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REVIEW
**of the article “A European Defense:
Europe will have to defend itself”**
by Professor (h.c.) Olivier VÉDRINE,
French journalist and political scientist

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We consider the article by Professor Olivier Védrine as a reason not only to thank the author who agreed to openly and directly express his opinions on the pages of the Russian specialized magazine discussing what they think in France regarding the necessity to create a European army and for what goals and tasks. We see this article as another opportunity to discuss this topic, to exchange views and ideas on the security for Europe and Russia and to understand that both Europe and Russia can be equally concerned about their security. But not at the expense of anyone or ignoring the security interests of anyone and not because it is possible to form an erroneous and dangerous for this very security public opinion that someone's security is obvious and real and the other subject of international relations has the right to only recognize itself as a threat, because someone strong and influential believes so. There are thus conditions for critically defending the very opportunity to present the prerequisites for security on an equal footing from the standpoint of both Franco-European and Russian interests. And with the consideration for the impact of the United States and NATO's military-political bloc on the process of international security and the nature of the discussion of this controversial and acute problem. It is very important because in the current conditions, traditional relations between the Russian Federation and the countries of the European Union, between institutions and states are limited or even interrupted and social, scientific and personal relations are disrupted. At the same time, everyone has to increasingly look for the non-standard solutions to security threats.

Professor Oliver Vedrin has published his article, we are reviewing now, at the time when not only in Russia but throughout the world, and especially in Europe, events of great importance with elements of tragic omen are taking place. Europe faces numerous processes threatening the foundations of Europe itself, its universally recognized world civilization worthy values. We, in Russia, observe with interest how the failed ideas of European security, initiated in the 1950s by Charles de Gaulle, are revived in Europe, first of all, in France and Germany. We've read the American point of view on this subject with genuine and pragmatic curiosity. We read with interest how "think tanks", experts and specialists interpret the object-subject and subject areas of threats for the effective fight against which the EU countries should cooperate and act in unison. And such threats to Europe, as Professor Vedrin is trying to convince us, are: "cybercrime, organized crime, terrorism, humanitarian and environmental crises." In Russia too, they reasonably appeal to such threats. But not only to the above list of threats, but also to the responsibility of global nature that will face any country or group of countries that would declare its role and readiness to provide security for itself and others.

We are well aware of the fact that once, after the summit in Paris, President Macron's words created tension between US President Donald Trump and European allies. France hastened to state that President Macron's interview was misinterpreted by some journalists in the sense that he stood up for the creation of the European army to defend against Russia, China and even the United States. In fact, President Macron discussed the need to protect France from cyber attacks and cyber espionage involving these countries. From this point, we can well understand the position of Professor Oliver Vedrin and his desire to convey the true meaning of his President's words. In our turn, we confirm Russia's position and to this end we cite the words of our Foreign Minister S. Lavrov: "After all, maintaining international peace and security is one of the priorities of Russia's foreign policy. Today, at the heart of our position – we have repeatedly stressed this – along with the promotion of national interests ...it is also the recognition of Russia's special responsibility for the universal security and global stability. We have our responsibilities as a nuclear power, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. That says a lot." We, in Russia, would like to see behind that brief "that says a lot" the security problems as they are understood by the authors of the Munich Security Report 2019. And to announce that the Russian point of view on the security issues and threats surprisingly coincide with the way they are seen in Europe. In Europe they say: "The emerging multipolar security landscape and accelerating technological progress have caused an arms control crisis."

At the very beginning of the article Professor Oliver Vedrin ties in a tight knot geopolitical context "plagued by many tensions, defense and security issues," "facilitation of diplomatic and military cooperation" and "defense and security issues." It is not difficult to explain how journalist Oliver Vedrin raises current

problems and contradictions to the level of extremely acute political problems and contradictions, reducing them to issues of defense and security that can no longer remain within the national borders. And it's no longer in journalistic, but in political sense that he talks about moving the European Union forward to the creation of a common defense policy.

