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European Security: What, Why, When, How ?

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Introduction

Let me start by unlinking the first two words of the title and concentrate first on the notion of security itself.

The 21st century did not take off very well, David Bowie recently declared. And he was right.

At the end of the Cold War, most of us shared a sense of euphoria. An era of international cooperation and globalisation was opening up, so we thought. Right was going to replace might. The United Nations would be tasked with managing global problems – problems without passport, as Kofi Annan called them.

Ten years later, this now looks as a pipe dream. Military might went again centre stage, as we can see in the Afghanistan, Iraq or near Damascus the day before yesterday. Unilateralism replaced multilateralism. Globalisation completely lost its lustre. People have the impression that there is no longer a pilot in the world's cockpit and believe that the extent of borderless forces has exploded much faster than our capability to deal with them. To me, today's most worrisome trend appeared through a worldwide public opinion survey, conducted at the end of last year. Asked whether respondents thought the children of today in their countries will be better or worse off when they grow up than people now, large majorities in many parts of the world answered the latter, 'worse'.

People – so it seems – no longer trust governments to provide them with security.

But what is security in the 21st century ? It has something to do with terrorism, proliferation of WMD and rogue states. But it has also to do with less traditional dimensions, such as worldwide population flows, enduring frustrations in many parts of the world that engender distrust and propel arms races, with regional tensions and local vicious wars, international crime and environmental hazards. It also has to do with uncertainty in the minds of many people, making them vulnerable for sirens' songs advocating simple solutions for complex problems, as Europe experienced in the 30s.

For those reasons, the very first sentence of a paper the Brussels Royal Institute for International Relations (IRRI) is due to launch in some week's time, goes as follows:

“The first responsibility of any government is to protect its citizens from harm and to provide them with an environment that induces confidence in the future.”

The sentence then goes on:

“Europe as an ever closer Union shares this responsibility with its member states.”

This brings us to the heart of tonight's subject: European security.

These quotes are extracted from the European Security Concept for the 21st Century, which we at IRRI have been elaborating at the request of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The reason behind this request was obvious: the European Union's common foreign and security policy, so it was and is largely felt, was lacking strategic clarity and a clear definition of its interests, its long-term foreign policy objectives and its priorities.

At the beginning of this year, an informal working group was set up within IRRI, comprising members from the diplomatic, military, intelligence and academic world, in order to initiate a strategic reflection on Europe's security policy.

Apparently, the idea was in the air, since a couple of months later, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the European Union tasked the High Representative, Javier Solana, with the elaboration of a draft strategic document. His comprehensive EU Security Strategy is due to be presented at the December 2003 European Council. For the EU and its member states this represents a major endeavour, since it will shape the external action of the European Union in the years to come.

I am happy to share with you some of the major findings of our work at IRRI through four questions concerning European defence. What does it imply ? Why do we need it ? When will we see it ? How will we do it ?

1. What European security?

To answer this first question, let me refer to a rhetorical question raised by Chris Patten, EU's Commissioner for external relations: what should be the primary purpose of foreign policy? Is it defensive: to keep bad guys down and to defend the homeland? Or is it positive: to build a system of co-operative global governance – an international community legitimised by representative institutions and by the rule of law?

The ultimate systemic threat to world security and international stability is the **ever growing gap between haves and have-less's**. No society, no community, be it local, national or international, can withstand the tensions arising from an unchecked wealth and income gap. Its effects are like global warming: the consequences are diffuse and only perceptible in the long term. But at a certain level of inequality the resulting political instability, extremism, economic unpredictability and appalling population movements will become uncontrollable. This is one of the lessons that Europe's dramatic downward spiral following the crash of Wall Street and the following Depression right to the outbreak of the second world war reminds us of.

The ultimate goal of European security policy then is to contribute to achieve an effective multilateral system of global governance, based upon common priorities and strong institutions.

Within this overall objective of establishing an effective system of global governance, three levels, three zones if you want, for EU action for providing security can be distinguished, going beyond the traditional notion of defence against an external enemy. Indeed, for the foreseeable future, the European Union and its member states no longer face any direct military threat to their **territorial integrity**.

