

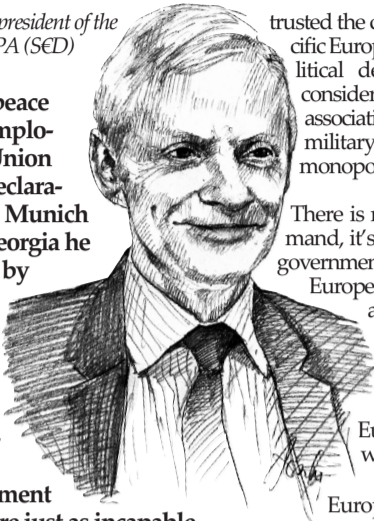
The 2024 European Parliament elections, an important step to the European federation?

OPINION - By Jean MARSIA, president of the European Society for Defence INPA (SED)

The hope of lasting peace that raised by the implosion of the Soviet Union was short-lived. Putin's declaration of war on the West in Munich in 2007, the invasion of Georgia he ordered in 2008, followed by the invasion of Crimea and part of the Donbass in 2014, have shattered our illusions but were not enough to shake the Atlantic and European institutions as well as our heads of state and government out of their torpor. They are just as incapable of dealing with the threats of today as others were in the 1910s, 1930s and 1990s. They were unable to prevent the two world wars or the implosion of the former Yugoslavia. Again, we are moving helplessly towards a new catastrophe.

Our governments tried in vain to improve the Common European Security Policy and the Common European Security and Defence Policy. Therefore, most European Union (EU) member states rely for security and defence on NATO, it's to say on the USA, who have little regard for our interests. This costs us dearly, economically, and politically. It is even more regrettable that NATO cannot guarantee our safety as it is handicapped by the need for unanimity in the Atlantic Council to act. Everyone is aware of the persistent failure of the Alliance to welcome Sweden.

One way to strengthen the Atlantic Alliance is to create a European pillar within it equivalent to the North American pillar. In any case since 2008, Europe has been unable to cope with the financial, monetary, migration, health, and security crises. Our ecosystems are in peril. War is raging in Ukraine and in Gaza partly because Europe, on the international stage, exists only as a trading power. The Rome Treaty of 1957 on the European Economic Community has en-



trusted the competence in foreign trade to a specific European commissioner. But in the geopolitical debate, the EU is not taken into consideration, because it is not a state, it is an association of states. It has no and cannot have military capabilities because states have the monopoly on armed forces.

There is no European politico-military command, it's to say an acting head of state, or of government. The high representative is not a real European minister of foreign affairs, let alone a real European minister of defence. Therefore, the high representative, the president of the European Council and the president of the European Commission often make 440 million Europeans look ridiculous on the world stage.

Europe generates collectively only a few percent of the American military capabilities, those of the Chinese or those of the Russians. This is not due to a lack of money, because the Europeans spend about half of the American defence budget, but to a lack of efficiency. In Europe we have about thirty Pentagons and not just one. Therefore, European armies must implement and maintain 154 types of weapon systems. They are only 27 in the USA. This prevents our armed forces from being inter-operable. This penalizes our defence industrial and technological base.

The high-intensity war waged by Russia on Ukraine since 24 January 2022 raised awareness, but action remained limited. Europe provided Ukraine with valuable help, but the donated equipment and munitions were too disparate and arrived too late. The Russians have had time to entrench themselves solidly. They revived their arms industry, while ours have made only marginal progress: in 2023, Europe has only been able to supply a third of the 155mm shells promised to Ukraine. They are sorely lacking on the front line.

If Putin wins in Ukraine, he could take over the Russian-speaking province of Narva in Estonia, or the Suwalki corridor in Lithuania. He could attack Finland, which accuses Moscow of orchestrating a migratory crisis in retaliation to the fact that Finland, worried about its security, joined NATO in April 2023 and closed its 1,340 kilometers long border with Rus-

sia from 15 December 2023 to 14 January 2024. Putin reacted to the closure by announcing the reinforcement of his military presence in the north-west of Russia. He will thus soon be able to go on the offensive. He knows that Europe has no federal military capabilities, and that those of the European States are not sufficient to ensure our security.

Neither integration within the EU nor cooperation within NATO has been able to guarantee us peace and security, but the recent legislative elections in Poland showed that if there is a popular will, there is a path to success. European governments got bogged down since 1950. In 73 years, they haven't given birth to the European Federation announced on 9 May 1950 by Robert Schuman.

A democratic, federal European state requires a constitution, not a treaty, because a treaty is external to the state and multilateral, whereas a constitution is an internal, unilateral act of public law that aims to establish the fundamental rights of citizens, the principles on which the legitimacy of political power rests and the general architecture of institutions. A constitution is at the top of the hierarchy of state norms.

The method for founding a federal, sovereign, and democratic state, united in diversity, has been known since 7 September 1787. History shows that confederations either turn into federations or dissolve. In Philadelphia, the delegates of the American states replaced their confederation by the very first federation. They adopted a federal constitution. It begins with the words "We, the people". It separates the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The legislative branch is bicameral. The lower house is directly elected, with the citizens of each state represented in proportion to their number. In the Senate the states are equal.

Europe can draw inspiration from these principles to keep us in peace and security, to guarantee our fundamental rights and freedoms, and to regain its rightful place on the international scene in view of its economic power and European civilisation!

