

Europe rearms

Ludwig Niethammer, Theodor Beck
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Of all the projects being pursued by the European Union (EU), few are being undertaken with as much energy and intensity as the creation of an independent European armed force. The ponderous Brussels bureaucracy usually measures the development of its economic, monetary or agricultural projects—from initial decision-making through planning, consultations and final realisation—in five- or ten-year periods. This is not the case when it comes to setting up Europe's own military structure.

First in the Gulf War and then in NATO's war against Serbia, the European governments were made aware of how completely dependent they were on the military might of the US. Since then, the establishment of a force capable of reacting to crises, and as independent of NATO as possible, has been at the centre of Brussels' concerns.

At the EU summit in Nice last December, government leaders decided on the precise framework for such a rapid reaction force. An exclusively European alliance of forces extending to 60,000 ground troops is to be ready for service in two years' time. These land forces are to be supported by air and sea contingents. Member states are to have the capability of mobilising their armies within 60 days so as to carry out independent military operations in designated trouble spots. The forces are to have the ability to remain in each combat situation for at least a year.

The size of the arsenal to be placed at the disposal of the EU strike forces is a sure sign that the EU has its sight set on heavily armed military interventions. Plans have been made for the acquisition of 95 warships and 570 aircraft of all categories. At the moment, silence is being maintained over both the arming of the land forces and the total cost of the military plans.

While security experts are stressing the necessity of European troops with an independent command structure, the media is continually drawing attention to the vast gap between wishes and reality. A typical commentary appeared in the conservative newspaper *Die Welt* last November pointing to "serious deficiencies" and a great need for modernisation in Europe's military.

The EU states are only able to muster 6 of the 61 ships deemed necessary by planners for the transport of troops and materials over long stretches of sea. With respect to air transport, 66 of the desired 188 aircraft are lacking. Glaring deficiencies also exist in electronic surveillance and equipment for neutralising enemy air defence systems. "Without NATO, it's no go," a high-level EU diplomat explained. "On the other hand, the EU states are well disposed when it comes to mobile headquarters, tank units and infantry."

According to press reports, the EU army's sphere of action will encompass an area radiating 4,000 kilometres around Brussels. This would make possible military engagements in the Near East, the Caucuses and northern Africa. Experts estimate that such interventions will require over 200,000 soldiers, although combat units engaged in foreign operations will often have to be relieved by replacement forces.

The rapid reaction force will not be a standing army. It will be made up from the various national armies of the EU states, the three biggest countries contributing most of the soldiers. Thus Germany will provide the largest contingent with 18,000 combatants, followed by Britain and France with 12,500 each. Except for Denmark, military units from all 15

EU member countries will be involved. The supreme commander of the EU military staff will be the German general, Rainer Schuwirth. In the competition for this post, France had to content itself with the office of deputy commander.

For five decades, the West European Union (WEU) served as the European pillar of NATO. Last November, the European foreign and defence ministers transferred all of the WEU's important military functions to the EU in order to establish Europe's first-ever independent military structure. This includes responsibility for intervention into crisis situations, but also extends to accountability for logistics and technical equipment.

Consequently, control of not only the Torrejon satellite centre in Spain but also the centre for military studies in Paris has to pass from the WEU to the EU. The de facto dissolution of the WEU is clearly a step towards EU military independence. The EU is now also responsible for humanitarian aid, intervention into catastrophes and the much vaunted "peace-securing and peace-enforcing" measures.

During his recent visit to Washington, Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair attempted to dispel American doubts about these independent European military structures. But the decisions reached at the EU summit in Nice are unmistakable. In their Agreement on European Security and Defence (AESD), the EU member countries determined that three new executive levels will be established.

The most important of these is the Committee for Politics and Security (CPS). The CPS is responsible for "political control and strategic management" during military operations. It will therefore play a key role in policy making from the initiation to the execution and winding up of military ventures. According to an official report of the AESD, the CPS is also responsible for reviewing the international situation in respect to "common foreign and security policy" and political dialogue.

The Military Committee of the European Union (MCEU) is the highest military body and consists of the general chiefs of staff of the EU member states or their deputies. This committee will advise the CPS in relation to military matters. In cooperation with the CPS, the MCEU will be able to issue military guidelines to the third body of the new EU military hierarchy, the EU Military Staff. In turn, the Military Staff will implement the guidelines of the Military Committee and also be responsible for the assessment of ground conditions and for strategic planning.

In the appendix to the treaty of the Common Foreign and Defence Policy (CFDP) it is stated that—in the case of an emergency involving a possible European military response—NATO will have to act with the utmost respect for the EU's scope for autonomous decision-making. The rapid reaction force's entire chain of command during any eventual operation must "be under the political control and strategic management of the EU".

At the 75th German-French summit in Mainz on June 9, 2000, decisions were made concerning armament policy. The consequences of these decisions will extend for years to come, thereby affecting power relations within the NATO hierarchy. The oft-criticised deficiencies in satellite surveillance and transport facilities are to be overcome through expensive armament measures. In this respect, France and Germany intend to work

together on their satellite systems.

The surveillance satellite, Helios 2, which France wants to launch into space in 2003, will function in cooperation with the German radar satellite programme, Sar Lupe, planned to begin operating the following year. Even though it is not possible at present to estimate how expensive the implementation of these guidelines will be, it is clear that the costs will be enormous. But the US lead in space technology is the major factor in its military superiority.

In order as quickly as possible to make up for the lack of transport facilities required for foreign intervention, a networking of the European armaments industry is being developed and weapons production is being boosted at a feverish rate. At the British air show in Farnborough in July 2000, the purchase of a total of 225 Airbuses (Type A 400 M) was finalised. Airbuses at a unit price of 100 million euros were ordered by Germany (73), France (50), Spain (27), Turkey (26), Britain (25), Italy (16), Belgium (7) and Luxemburg with the help of Belgium (1). However, the aircraft can only be delivered some time between 2008 and 2016.

