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European Defence Agency – Motor of Strengthening the EU’s Military Capabilities?

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Abstract. EU as a military actor is a hotly discussed topic in contemporary European Integration. At this time EU-led operations apparently show EU’s lack of market-scale defence industries, weakness of defence technological and industrial bases, and ineffectiveness of military cooperation programmes. Therefore, EU could try to improve its military operational capabilities through two approaches, namely the ‘NATO approach’ under the concept of CJTF and intra-European ‘EU-approach’ involving ECAP, Helsinki Headline Goal, and Headline Goal 2010, etc. Simultaneously, there is the EU-established European Defence Agency (EDA). Since 2004, EDA has served as the main driving force for promoting EU’s military capabilities. But an integrated and inter-operable EU force does not exist. Some challenges, e.g., the security exemption under Article 346, the government monopoly of the defence industries, the rush reduction of the defence budget, and the small scale of R&D investment, etc., could eliminate the functions of the EDA. Only when EU-MS strengthen their political willingness, accept the European-wide defence cooperation programmes, cooperate with the European Commission and ESDC, and utilize the Permanent Structured Cooperation under Lisbon Treaty, then EU can stably develop its military capability.