Incomparable and subtle observer of everything that happens in Europe and in the world Oliver Vedrin not only sees what is happening, not only listens to the words and thoughts of the Europeans and Americans, he tries to understand what moves them. Trying to understand the idea promoted by him – the European Union will have to provide security and defend itself – we experience not only the highest pleasure, but also some anxiety. But our anxiety, the anxiety of Russians, is different from the feelings and thoughts of Europeans. We, in Russia, experience constant anxiety. Because we cannot understand and comprehend, for example, from whom the united army of the European Union will have to defend itself. And would it have to defend?? Maybe – attack!? What is the object against which will be directed the most powerful potential of the European army??

The European Union is also concerned, if we interpret the content of this article correctly. But these are concerns of a different kind than our Russian concerns. European concerns are not permanent, but temporary, they are caused by Donald Trump and his furious attacks on Europeans. It seems to us that a part of the temporary European anxieties will disappear as soon as another US leader comes instead of Donald Trump. We believe these are the expectations of the EU countries establishment. And the author of the article under review is inclined to think so in a hidden form. There are reasons for that. They are in the depth, in the very nature of the political system that has become and will be the basis of the American democracy, the changeability and election of the state power and the President.

We, experts and specialists in Russia, are not surprised that the author of the article, struggling with the anxieties and threats to the security of the European Union, is no less, if not more concerned about the potential and real threats that arise along with the implementation of the idea on the creation of the European army, if it is considered in the context of relations with NATO and the United States of America. To overcome such anxiety in this system of relations, the leaders of France and Germany and our author hurry to assure us that: “no, the European army is not a competitor to NATO;” “each action to develop or reinforce the military capabilities of a European country reinforces the Atlantic Alliance.”

One point is of particular concern to the author of the article and the authors of a great variety of ideas about greater EU autonomy in the field of defense. It is clear that security and defense policy and tasks in this area can only be solved either by NATO forces or, in the opinion of the leaders of France and Germany, through their own armies. It seems there is nothing tricky in it: the democracies of France and Germany will give to themselves and all their observers a picture of a healthy, normal, true development of their views and ideas about ensuring,

even the possibility to ensure security for themselves. But, it turns out there is no unambiguous and only correct answer to the questions posed by them at the theoretical level. Europe has yet to answer the question whether it needs tolerance and whether the policy of protecting itself alone without looking back at the US suits it more. Qualified in this field, Professor Olivier VÉDRINE appeals in his judgments to the vague arguments of Emmanuel Macron about the European army. If President Macron has no clear idea about what kind of army Europe needs then the author of the article has no trace of the vague interpretation of this phenomenon: "we are not going to create a European army with integrated contingents." Such army cannot be without NATO and it "will never be against USA;" "it is not a European army in the technical sense of the term." Such reasoning connects the European idealistic judgment with a strong sense of reality. Seemingly disembodied ideas about the kind of the European army and about Europe that "must be able to assume its own destiny and no longer rely on others" go hand in hand with an empirical and realistic assessment of the purpose of that very European army, no matter how it is seen and prepared. And it is seen and prepared for one thing only – to increase the military collective potential and contribute to the strengthening of NATO.

The section of the article *The European Defense today* is devoted to the concrete embodiment of these ideas. With genuine passion the author of the article offers a consistent line of action for the creation of the European Union's extensive infrastructure for the development of defense potential. At first glance, the actions taken by the European Union (creation of the European Army and European rapid reaction force aimed at the settlement of sudden conflicts outside NATO, planned setting of the European Defense Fund, financing of the defense at the Community level, financing of the joint defense research, in 2021-2027 the European Defense Fund will reach 13 billion euros spending on defense over 7 years) do not contradict either the systemic principles of the EU's functioning or the strategy for its further development. Neither do they contradict the relations within the military-political bloc of NATO or with the United States of America. It seems that there are no obstacles to the creation of an army for defense, no contradictions in its strategy or in the European initiative of intervention, in the implementation of its goal – to contribute to the emergence of "the European strategic autonomy."

But still, much of what has already been done and is planned to be done looks like improvisation. The exaggerated hopes for European defense can also be pinned down and discarded under the weight of arguments that contradict the ideas and principles on which the European strategic autonomy and its instrument – the European defense army with non-integrated contingent – will be built.