First of all, within the borders of the European Union, member states are now definitively at ease with one another and no longer pose any mutual threat. Through the pursuit of the existing web of political, economic, social and military interdependence between current and, through enlargement, future member states the European Union will evolve into an **area of freedom, security and justice**. But: the European Union's territory and population remain vulnerable to the effects of global threats and so it must ensure its internal security.

The second zone is the proximity of the EU. Through the accession process, the European Union has been able to create stability in its proximity. By its **force of attraction**, not through coercion, has it succeeded in neutralizing the forces of minority disputes and border conflicts that looked particularly destabilizing less than a decade ago. The task at hand for the European Union is to replicate this success in a somewhat wider proximity. The security environment in our proximity is different from that within the European Union. There remain challenging **pockets of regional instability and longstanding disputes** in our neighbourhood, both on the European continent and around it. Furthermore, **uncontrolled migration to the European Union**, especially when **linked to international organized crime**, clearly is a source of major anxiety in our public opinion.

And finally there is the global level. The EU must contribute to strengthening today's often embryonic **institutions and mechanisms for global action**. In the politico-military field specifically, a number of challenges stand out that must be effectively addressed: proliferation of **weapons of mass destruction, excessive militarization, terrorism, failed states**.

2. Why ?

Overcoming that last category of threats – sometimes called the dark side of globalisation – requires the cooperation of all. But great powers have the greatest responsibility in projecting stability in the world at large. The European Union provides for the greatest share of development aid and is a major contributor to peacekeeping operations, but nevertheless in the past it has been unable to carry the same weight at the global level as in its neighbourhood. In the global environment, **politico-military power** plays a more prominent role than on the European continent. Projection of military power may constitute a necessary means in order to assure international stability.

Europe's economic might gives us this very responsibility, proper to all great powers in history, to do our fair share in managing world affairs in a way we deem appropriate. Individual member states can no longer weigh sufficiently on world events. The EU can.

There exists a distinct European approach to security, a 'European way' to deal with security. Europe's long and often tragic history has conducted Europeans to view the world according to a number of values, principles and guidelines that will underlie any approach to defining their security policy.

1. Long-term security cannot but be **comprehensive**. The European Union sees politico-military means and power as part of a broader framework which *integrates* all fields of external action, at the level of both objectives and instruments. **Root causes** of instability and insecurity are diverse, thus a multidimensional response is needed, which emphasises **prevention**: a proactive rather than a reactive or curative approach, focussed on policy objectives rather than on threats.
2. Long-term security is based on **institutionalised, rule-based multilateralism**, to further predictability in today's multi-polar world, to confer legitimacy on the governance of this world and thus to enhance the effectiveness of governance.
3. The European Union acts through cooperation, consultation and partnership and strives for equitable relations with other nations, in which the same treatment applies to all. It is in Europe's interest and it is our historic responsibility **to make multilateralism work**. This will affirm the European Union as an international actor and will enhance the legitimacy of its external action as the first tranquil superpower in history.

But even dubbing this a specific European world view, I am of the opinion that we should not hastily conclude that Europeans are indeed living on Venus and Americans on Mars. Between Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, both Americans, there is no gap. There is a yawning canyon. To me, the real divide, is not some genetically induced difference between Europeans and Americans, but rather diverging views on the world that crosses right through European AND American elites, opinion makers, leaders and ultimately public opinion.

But if Europeans do not stand up for their own vision, nobody else will. If Europeans do not cast off their intellectual laziness on this and start doing their homework, based on the distinctive European approach to security, the present situation will last, like it or not, in which we only get marching orders, but no common vision from Washington.

Today's Washington likes deputies and junior partners. But in the somewhat longer term, America itself needs someone to speak up and demonstrate that another, less one-sidedly muscular approach of the world is both possible and needed in order to assure some minimum international stability and human decency. Managing global order can never rest solely upon American military primacy, however impressive it might look. It is simply not in America's national DNA to impose a new Pax Romana on the world, as an American journalist wrote a year ago.

3. When ?

Now is the time.

Let me again refer to Chris Patten. In the Financial Times, he wrote that the world now is confronted with a clear choice. Either we decide that the only way to deal with the challenges of the 21st century is to revert to the methods of the 19th century: national sovereignty, national interests, balance of power. Or we decide to try and pick up the pieces after the recent bruising encounter with the United Nations.

