

Small steps instead of big projects: France and Germany's plan to enhance the CSDP

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On 12th September the media in Germany published the Franco-German non-paper on enhancing the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The document contains proposals with regard to: (1) enhancing the CSDP – improving EU training missions and strengthening the Eurocorps in this area, establishing the European medical headquarters, raising situational awareness via better access to satellite data; (2) accelerating the implementation of the European Council resolutions of 2013 and 2015 regarding the launching of an EU-funded defence research programme, strengthening NATO-EU co-operation, revitalising EU battlegroups; (3) strengthening the European arms industry co-operation – introducing tax incentives to stimulate collaboration within the European Defence Agency, developing joint capabilities (aerial refuelling, satellite communication, cybersecurity, drones) and transparency in the area of domestic defence budgets and modernisation plans. The document calls for the use of permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) to implement the above mentioned proposals.

Commentary

- The Franco-German non-paper forms part of a series of statements and initiatives regarding security which have been presented following the British referendum on EU membership. Germany and France see the UK's plans to leave the EU as an opportunity to strengthen EU military co-operation since they believe the UK blocks the development of the CSDP. They also feel it is necessary to put forward new ideas for enhancing EU integration in a changed political situation. Since it was difficult for them to develop joint initiatives in other areas (e.g. enhancing economic integration), proposals with regard to security and defence have become the lowest common denominator. The Franco-German non-paper is based on the document 'A strong Europe in a world of uncertainties' which was presented by the French and German foreign ministers in June this year after the British referendum.
- The document does not feature breakthrough proposals, such as the establishment of the European Defence Union or a European Army, which have been mentioned in previous debates. The conclusions presented are rather focused on pragmatic steps aimed at consolidating the current actions within the CSDP or on the implementation of previously made decisions. Germany and France would like the proposals to be adopted at the

European Council in December this year.

- Despite the discussions on strengthening EU military co-operation, it does not seem likely that this process will significantly accelerate in the future. The implementation of the decisions made at the Warsaw NATO summit (the reform of the NATO Response Force, the development of follow-on forces, the deployment of rotational battalion-sized battlegroups on NATO's eastern flank) requires substantial European financial and human resources. It is therefore rather unlikely that new European structures will be set up. Small (and useful) steps which would increase co-operation between EU member states are to be welcomed. However, it is essential to increase defence spending and to develop new military capabilities rather than set up new EU structures.