

'A European army' from La Libre Belgique (26 May 1995)

Caption: On 26 May 1995, the conservative daily newspaper La Libre Belgique sincerely hopes that a European army will be created as part of a European security policy.

Source: La Libre Belgique. 26.05.1995, n° 146; 112e année. Bruxelles: Edition de la Libre Belgique S.A. "Une armée européenne", auteur:Cremer, Pierre , p. 1; 5.

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A European army

So the forthcoming 'intergovernmental conference' in 1996 will examine the development a European security policy and hence the defence instruments that this implies.

Of course we refuse to heed those awful nay-sayers who are already doubting the success of this conference or even trying to torpedo it, with the torpedoes always coming from the same quarter, from backward nationalists who are opposed to any form of strong Europe.

On the contrary, we see an urgent need to establish a genuine 'European army', a force that would go beyond the outdated, limited tools represented by our national armies, even if they are supported or coordinated and deployed, and then only in wartime by structures such as NATO, which itself is too often ruled by an Uncle Sam who is not part of Europe. It seems to us that the time has come to think about this situation amongst Europeans in order to remedy it. Before doing so, a decision has to come from the European Union to gradually combine our defence policies with an appropriate European security concept and military strategy drawn up by the European Defence Institute, assisted by military colleges and academies in the countries concerned. A second reason for creating the proposed 'army' is to end the current dispersal of Europe's available resources. This flouts the two principles or golden rules in military strategy, which are first 'making the best use of the means at our disposal' and second, 'economy of force'. It is clear, of course, that it is normally the parochialism of national policies that still too often prevents the vital pooling of resources and is counter to long-term interests. However, those most affected, the military themselves, would, strangely enough, not have the slightest problem in joining their future brothers-in-arms and merging their flags into the blue banner of Europe.

The main point is that we can no longer make do with a policy of mere 'coordination' of national capacities, which is what NATO does. When it comes to the defence of Europe, only as much 'integration' as possible can ensure any chance of success. 'Against what enemy?' some might ask. It will no longer be the clearly defined enemy of the Cold War, but that of the period we are now living through, one of greater flux and uncertainty as to the danger to be faced. It is this that will require greater flexibility in our response capability and in the level and nature of the means to be deployed. Let us also not forget the ever increasing, indeed exorbitant, cost of modern equipment and weapons which can only be met by pooling resources. We do not underestimate the efforts that will be required to overcome all kind of hurdles that will emerge on the path towards integration. We will soon, in these pages, try to outline realistically and pragmatically specific ways to achieve the desired goal. There is one prerequisite: all those who will be responsible for launching the vessel of European military integration must first be aware that the specific nature of this integration can in no way be compared to any other model of integration, and, secondly, that any operational or structural integration of forces will necessarily involve merging logistics and thus the means of military production which have so far been jealously guarded for domestic industries.

In a follow-up article, which will necessarily be more technical, we will try to describe the possible ways and means for the gradual launching of this plan for a 'European army'.

Pierre Cramer