As we can see, the Europeans are making efforts to supplement the American security strategy with their initiatives and proposals. But what contradictions can grow of such attempts and efforts? Here are a few judgments in this regard.

After the statement that the future of Europe will include a “real European” or even non-integrated army, it is immediately stated that such army will not be against NATO. The creation of a European army is the ability to collectively conduct small military operations that NATO is not going to and does not want to undertake. Such army will be the most reliable tool to prevent war between the European nations. It is primarily meant to prevent war between France and Germany and partly with England. The European political beau monde firmly holds in mind only the danger of war between West European countries and remembers grief WWI (1914-1918) brought them. But for some reason they do not think of the danger or they’ve lost historical memory of the danger of war between France, Germany and Russia. The historical memory of Russian citizens of the sufferings of the military campaigns in the XX century, in which Russia and many European countries were direct opponents or allies, on the contrary, is very strong.

It is amazing how the Chancellor of Germany or the President of France, the most Pro-Atlantic leaders of the most Americanized countries in the world, declare a purely European defense and the responsibility of their countries to ensure it. We see that such statements are already supported by concrete actions. But there are specialists and experts who believe that the creation of the European army is a distant, premature, overly bold and frightening affair. The issue of the legitimacy of sending soldiers to the points and regions of military conflicts has not been resolved. So far, this is the prerogative of national parliaments. The question remains how such an army will be organized, who will lead it, how it will be managed, who and how will finance it when for many European countries even two percent of GDP on defense is a serious obstacle. There is a heated debate about whether European defense expenditures will be designed to promote European manufacturers of military equipment at the expense of American. This is one of the critical remarks of the Trump administration about the conditions for a large European defense.

A number of experts consider the political meaning of the proposals to create a European army for France and Germany in two senses: the first one is an opportunity to avoid the traditional responsibility of these countries to play a leading role in the defense policy; the second – on the contrary, is an opportunity to strengthen themselves as leading countries and thereby raise their status. There are no answers to such questions. In respect of some of them, there are even no attempts to find any intelligible answers.

If the relationships among the European countries and in respect of NATO and the United States regarding the realization of the idea of creating a European defense army are in a shifting pattern of mobilization, the question of the European defense and Russia has not yet any glimpse of a better future. The author of the article, it seems to us, presents those considerations according to which Russia, its political regime and V.V. Putin personally either do not understand the true significance of the Europe’s natural movement to ensure its European

security or Russia and especially its political regime is an existential threat to the European security. The tension of the moment in respect of the European defense and ideas about it in the minds of the Russian political leadership sets the author of the article to fatalism: "Putin who is in favor of the European defense must understand that the European defense cannot be without NATO and then will never be against the USA." "The warm Putin welcome for the European defense is only a tool used for propaganda and internal Russian policy, this is not good news for Putin and that underlines more a misunderstanding from the Kremlin about what can be an effective European defense!" It seems to us that this is an erroneous opinion, which, unfortunately, dominates in the minds of experts and in the public European consciousness. It's a mistake to believe that V. Putin should understand the structure of relations between Europeans, NATO and the United States in the way it is interpreted by the Europeans themselves. And there is no other understanding. The European understanding of this particular process and phenomenon is fading when the possibility of a collision between Russia and Europe, Russia and the United States grows from the intersection of individual and immediate, deep and superficial circumstances of European defense and V. Putin's attitude to it. Not only Putin should be expected to understand what a European defense together with NATO and the United States is. Let's support the idea of the author and agree with him: "Putin knows that the European defense is not in his favor". Not only Putin but also the Russian society knows, almost all people in Russia know what lies behind President Macron's words when he says that it would take a "European army" to "face Russia, which is on our borders and has shown that it can be threatening." Russian society and its rulers differ from many others in that they live in deep confidence that the events and considerations that accompany them and explain them are approaching the climax. And in the era of the global security movement, when Europeans doubt the US commitment to NATO and its obligations under Article 5 to ensure collective defense, Russia is focused on the coming hour without threats or mutual claims.

Once again, we thank Olivier VÉDRINE for the opportunity to launch a discussion on a politically sensitive and controversial topic. And we would like to give it a wider scope, for which we invite all interested parties.