

## ESDP and terrorism

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In June 2004, the European Council asked the Political and Security Committee to elaborate upon the contribution ESDP could render in the fight against terrorism. Half a year later and looking at it from the outside, I sense a feeling of perplexity and bewilderment in articulating operational proposals that go beyond the mere identification of the four main areas of action: prevention, protection, consequence management and support to third countries.

ESDP is a means to an end – the end being an effective Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and its member states. ESDP cannot and should not be viewed in isolation from the objectives and the principles of the Union's external action, including the longstanding European emphasis on addressing the root causes of terrorism and acting in accordance of the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

The vagueness of the issue – which prompted today's seminar – springs from a number of mutually reinforcing sources. To clear up this vagueness three concomitant suggestions will be offered.

### Stuff Happens Nevertheless

A first source I would qualify as: 'Stuff Happens Nevertheless' – with 3 capital letters.

Even if we do not dispose of a satisfying concept, doctrine or strategy concerning ESDP and terrorism, we nevertheless have a practice in doing what could be called 'ESDP-stuff'.

Let's list a number of instances, chosen at random, where in recent years military and civilian means have effectively been put into action in one of the aforementioned main areas of action.

When the EU requested the Belgian Air Force to provide for an air dome with F-16's for the Council meeting immediately after 9/11, this simply was **prevention**, as described in the December 2004 Conceptual Framework on ESDP and terrorism.

The presence of armed forces of EU member states in Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan is a prime example of **offensive counterterrorism**, as is the inclusion of counterterrorist tasks in the operational plan of ALTHEA in Bosnia.

When military are involved in **border control** exercises and operations, European military instruments are being provided to the third pillar.

A multinational **CBRN** battalion has been created within NATO and deployed during the Olympic Games in Greece. It shows that even without a doctrinal agreement, states do liaise and combine expertise and means when need be.

Whenever armed forces are fielded, **force protection** always has been a mandatory component of operational and tactical planning. This protection even extends to NGO's and the local population, within the available means and capabilities. Protection against possible

attacks by terrorist gangs is already now part and parcel of many armed force's planning requirements.

The tsunami-response saw an impressive **combined use of military and civilian means** – even if some EU member states until then hesitated in considering the involvement of military assets within the EU borders. I guess that no European would understand that outside the EU we are doing things, that we would refuse to do within our own borders if need be.

Finally, a number of EU member states clearly have an established expertise in **consequence management**, projecting a combined military and civilian component into emergency situations. By way of example, let me refer the so-called 'B-FAST', Belgium's rapid deployment emergency teams. This structure was created as a consequence of the earthquakes in Turkey, in August and November 1999. Belgium was among the first countries to provide relief and assistance. As part of the lessons learned Belgium deemed it necessary to set up a structure that could be mobilised at any time. Its objective was twofold: on the one hand, to ensure a better preparedness for such operations; on the other hand, to give a quicker and more efficient response to emergency situations. Since 2000 Belgium disposes of emergency teams that can be mobilised within 12 hours and send to countries affected by a man-made or natural disaster. B-FAST's executive body is chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and combines the involvement and expertise at the governmental level (MFA, Interior and Defence) and NGO's. Other member-states have probably a similar practice.

So, looking at all these examples of what is already going on in the field, in the identified four areas of possible ESDP-action, one might raise the legitimate argument: arguing about theology is fun, but clearly reality has not been waiting for the disputes to be settled.

So, even without acknowledging it, a lot of ESDP-related things are already happening in terrorism-related environments. A **first suggestion** would then to **bundle these 'best practices'** at the national and European level in an appropriate wrapping, that we then will officially baptize 'ESDP-contribution in the fight against terrorism'.

### **Show Me The Enemy !**

But in order to be able to do so, we have to address a second source of bewilderment. It can best be circumscribed as: 'Show Me The Enemy' !

We are accustomed to saying that we face a 'growing strategic threat to the whole of Europe', that terrorism now has a 'global reach' and increasingly so 'for the decades to come'. It is said and written that policymakers and the public tend to underestimate the seriousness of the threat.

Perhaps. But are we sure of this ?

It could as well be argued that global islamist terrorism – the major strand of today's international terrorism – peaked at 9/11 and that its European variant at March 11. That it was their best shot. The progress achieved since then in anti-terrorism cooperation – both domestically, European and internationally – and the extraordinary turmoil in Arab civil society that started after 9/11, could be seen as signs that islamist terrorism as a global threat

is waning rather than growing and that Islamist terrorism has proven to be a dead-end, as was the case with their anarchist predecessors exactly a century ago.

