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## The Role of the Multinational Corps

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The European Council in June has not been very encouraging for those who believe in the necessity of an autonomous Security and Defence Policy of the European Union. Public attention was taken by the problems of Greece and the drama of the refugees in the Mediterranean. The discussion about Security and Defence took only a very short time.

However, Frederica Mogherini has obtained a mandate to formulate a strategy on foreign and security policy for the European Council in June next year. In the debate preparing this paper, we will have to answer the question if we really want a European Army as demanded by Jean-Claude Juncker, Angela Merkel and Ursula von der Leyen in declarations earlier this year.

A look at the European Defence Policy clearly shows that improvements are necessary. The 28 Member States of the EU spend about € 190 billion per year on defence. This is more than twice the defence spending of Russia, but we know that we would not be able to defend ourselves without the assistance of the United States. Even relatively small operations like the mission in Libya were not possible as an autonomous mission of the European Union. And a Continent which is rich but unable to defend itself leads a dangerous life.

We permanently expect from our American allies that they risk the lives of their soldiers and their citizens for the security of Europe. In the current international insecurity and turmoil, Europe cannot escape the responsibility to carry a larger part of the burden. Do we therefore need a European Army?

A European Army is a long term goal of some of the Member States of the European Union. It can only be realized step by step.

The first step is the realization of the Internal Market in the field of defence. This mainly concerns the European Legislation concerning Defence Procurement. This legislation has been adopted by the European Parliament and Council. Important savings are possible if they are really applied, and efforts are necessary now to assure their implementation.

The next step concerns common projects which go beyond the financial means of individual member states. The European Union sends soldiers into operations which are demanding and dangerous. We therefore have a responsibility to make sure that they dispose of an adequate equipment for intelligence, observation, telecommunication and transport.

Many of these capabilities are connected with satellites. Therefore an autonomous access to space is of high importance for the security of the European Union. These projects should be financed from the budget of the European Union. We have seen that this already happens with security related projects like Copernikus and Galileo. The decisions concerning Ariane 6 are therefore important steps in the right direction.

But these projects are nothing but a closer cooperation between the member states. What we need now is a visible next step on the way towards a European Defence Union. This will only be possible as an agreement between a limited number of Member States. Therefore, Michel Barnier has proposed to use the instrument of a Permanent Structured Cooperation as foreseen in the Lisbon Treaty. But such a project needs a visible goal. I therefore propose to build such a cooperation around the goal to develop the Eurocorps into a permanent crisis management instrument of the European Union. This decision could be taken by the framework nations of the Eurocorps: France, Germany, Spain, Poland (from 2016) Belgium and Luxemburg.



These countries could take the initiative to put the Eurocorps at the permanent disposal of the European Union. In the recent years, the Eurocorps has developed many of the capabilities necessary for this task. These capabilities could be further developed in the context of a permanent structured cooperation. This could then be used as a model for the other Multinational Corps and serve as an alternative to the Battle Groups which until now have been a failure. This could be a useful step on the way towards a more effective Security and Defence Policy of the European Union. It could also serve to make us a more useful partner in the Euro – Atlantic Partnership.