

**Antonio Porras:
Army, Defence and Identity:**

"I would say there are three cases for security and defence. The first is political, and it concerns fulfilling Europe's ambitions on the world stage. The second is operational: ensuring that Europe has the right military capabilities to be able to act. And the third is economic: here it's about jobs, innovation and growth."



HRVP Catherine Ashton, EDA annual conference, Brussels 21 March 2013.

As highlighted by Ms. Ashton, there are three main pillars of the identity of Europe which depend on Defence and Security: politics, operations and economics.

When it comes to politics, Europe is experiencing key challenges in the current geopolitical situation. Two of the most important challenges are related to borders: the critical situation of immigration via the Mediterranean Sea and the Ukrainian conflict.

With regards to the Mediterranean Sea, the situation in 2015 is becoming more critical than ever. According to official sources, from January to the end of April of 2015, there were more than 1700 people who died trying to reach Europe. This amounts to thirty times the number of deaths registered in the same period in 2014. Europe should not let this happen.

Mare Nostrum was the name of the border protection and surveillance mission that was in place until 2014. Mare Nostrum's budget in 2014 was close to 9 M€/month. The budget of Triton, the program intended to replace Mare Nostrum, is only a third of this.

Considering the current situation, Europe is under enormous pressure to foster and develop the cooperation between nations in order to avoid the recurrence of this tragedy. This means fighting the mafias that are operating in North Africa as well as increasing maritime surveillance operations and capabilities in the Mediterranean Sea.

At the same time as the refugee problem, the Ukrainian conflict is also turning into a key challenge, with Europe struggling to safeguard its role Europe in this important border region.

In terms of the defence budget, the figures have a crystal clear voice: even taken together, the defence budgets of Western Europe in 2014 were less than a half of the U.S. budget during the same period. Therefore, Europe has no choice: we have to work together if we want to be relevant on the global stage.

Secondly, regarding operations, the current geopolitical situation is demanding a wide range of capabilities in an even more complex range of environments. Taking into account the current economic situation, it is paramount to promote joint initiatives for pooling and sharing services and developing capabilities. This can bring additional benefits, too. In around 70 percent of cases, new capabilities developed in the military world also have a civilian use.

Finally, talking about the economy, the Defence and Security industry is one of the most important investors in research and technology. Jobs in this sector produce high added value. As an employee of Airbus DS, I have had the opportunity to work in several cutting-edge technology programs where the collaboration between different European nations has been fundamental.

To sum it up: when we work together, we are stronger, smarter, more efficient and more supportive. But most importantly, Europe then is at peace.