If all states are going to act unilaterally and without paying much attention to established rules and if we – Europeans and Americans – simply would surrender to the central belief of today's Washington and view the world solely through the prism of terrorist threats, pre-emption and military might, the world will ultimately become an even less hospitable place to live in.

Put differently and a bit dramatically: we are at a crossroads between global anarchy and global governance. So the time to act is now.

If, on the other hand, the EU succeeds in defining its own, positive agenda, then that is the starting point from which we can try to reach out to what I once called the 'other' America that still reasons in multilateral terms and that is willing to consider an equitable partnership with the EU – allowing even for honest disagreements. For, as Solana put it in his draft document, 'acting together, the European Union and the United States can be a formidable force for good in the world'.

Having said so and contrary to widespread impressions of improvisation, hesitation and compromises, the evolution towards a proper European foreign, security and defence policy has been astonishing in speed in the last few years. The Maastricht Treaty for the first time stated that ultimately a European defence could be conceivable. That in itself was already a remarkable event, taking into account the reluctance during those years of linking the words 'Europe' and 'defence'. For a number of reasons, from deep seated ideological distrust to the unfortunate handling of the Balkan crisis, no real progress was however made for almost a decade.

But all of a sudden a impulse was given from an unexpected corner: at the Franco-British summit in St-Malo in 1998, the UK agreed to building a military capacity directly under the EU, as they realized that cooperation in the framework of the Union was the only way to make member states enhance the performance of their armed forces. The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) was born. Today, the famous Helsinki Headline Goal of creating a 60 000 strong rapid reaction force is nearly realized, the European Capability Action Plan is striving to fill the gaps in our capabilities and a European armaments agency will be set up. Some now argue that the time has come to look even beyond the Headline Goal and define additional objectives.

Back in 1998 however one debate had been very consciously avoided: the strategic debate on the objectives of EU external action. In other words: what is the military capacity that ESDP provides us with, to be used for ? This discussion was then not entered into, for fear of letting pass by the momentum for increasing European military integration unused. Now, with Solana's assignment to draft an EU security strategy, this last hurdle is being taken as well.

4. How ?

That is the key question. Paraphrasing what the Dalai Lama said a fortnight ago in Central Park: all that preceded is only some blah, blah, blah – if we do not descend again on earth and spell out in concrete terms what we want to achieve and how we intend to pursue this.

Let me spell this out according to the three zones we defined before. In RIIR Security Concept for the 21st Century we do this at great length and in detail, but tonight I will stick to a more general overview.

4.1

With regard to security within the EU, new instruments have already been adopted: a European Arrest Warrant, the Framework Definition on Terrorism and Eurojust. Introducing qualified majority voting across the board in Justice and Home Affairs and giving **Europol and Eurojust** more operational powers and more investigative and prosecutorial resources, under the control of the European Court of Justice, will enhance our capacity to deal efficiently with the effects of global threats on the internal security of the European Union. The effectiveness of this endeavor, while fully respecting our **civil liberties**, will be furthered by enabling full harmonisation of policies in areas commonly agreed upon, in particular terrorism, human trafficking, drugs trafficking, corruption, euro counterfeiting, arms trafficking, money laundering and organised crime.

4.2

When it comes to Europe's proximity, the main EU instrument for promoting stability in our neighbourhood is the further development of its **Neighbourhood Policies**, which offer concrete benefits and preferential relations to neighbouring states in a wide range of fields, particularly with regard to market access and investment promotion. These benefits will be linked to progress made in defined areas, notably economic reform, democratization and respect for human rights, as well as substantial politico-military cooperation, in order to establish joint conflict prevention and crisis management mechanisms, including joint measures to combat terrorism. Through the Neighbourhood Policies, states can come as close to the European Union as they can without being a member.

The concept of Neighbourhood Policies illustrates a common misconception: that the EU would be nearly absent from the field of security policy. This impression is faulty, because it ignores long-term EU external policies in a wide range of fields, which all have a bearing on security. Security must be seen as a comprehensive notion; the 'traditional' politico-military instrument is just one in a whole range of instruments available to the EU.