To turn at last Europe into a power, deterrent but peaceful, European governments should, in 2024, establish a federal governance in Europe and take the following appropriate measures. The first step to is to form a nucleus, a vanguard of states that want to federate. This is how the European Union was built: the

Benelux was the forerunner of the Six, who were 28 and are still 27. The Benelux initiated the Schengen zone, today with 23 member and 4 associated states. The Eurozone had 9 member states when the Maastricht Treaty was signed and now have 20.

Members of the European Parliament will be elected in June 2024. Those from the new core group should be tasked to declare themselves a constituent assembly, to draft and adopt a federal constitution. The constituent assembly will choose the name of the federation. It doesn't matter if it is named the United States of Europe, the European Federation, or the Federal Republic of Europe. It must be a democratic state, legitimized by universal suffrage.

The constituent assembly will define the areas of competence, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity, to maintain the sovereignty of the people and the balance between the federal, national, and regional powers. The European federal government would therefore take over part of our international relations, security, and defence. This should make it possible to constitute, as in America, federal forces to complement the armies of the states, which would correspond to the American National Guards.

A federal Europe would establish a politico-military unity of command, which would allow for the economies of scale and the gains in productivity and efficiency. This would make the rearmament of Europe and the constitution of a credible European pillar within the Alliance financially sustainable.

Finally, the constituent institutions must be put in place. Therefore, the European federation should have its own resources, based on an innovative, egalitarian tax system. Multinationals, especially those in the digital sector, should no longer escape taxation. This would make it possible to finance the above-mentioned policies and to conduct a budgetary policy that could support the monetary policy successfully carried out by the European Central Bank.

To restore peace in Europe, to turn it into a sovereign, autonomous, independent, peaceful but respected power, we must act, urgently. The elections to the European Parliament in 2024 are an opportunity for European citizens to demand that candidates commit to making the next European Parliament the constituent assembly that Europe needs.

L'UE lance un fonds de soutien à la défense de 175 millions d'euros

La Commission européenne et le Fonds européen d'investissement (FEI) ont uni, le 12 janvier, leurs forces pour renforcer leur soutien à la défense et à la sécurité de l'UE par le lancement du mécanisme de fonds propres dans le domaine de la défense.

L'initiative, qui se compose de 100 millions d'euros provenant du Fonds européen de la défense et de 75 millions d'euros supplémentaires provenant du Fonds européen d'investissement, renforcera considérablement la capacité d'investissement du FEI afin de soutenir, au cours des quatre prochaines années, les fonds de capital-investissement et de capital-risque au moyen de stratégies couvrant les technologies pertinentes pour la défense. Cette initiative de 175 millions d'euros devrait attirer des investissements privés supplémentaires dans les fonds qu'elle soutient, mobilisant ainsi, au total, environ 500 millions d'euros en faveur des entreprises européennes.

Le mécanisme de fonds propres dans le domaine de la défense vise à stimuler le développement d'un écosystème de fonds privés investissant dans l'innovation dans la défense. L'initiative se concen-



trera sur les technologies à double usage englobant à la fois des applications civiles et de défense, afin de soutenir davantage la sécurité de l'UE, conformément aux objectifs d'InvestEU. Cette nouvelle possibilité de financement s'accompagnera d'activités de renforcement des capacités visant à soutenir les gestionnaires dans le développement et la gestion de leurs fonds. Cette initiative renforce la coopération entre la Commission et le FEI en faveur de l'écosystème aérospatial et de défense, lancée avec le lancement du Fonds CASSINI en janvier 2022 afin de renforcer les investissements dans les entreprises spatiales.

Le nouveau mécanisme de fonds propres dans le domaine de la défense est pleinement conforme à l'appel lancé par le Conseil européen

de décembre 2023 en faveur d'un renforcement du soutien du groupe BEI à la sécurité et à la défense européennes, en s'appuyant sur l'initiative stratégique européenne en matière de sécurité lancée en 2022 et mise à jour en juin 2023.

Thierry Breton, commissaire au marché intérieur : "Avec le mécanisme de fonds propres dans le domaine de la défense, nous franchissons une première étape dans l'amélioration de l'accès au financement pour le secteur de la défense. Cette initiative contribuera à envoyer un signal positif au marché et à stimuler les investissements privés en faveur de l'innovation dans le domaine de la défense. Il s'agit d'une première étape et nous continuerons à travailler avec la BEI et le FEI pour favoriser l'accès au financement dans le secteur de la défense".

Roger Havenith, Deputy Chief Executive of the European Investment Fund : "Notre partenariat avec la Commission européenne, dans le cadre du Fonds européen de la défense, représente une étape importante dans nos efforts visant à stimuler l'investissement et l'innovation dans un secteur d'importance stratégique pour l'Europe. En soutenant les fonds de capital-investissement et de capital-risque ciblant les investissements dans les technologies de défense présentant un potentiel à double usage, nous visons à catalyser la croissance économique et favoriser un écosystème entrepreneurial prospère dans la sécurité et la défense".

Kris Peeters, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank : "Ce partenariat renforcera encore les capacités de défense européennes dans un monde de plus en plus interconnecté et confronté à de nouveaux défis géopolitiques. Le mécanisme de fonds propres dans le domaine de la défense contribuera à la réalisation des objectifs de l'initiative stratégique européenne pour la sécurité de la BEI et jouera un rôle clé dans la promotion de technologies de pointe contribuant à la défense et à la sécurité de l'UE, confirmant ainsi que ce domaine stratégique constitue une priorité pour le groupe BEI".

Source : Commission, BEI et FEI



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