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Security and Defense Policy of the European Union. Its developments

Speaking about security, defense and foreign policy in the European Union means explaining a very difficult start, tortuous developments, and an unfinished story. Not a surprise because those areas are at the very heart of statehood and sovereignty. Since the year 2000, however, when permanent dedicated bodies were put to work in Brussels, a lot of progress has been made.

It does not go on the first pages but there is a lot of coordination and common work going on every day in delicate areas. We are speaking of Foreign Policy and Security.

In Defense policy we are not yet there. Again, it is not a surprise because that would mean the existence of a quasi European state.

We should not forget, the existence of the Atlantic Alliance with almost the same membership, adding the United States and Canada. The protective umbrella of NATO has ensured the development of Europe for many decades.

Ambitions in military affairs have gone up and down. At the beginning of the century there was the objective of a “head-line goal”, a very robust European Corp able to deploy in other parts of the world on short notice. In reality the overseas operations of the Union have been modest in size, with the exception of training.

Would Brexit change things? Not very much, because London has a great tradition in military affairs, but budget cuts along the years have severely hit its capacity of projection. It is in defense Industry that the country remains an important player.

The American President is criticizing the Europeans for their lack of efforts in defense spending, but this is not new, only the tone is different.

Concrete steps are possible to improve the efficiency of the European tools, they have to convince citizens that they are useful. At the same time to pretend new institutional advances is wrong and can be counter-productive.

Public opinion in Europe is focused on “security”, meaning personal and collective protection from a number of threats starting with terrorism, migration and criminality. It is highly advisable for the European Institutions to promote visible actions in that direction.