With regard to long-term external policies, which have a broad preventive scope, the EU is very active indeed. Examples are the successful transition of Central and Eastern Europe, the stabilisation process on the Balkans, and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. This comprehensive and cooperative approach is emerging as the hallmark of the EU approach to security.

4.3

At the global level, the main instrument through which the European Union contributes to security is the strengthening of today's often embryonic **institutions and mechanisms for global action**. This also applies to the politico-military field. The EU must contribute to building effective multilateral institutions.

Amongst the numerous suggestions we described in the RIIR-Security Concept, I signal out only one which is of particular importance now that it appears that not glamorous military action, but the much less exciting combination of economic, political and diplomatic pressure kept Iraq disarmed. The EU should promote the accession to and the verification of the key multilateral agreements on non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament:

- by strengthening the existing independent agencies;
- entrusting them through the Security Council with a broader mandate and capabilities for ad hoc and long-term on site inspections and monitoring to ensure compliance;
- by member states providing them with all available intelligence.

4.4

Looking beyond the specifics of the three zones, two misconceptions have to be addressed.

When we talk about the military means that the implementation of policies at these three levels requires, it is often said that the EU has insufficient military means and that only NATO can act effectively. First of all, the military means belong not to the EU, not to NATO, but to the member states. The military means of all EU member states combined represent a force that is only surpassed by the US – and we don't intend to declare war on Washington. Thus – and contrary to widespread belief, the EU can do anything which the US can, but it will be less rapid and less clean, because our armed forces are still in the process of reform.

The EU therefore faces two tasks. The first is continuing the reform of its armed forces. The second is building the structures and mechanisms that allow for these forces to be used in an EU-context: ESDP. Why is this necessary? Because we must provide for three scenario's: NATO operations; EU operations with the use of NATO assets; and EU-only operations. For the latter to be credible, the autonomy of EU policy-making, including planning and conducting military operations, must be assured, since it is by no means unimaginable that in certain circumstances NATO assets are not available. Even if the incident has not been widely reported, the EU operation is Bunia – East Congo – could not count upon American airlift when requested.

The second misconception has to do with money. The familiar comparison between the American and European military expenditures are up to a certain point misguided and misleading. Contrary to today's Washington, the EU is not planning to assert a military hegemony over the world, solely based upon hard power. Nor is it planning to go to war with the United States. Thus, a equal defence effort by the Europeans is not adequate, nor is it in the offing since there simply exists no public support for this in Europe.

Does this then reduces Europe's global ambitions to chimera ? Not at all. The best – one could also rightly say: the only – way ahead to increase efficiency and interoperability is further integration of national armed forces. The Belgo-Dutch common organisation of their

naval forces can serve as an example how increased integration of forces enhances efficiency while at the same time respecting existing financial ceilings.

There is room for much improvement along the lines of multinational cooperation, pooling of means and task specialisation around cores of excellence, on the basis of planning at the European level that is to be implemented by the EU Military Staff according to the objectives fixed by the Ministers of Defence on the advice of the EU Military Committee. Through such a process, the European Union could be provided with an enhanced catalogue of capabilities that makes use of the full potential of member states' armed forces and to ensure that each member state contributes its fair share. This will enable the European Union to field more rapid reaction forces that are capable of implementing the full range of the Petersberg tasks at any scale: joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peacekeeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace enforcement (also dubbed peacemaking), and post-conflict stabilisation.

4.5

A very last question now: will all member states agree to such a far-reaching process of military integration? Probably not. Common foreign and security policy too often is a policy of the lowest possible denominator. It is hard to imagine a Union of 25 or more member states to share a similar world view and agreeing to common policies. All international organisations – and the EU is not an exception – need constant impetus. This can only be delivered by a core of likeminded member states willing to go ahead without necessarily waiting for all the others to subscribe to this endeavour.

That is why we must look into the possibility of closer cooperation between a limited number of member states. The introduction of an enhanced degree of flexibility, by enabling those Member States that are willing, to proceed further than others with the integration of decision-making and capacity-building, would enhance the performance and efficiency of European security policy, and thus make the Union into a more effective actor on the world stage, matching its economic and commercial power.

