Trump asks Europe to defend itself, recovery will not be easy.

Published on 28/04/2025

In recent years, Donald Trump's foreign policy has had a significant impact on Europe's defense dynamics. His repeated threats not to defend NATO members have prompted European countries to seriously consider the need to strengthen their defensive capabilities. The war in Ukraine has further exacerbated the situation, leading to a new political momentum and an unprecedented willingness to invest more in defense. However, although Europe is taking important steps, there are still many challenges to overcome, particularly those related to the fragmentation of the defense industry and dependence on the United States.

Trump's Threat and the European Response

Donald Trump put pressure on his NATO allies during his presidency, accusing them of spending too little on their defense. His statements, which threatened to withdraw American military support if needed, had a galvanizing effect in Europe. **For the first time, European countries began to recognize the need to become more independent in terms of defense and to**

invest significantly in their own capabilities. A clear example is the case of Spain, which for years had a low level of defense spending compared to other NATO members. In 2025, Spain decided to significantly increase its budget to reach the NATO target of 2% of GDP. **At the European level, however, the change is not immediate, and the entire defense industry must be restructured to address security challenges more autonomously.**

Military spending, Italy gives the shock: Spain also accelerates to 2% - brigatafolgore.net

The Fragmentation of the European Defense Industry

One of the main difficulties Europe faces in its quest for defense autonomy is the fragmentation of the defense industry. In Europe, many countries continue to favor their local companies, avoiding transnational collaborations that could reduce costs and improve interoperability. This has led to a situation where, for example, **there are at least 12 models of tanks produced in the European Union**, compared to a single model used by the United States Army. At the same time, **Europe continues to depend on the United States for many supplies and technologies, such as in the case of the Airbus A330 MRTT refueling aircraft, which use components and software produced in the United States.** This dependence is particularly evident in the air defense sector, where Europe imports more than half of its equipment from the United States. Overcoming this dependence will require years of investment and a common vision at the European Union level, as well as a deep restructuring of the defense sector.

Shield 25: Pinerolo, Rombo and Ranger test new digital capabilities - brigatafolgore.net

Hope for the Future: Investing in the European Defense Industry

Despite the challenges, there are positive signs for the future. The European Union has put forward a proposal of 150 billion euros to finance the purchase of air defense systems, drones, and other strategic technologies. This package includes measures to simplify defense budget rules and reallocate EU funds to reflect security priorities. **A key aspect of this proposal is the encouragement of cooperation among member countries, which will have to purchase at least 40% of their defense equipment in collaboration with each other and exchange 35% of defense goods by 2030**. This approach aims to reduce dependence on the United States and promote a more integrated European defense industry.

In this context, Airbus and other European companies see the opportunity to grow and develop thanks to the growing political and financial support from the European Union. Jean-Brice Dumont, head of Airbus's air division, emphasized the importance of investing in the European defense industry to ensure the continent's long-term security. Europe thus has a great opportunity to build a safer and more independent future, but to do so, it must face the challenge of overcoming industrial fragmentation and adopting a common vision for the continent's defense.

The European response to Trump's threats and the needs imposed by the war in Ukraine is an important step towards greater defense autonomy. However, the path to a fully self-sufficient Europe is still long, and the challenges are many. **The fragmentation of the defense**

industry and dependence on external supplies are significant obstacles, but with targeted investments and a common strategy, Europe can build a solid and independent defense. Political will has grown, but now it needs to translate into concrete actions to address future challenges.

News link: https://www.military.com/daily-news/2025/04/28/trumps-threats-gave-europe-political-will-spend-more-defense-challenges-are-ahead.html