The Airbus A 400 M is a multipurpose heavy transport aircraft, developed and manufactured by the Airbus Military Company in cooperation with the European aircraft consortium EADS. Several European countries are contributing to the A 400 M's development costs, amounting to 22.6 billion euros. According to information released by EADS, the A 400 M is "capable of carrying every important kind of military vehicle and helicopter". While in flight, it can drop both paratroopers and military equipment. Furthermore, the A 400 M has "air-borne refuelling technology as part of its standard equipment".

In the autumn of 1999, the government heads of Germany, France and Spain met with representatives of DaimlerChrysler Aerospace, Lagardhre/Matra and Casa to announce the merging of these groups into the largest European aerospace concern, EADS. Since then, orders worth billions of euros have been placed by European governments—9 billion alone under the rubric of "defence". Orders of over 12.7 billion euros have been recorded in the category of "aeronautics"—which also includes equipment for war.

EADS can supply a variety of aircraft, from the A 400 M to the Eurofighter. It is linked through numerous joint projects with other armament companies and serves Europe as one of the most important weapons producers. Germany, in particular, has multiple entries in EADS's order books. By the year 2015, all of 180 Eurofighters—the most expensive of Europe's fighter planes—will be delivered to the German ministry of defence. The Eurofighter and the Tornado are to be equipped with the most modern forms of precision and long-distance weaponry.

Until their assumption of government power in 1998, the German Social Democrats and the Greens had vehemently opposed the Eurofighter/Tornado project on the grounds that their development and production would swallow up hundreds of billions in tax revenues urgently needed for social services.

Considering the current transformation of the German federal army from a defence force to an intervention force, one gets an insight into the speed and scale of the armaments build-up in Europe. The federal army—which was established exclusively for the purpose of national defence against the background of the Cold War in the mid-1950s—is now being given a completely different task and thus acquiring a different character. The kind of restructuring, role definition and investment under way reveal the function for which the German army is being prepared: military interventions in every corner of the world.

Rudolf Scharping, the German minister of defence, has initiated an "alliance between the federal army and the business community". The federal army is not only to cooperate more closely with industry; it is also to be remodelled along business management lines. The Institute for Development, Procurement and Management (GEBB) was set up especially for this purpose. The GEBB has the task of rationalising the

federal army in line with the process under way throughout the general economy.

A billion marks are to be saved annually through the sale of equipment, vehicles, land and buildings. Some vehicles and property will be rented back to the army. According to Scharping's reckoning, the number of employees of the federal army will be reduced from the current level of 130,000 to 85,000. The aim of this scaling down is a qualitative improvement of the military force. Scharping has already announced that all proceeds from the sales and cost-cutting measures will be devoted to new military investment.

The German defence budget—amounting to 46.8 billion marks this year—will be increased, despite all declarations to the contrary. Even now the increase is being implemented through the back door, by concealing the allocation of additional funds for the "reform of the federal army" in the budgets of other departments, such as the Ministry for Research and Development. For the current year, the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) is demanding a supplementary budget, designed to drastically raise defence spending. Purchases of weapons worth around 225 billion marks are planned to take place up to the year 2015.

Without exception, these new acquisitions will involve equipment for military offence. A substantial part of the spending will go for the purchase of the Tiger, a combat helicopter that will enhance the effectiveness of ground forces and reduce periods of fighting. Germany has bought 80 helicopters of the Tiger model—a joint German-French production—at a unit price of 72.6 million marks.

New cruise missiles are considered by Helmut Willmann, army chief of staff, to be a "technological and strategic leap forward". Here the Typhoon and Polyphem are above all worthy of mention. The Typhoon is a virtually unmanned aircraft that uses a programmed flight path to seek out its target. It is capable of flying unaided for hours on end. It can distinguish between different objects on the ground and guarantee strikes of great accuracy. On the other hand, the trajectory of Polyphem is followed on a monitor and steered manually, enabling the controller to direct the cruise missile with even greater precision towards its target.

The military is revelling in this systematic upgrading of the armed forces with the most modern weaponry. Schneider, the commander of the artillery school, commented euphorically: "By equipping today's artillery with the current and forthcoming advances in tracking, surveillance and attack systems as well as 'intelligent' missiles, Germany is enabling its artillery to experience a technological quantum leap that will place it at the top of the world ranking."

The previously mentioned 180 Eurofighters will be equipped with Taurus cruise missiles, jointly developed by the DASA subsidiary LFK and the Swedish firm Bofors. The armaments programme includes plans for 1,200 of these rockets—each containing enough explosive power to break through a 4-metre-thick concrete wall.

Apart from this, the Patriot air defence system is being completely modernised, as is ocean reconnaissance technology.

The navy is also being prepared for a new role with the construction of warships at a cost unparalleled in German history. The first F124 frigate is already available and two more will be at the disposal of the federal defence forces from 2002. The Corvette K 130 will serve in coastal operations and the navy will acquire 15 of them. They are suitable for rapid reaction missions and can be used both on the high seas and in calmer waters.

A particular model of submarine has also been chosen to strengthen the position of the German navy in the oceans of the world. The Type 212 submarine is three times bigger and can remain submerged many times longer than its earlier versions. In addition, new supply ships have been put into service in order to double the length of operational periods at sea.

The rearming of Europe's military and the vast sums involved in military spending will place tremendous additional strains on the budgets of the

EU countries. Social cutbacks—already well advanced—will lead to an ever deeper social polarisation throughout Europe. To stifle opposition, democratic rights are even now being curtailed. It is becoming more and more obvious that militarism against foreign foes is being augmented by militarism against the enemy within.



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