There most certainly exists already a dynamic towards forms of enhanced cooperation in the field of security and defence. Several Member States are in fact already engaged in schemes outside the Treaty, such as multinational military forces (the Eurocorps e.g.) and the organization for armaments cooperation OCCAR. Within the Convention, provisions have been proposed allowing 'the willing' to engage in further-reaching cooperation. The declaration issued after the February 2003 Franco-British summit in Le Touquet as well contains elements pointing in this direction. And finally, on 29 April, four Member States, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium, met in Brussels at the invitation of the Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt. Their aim was to explore whether their close consultation and cooperation during the Iraq crisis could constitute the basis for a more durable enhanced cooperation between them in the field of defence, which might then accelerate the development of the ESDP.

This initiative has led some observers to exercises in irony, and it attracted some fierce criticism, not only for allegedly being ill-timed or undermining transatlantic solidarity, but also because of the limited number of participants. Some critics dubbed the initiative to be

contrary to the spirit of European integration. To this I would reply with a question: was major progress in European integration not often the result of similar core group initiatives that others joined at a later stage when they felt ready for it: the European Coal and Steel Community, that led to the very birth of the European Community as the first such attempt and Schengen and the euro as some of the more recent examples. Most of this is now almost part of the Union's 'acquis'.

The Defence Meeting of April 29 provides us with a quite ambitious blueprint, which outlines both a possible **institutional** framework for enhanced cooperation on defence – the European Security and Defence Union – and the **concrete** issues which should be tackled. If recent declarations prove true, even the UK would now be willing to consider moving into that direction.

5. Conclusion

The Iraq crisis highlighted intra-European divides. All too often yet, the EU, when confronted with a crisis, fails to reach consensus and, therefore, to act. The definition of an EU security strategy is a way to forge a truly common foreign and security policy.

But for the EU security strategy to be implemented, for it to materialize in the reality of international relations, the European Union must have the will and the capacity to bear on the course of international events and to weigh on the actors on the international scene. In one word, as the December 2001 Laeken Declaration states: the European Union is to become a **power**. This equates a qualitative jump from being an economic entity – a civilian Europe – into becoming a political entity.

This powerful Europe, ‘Europe-puissance’, will never be conquering, expansionist, imperialist or hegemonic. A powerful Europe is that Europe which, having fully assimilated the lessons of its own suicidal wars of the 20th century, is at peace with itself; which has achieved decolonization without losing its identity; and which, through the project of European integration itself, has succeeded in reconciling hereditary enemies and in conceiving and implementing a model that guarantees the stability of relations between the member states while combining the need for integration with respect for the identity of each. A powerful Europe is that which by affirming its plain existence and its specificity as an actor bears witness to the feasibility and the achievements of a harmonious **model** of international relations, **organizing cooperation while respecting differences**.

Regardless of economic, political, demographic and military weight, there is no power without will. To play a part on the international stage, it does not suffice to take the current state of affairs for granted, to passively look to others to sort out problems or to systematically follow others’ lead in dealing with them; power requires the will to make a proper mark on the course of events. The European Union will only be powerful if its member states consciously and collectively muster **the will to constitute one of the poles of the multi-polar world** and act accordingly.

Likewise, there is no power without **capacity for and autonomy of decision-making**. The capacity for decision-making rests on a political consensus on the overall objectives that are to be achieved, on efficacious decision-making mechanisms and on the maintenance of the scientific, industrial and financial basis that is needed to be able to decide freely on the initiation or pursuit of policy. Autonomy of decision-making means to be conscious of one’s identity and sovereignty and thus to feel responsible to decide, without any inhibitions caused by a habit of dependence, submission or gratitude.

Does all this sound too ambitious ? It is not – look at the many initiatives in the history of the European integration that succeeded against all odds. Is it feasible ? That depends what we call results: taking part in this endeavour is more important than striving for quick results. Can we be certain of the results ? Never, since in *res publica* nothing is ever guaranteed. But what we can be certain of is, that, left to its own devices, unregulated, without some form of global governance, the international community will most certainly revert to a Darwinian order ruled by a modern-day law of the jungle in which only the fittest survive.