We lack the criteria to gauge this. The European reflection on the very nature of today's wave of terrorism is not as elaborate and well thought-off as one might wish. So groupthink is lurking. It would not be the first time in the history of international terrorism that we are crying wolf when in reality the threat has transformed and the wolf is hiding somewhere else.

The reason I'm putting this argument forward, is not because one should question the existence of a terrorist threat. There clearly is one. The argument has to do with the very subject of today's deliberations on ESDP and its contribution to anti- and counterterrorism.

If we would simply assume the worst case – an al-Qaeda type global terrorist threat in possession of CNBR-weapons – ESDP clearly is paramount as part of a strategy to counter this. But how probable is this scenario? Developing such a scenario will reveal vulnerabilities, but not probabilities. If we would be concentrating solely on a worst case scenario, we could as well miss a threat that is much more probable and that one could characterise as the van-Gogh scenario: a local gang of self-radicalised and self-recruited youngsters who think they are acting in community with a worldwide liberation struggle in favour of an oppressed *Ummah*. In such a scenario, a CFSP dimension would be necessary, but an ESDP component is less obvious.

I would then offer my **second suggestion**: instead of elaborating a single scenario to define the ESDP contribution, would it not be more appropriate to devise right from the start several parallel ones – a methodology we followed at the WEU Petersberg meeting, June 1992.

**We need not one, but parallel intelligence-based scenarios, ranging from high probability incidents with low consequence effects to low probability attacks with possible high consequence effects.** Within each of these scenarios and the ensuing exercises, we then will be able to define more accurately the different ESDP-instruments that are required in the four main areas of action, as a complement to national endeavours. The methodology involved is nothing but very familiar: risk analysis, conceptualising the response, devising a catalogue of means, drawing up an operational plan.

Next to being practical, doing so, we will moreover send a signal to our own publics that we take terrorism seriously indeed, while at the same time avoiding eventually unduly alarmism.

### **L'Union Fait La Force**

My third and final reflection is dubbed 'L'Union Fait La Force' – the old Belgian maxim. In view of the never-ending Belgian domestic disputes, I can assure you that one cannot take this maxim for granted. On the contrary, it needs constant nurturing for it to become established practice.

Terrorism is not a military operation. It's a tool – as old as human history – with a political objective in mind – even if couched in religious terms. ESDP – as I said in the beginning – is only a means to an end. The effectiveness of an eventual ESDP contribution can not but be judged from the degree of synergy with the other policy instruments of the EU and its member states.

The EU has organised quite a few antiterrorism exercises in the last years. All of them however were 'pillarised'. Euratox 2002 (France), Common Cause 2002 (Denmark) and the EU Response Exercise 2003 (Belgium) were all Commission exercises without CFSP-involvement. Within the second pillar, crisis management exercises have been devised and the European Military Staff drew up a military DBase that is put at the disposal of the Community Civil Protection Mechanism – but never ever was this tested. Last year, five exercises within the JHA-pillar were organised, dealing with border controls, illegal immigration and drugs trafficking – but isolated from the other pillars.

The same goes for a number of operational mechanisms that are already in place, amongst others: SitCen, the Commission's OpsCenter, the Community Mechanism, including its Monitoring and Information Center (MIC), the Civilian-Military Cell, and – why not mention it – Echo. So we do have a wide array of instruments in the four main areas of action, but most of them remain largely within their own pillar.

So my **final suggestion** builds on the preceding one: when devising parallel scenarios and organising exercises, these should all be based on a **cross-pillar** synergy, involving all the policy instruments at the disposal of the Union and its member states. A **cross-pillar methodology** is long overdue: we need a cross-pillar analysis of requirements and means, which by comparing them will enable us to define the shortcomings and deficiencies, so that we can devise an action programme to overcome them.

The more you think about all this, the more obvious this looks. Do member-states not use in an integrated way all available means at their disposal in their national antiterrorism plans ? Moreover, it has been declared EU policy, ever since the June 2002 Sevilla Council declaration, stating the need for a coordinated and inter-disciplinary approach embracing all Union policies. Only when acting upon these words, we will make sure that the now famous March 2004 EU solidarity clause will not remain purely symbolic and that the EU really is a community of shared values and objectives.

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