EUROPEAN SECURITY AFTER LIBYA AND UKRAINE: IN SEARCH OF A CORE LEADERSHIP

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T his Synthesis aims at presenting the main issues discussed during the seminar entitled "The European security after Libya and Ukraine: in search of a core leadership?" organised by Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute in partnership with the Istituto Affari Internazionali on 29 April 2014 in Paris.

Introduction

The recent crises in Ukraine and Libya highlight the need to open dialogue about the purpose and structure of common European defence.

With this aim in mind, Notre Europe – Jacques Delors Institute (NE-JDI) along with the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) held a seminar on 29 April 2014 entitled "European security after Libya and Ukraine: in search of a core leadership".

An introduction by **Filippo di Robilant**, former advisor to the Italian minister of foreign affairs Emma Bonino, and introductory remarks by **Joylon Howorth**, Yale University and author of the paper presented for the seminar[1], were followed by a discussion with **Nicole Gnesotto**, vice-president of NE-JDI, **Sergio Jesi**, vice-president of Elettronica, and **Marcin Terlikowski**, analyst in the international security department of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, moderated by **Alexandra de Hoop Scheffer**, German Marshall Fund Paris Office.

1. A core leadership?

At its birth the purpose of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union was to develop a security apparatus separate from United States-dominant NATO, in which Europeans had the ability to form their own unified strategic vision, develop capability instead of relying on free-riding, and assume responsibility for their own regional security. However to date CSDP has been mainly used for marginal civilian missions of little strategic impact. The absence of the CSDP in light of the Arab Spring and recent events in Ukraine highlight the difficulties at delivering on the three aforementioned objectives.

Unlike the euro area crisis, the EU foreign policy crisis is not fundamentally an institutional problem, but

a political one. Efficiency of governance is of little issue; rather CSDP lacks the political enthusiasm of member states in their push toward autonomy that sparked its foundation in the first place. The trouble lies in the Union's inability to form consensus on fundamental issues pertaining to European collective defence and security, such as strategy, autonomy, and even the very purpose of the CSDP, due to the varying political objectives of member nations.

As Howorth comments in his paper, in the CSDP agenda there exists "an aura of supra-nationalism [that] [...] informs the way in which decisions are actually made – [...] everything CSDP does enjoys the blessings of member states. Anything to which any member state has a serious objection simply does not make it onto the CSDP agenda". Only the issues that can be agreed upon are acted upon. Yet only the relatively inconsequential issues can be agreed upon between 28 countries with wide ranges of security priorities. However, it is possible that a more coherent security platform could be concocted, and activity and importance of missions be ramped up, if there were a leadership to follow from some core group of member states.

2. Determining a core

It is problematic to determine which core group of countries can take the forefront, due to the fact that it is not clear what the specific purpose of CSDP is. With each projected idea of purpose a different core develops. If the purpose were determined to be a more broad-reaching system of collective European defence, then a core of France, the United Kingdom, and Germany are often cited as potential candidates, with an 'outer core' of Poland, Spain and Italy. However, if the purpose were less grandiose, more along the lines of a crisis-reaction instrument, the core would most likely include those nations disproportionately active in civilian missions: Sweden, Germany, Finland, and Romania. The question of establishing a core leadership again remains a function of establishing a core strategic framework.

Though some models for a new CSDP structure have been thrown around they have to face concrete challenges. One proposal is that of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), in which a leading group of countries commit to stepping up CSDP. However, as no nations wish to be "relegated to the non-core",

and it has been extensively argued that this method would be most functional by including the maximum possible number of members.

'Clusters' of nations grouping together according to strategic culture, capacity, etc. is another proffered solution, but lacks an overarching strategic framework, rendering the model all but useless in terms of CSDP and collective defence. De Hoop Scheffer states about the cluster model, "We are nourishing this lack of political cohesion inside the EU [...] By only investing in a regional cooperation mechanism, at the end you are not reinforcing these international organisations like NATO or the EU [...] We are very into an EU bottom-up approach with these regional corporations but what is lacking [...] is the strategic vision in the top down approach."

3. Retooling the CSDP-NATO relationship

Based on scathing reviews of EU response and performance (or lack thereof) in the Ukraine crisis it is evident that the fundamental workings of European security need to be revised. It was Washington, not Brussels that had the capability to, and did, push back against Moscow. The relationship between CSDP and NATO is in need of re-examination. There is significant disagreement, however, on what the next step forward should be, even between the four panellists. The CSDP could be scrapped entirely, leaving NATO (i.e. the US umbrella) solely in charge of European security, something that would please neither the US nor the EU. Another way is to continue along the current trajectory of CSDP aiming at a step-by-step integration. Gnesotto, on the one hand, believes neither NATO nor CSDP will last, in that "If you are serious about dealing with European security then you must realise that [both bodies of European security] cannot be used in a crisis, so what are we going to

do? I don't have the answer to this question, but I'm sure the answer does not go through NATO, and the answer does not go through CSDP."

Perhaps further integration with NATO is a possible answer, suggest Terlikowski, Jesi, and Howorth. Europeanisation of NATO through the stepping up of commitments from EU members, participation in "intense cooperation" between CSDP and NATO, and eventually a shift of primary responsibility from the US to the EU for central NATO functions could serve to build a genuine regional defence capacity. The quickest and most practical approach to integration would be a combined bottom-up and top-down approach, as the above-cited consensus issue renders it difficult to believe that much could be achieved by solely top-down means. Jesi affirms, "A defence security European policy is very hard to see in [the next] 20 years [...] I think a bottom-up approach could be feasible [...] Maybe we will fail to have a big picture of strategy but if we build up step by step [...] a very humble something, I think we can proceed in order to have not in 20 but in 6 or 7 years programmes, operational requirements, other forces that can be

more linked together." Results could come from linking operations, along the lines of cyber security, drones, satellites, etc. (i.e. bottom-up) side by side with a nudge from the top via joint programmes, etc. This route may provide some of the capacity and capability that the EU so lacks and desires.

Conclusion – The way out of the EU's existential crisis: redefining the CSDP-NATO relationship

If the European Union truly wishes to become an independent entity in charge of its own regional security, it is evident that something must change. Its inability to act autonomously from NATO and the US has thrown the Common Security and Defence Policy into the midst of an existential crisis. Questioning and redefining the relationship between CSDP and NATO remains the most promising means of forming a comprehensive system for European defence, thus allowing the European Union to stand as a truly global actor.

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1. Jolyon Howorth, "European Security Post-Libya and Post-Ukraine: In Search of Core Leadership", *Imagining Europe No. 8*, Istituto Affari Internazionali, May 2014.

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