederation. He decided on foreign policy, war, and currency during the War of Independence. During it, the confederation founded in 1776 showed its limits and George Washington proposed in 1787 a federal constitution. To get it ratified, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay published 85 articles in 1788, The Federalist Papers.

In 1923, Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi published Pan-Europa, a work that drew lessons from the First World War and proposed a European constitution. It was prefaced by Winston Churchill. European politicians preferred to create the useless and even harmful Society of Nations, because it left the field open to totalitarian regimes and the Second World War, but Adenauer and de Gaulle adhered to pan-European ideas.

In 1950, Mr. Schuman announced the creation of a European federation, but it still does not exist.

Next, Mr. Marsia asked the audience who said: "With unity achieved, Europe could build adequate security. It was Eisenhower, July 3, 1951.

Who said in 2011: "My goal is to create a United States of Europe – on the model of the Swiss, German or American federal states." That is Mrs. von der Leyen.

Who said in 2015: I want to see the creation of a European army. It is Mr. Juncker.

Who said in 2017: At the beginning of the next decade, Europe will need a Joint Intervention Force, a common defence budget and a common doctrine to act. It is Mr. Macron, at the Sorbonne.

Who said in 2018: "We need to develop a vision that will one day lead to a real European army that will usefully complement NATO. It's Mrs. Merkel.

Who said in 2019: We must move towards a federal Europe and create a European army, to be credible. It is Mr. Pedro Sánchez.

Who said in 2022: I call for the establishment of federalism at European level. It is Mr. Draghi.

Mr. Marsia lamented that all these leaders had done nothing to establish European federalism, whereas it would be enough that a Constituent Assembly should draft and adopt a federal constitution. 90 States around the world have done so.

A federal constitution includes a social contract and the description of the executive, legislative and judicial powers, as well as the distribution of competences by level of power: the EU, the Member States, the Regions, in the fields of home, economic, social and

environmental affairs, external relations, Security and Defence, Public Finance. It lays down the procedure for entry into force and amendment.

That's, said Mr. Marsia in conclusion, what the international non-profit association European Society for Defence (S€D) seeks to achieve.

Mr Goerens disagreed with Mr. Marsia, which he said is too hard on the EU. Mr. Goerens has called himself a 100% federalist but believes that the United States of Europe remain an illusion. How can this idea be incorporated into the treaties? NATO works because there are common interests. In Europe, we have the single currency.

Mr. Marsia replied that this currency remains fragile, because it is not supported like the US dollar by a federal government and by a federal budget corresponding to 30% of the gross domestic product.

Mr. Goerens was also pleased to see that the European spirit is developing.

Mr. Déage, who chairs IHEDN-Luxembourg, would like a common vision in Europe in terms of infrastructure, weapons systems, and training.

To several questions raised on nuclear deterrence, excessive economic dependence on China, Europe's inability to provide enough ammunition to Ukraine, Belgian-Luxembourg cooperation and others, the motivation of Europeans to die for Europe, Mr. Politi recalled that it is only in times of war that people show or not their real will to fight. He also recalled that the Americans have limited the provision of nuclear weapons to a few countries, while maintaining control with a dual key system. Only the France and the United Kingdom, among the Allies, are more autonomous in nuclear matters. The American reluctance to implement nuclear weapons was also evident when General MacArthur was relieved of his command in Korea by President Truman in 1951, because he had called for the use of nuclear weapons to win that war.

Mr. Marsia returned to the idea of bringing the United States of Europe into the European treaties. This is not possible because a federal State requires a constitution, which is a legal act internal to the State, while treaties are legal acts external to the State. Only a Constituent Assembly could create the United States of Europe.

The last word went to Mr. Goerens, who called on Europe to unite quickly, to protect itself against a possible return of Mr. Trump in power, because it is a real putsch that he organized on 6 January 2021.