

EU SECURITY: A MATTER OF POLITICAL URGENCY

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Ensuring the security of the European Union (EU) is no longer a technical issue requiring simple, bureaucratic adjustments. Together with a return to growth, it is the major political challenge facing Europeans. Instability in neighbouring countries now has profound effects on the entire Union. No member state can assume it is safe from terrorist attacks or exempt from providing a responsible operational response to the inflow of refugees, and no less that it is not exposed to the short- and mid-term fallout of economic collapse in several EU neighbour countries.

Unilateral measures taken by member states are insufficient given the scope of the challenges at hand. Europeans must form a united political front based on a ranking of priorities in the short and medium term. The current review of Europe's security strategy is necessary, but this somewhat abstract exercise must not postpone concrete political initiatives which, coordinated within a comprehensive approach, must aim to:

- Provide greater assistance in the fight against Daesh;
- Develop a medium-term strategy for Syria;
- Stand firm and united both "with and up to" Russia;
- Provide an immediate response to the migrant crisis;
- Deepen and expand cooperation in the area of security.

Introduction

The attacks in Paris on 13 November 2015 were a catastrophic reminder of the continuum now linking internal and external security. They are the newest of a string Daesh's murderous attacks in Europe (along with those in Belgium and Denmark), and more widely in Turkey, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and, further afar, in Southeast Asia. The increasing number of Europeans joining Daesh's ranks only reinforces the link between internal and external security.

Two inaccurate conclusions should be avoided. The first assumes that the Schengen system is "dead" and that only the permanent re-establishment of national border controls will protect European citizens effectively. Rigorous checks at borders crossed daily by hundreds of thousands of people is impossible. Though they create a false sense of security, such costly controls in fact weaken the security of Europeans by draining human and financial resources normally earmarked for intelligence, mobile policing, European

law enforcement cooperation and the reinforcement of external Schengen borders with non-EU countries.

The second conclusion equates refugees with terrorists. The terrorists who struck in Madrid, London, Brussels and Paris were European citizens born in Europe. Refugees, on the other hand, are fleeing terrorism and violence. To draw such a conclusion kindles nationalist and xenophobic sentiments which rot Europe from within. Given the scope of the terrorist threat and the challenges posed by migration, member states must refrain from taking illusory unilateral measures which seem to provide short-term national solutions but prevent states from taking the responsible, united decisions needed to ensure our safety in a sustainable manner.

The threat posed by terrorism and the challenges of migration are first and foremost linked to serious instability in the EU neighbourhood. The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which in 2004 aimed to create a circle of stable, prosperous and peaceful countries at the EU's borders, has failed. Confident they

could rely on NATO in the event of military aggression on European soil, and focused on their economic troubles, Europeans underestimated the repercussions of turmoil in the neighbourhood, and collectively shirked the responsibility of providing an appropriate response. Shortcomings in the Union's external action and a certain inability to predict crises – the refugee crisis is one example – are more than obvious today, and primarily attributable to divisions within the EU-28. Had we given more firm support to the UN in its efforts to improve the lives of refugees in camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, the migrant and humanitarian crisis would likely have been better controlled.

Notwithstanding the unanimously applauded operation to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia, missions and operations launched in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy have produced mixed results: often, the respite they provide is all too brief. The EU's intervention capabilities are limited to low-intensity conflicts. The issue of sharing the costs of these operations is unresolved, thus placing a heavy burden on the biggest member states involved and limiting their ability to commit to new efforts. The economic and financial crisis also resulted in the uncoordinated national defence budget cuts. Furthermore, the mutual defence clause added to the Treaty almost seven years ago has never been used, nor has the EU battle groups. Why multiply the number of instruments for intergovernmental cooperation and pile up European action plans for non-military capacities and crisis management if, ultimately, the political will to implement such things is lacking in Europe's capitals?

It is not just the worrisome instability in the southern neighbourhood and Russian foreign policy which lead us to concern, but also the lack of a convincing EU response or a commitment to a common foreign and security policy that measures up to the threats faced. Initiatives were taken in Brussels in 2015. A new European Internal Security Strategy was presented in June, followed in November by a review of the ENP. After years of hesitation, heads of state and EU leaders decided to review Europe's security strategy, which dates from 2003. The High Representative, Federica Mogherini, led a broad consultation process with European institutions and member states, which will result in an "EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy" by June 2016. While this inclusive process is admirable and necessary, the ambitions driving the strategic rethink risk being weakened by political compromises, even more so in the lead-up to the Brexit

referendum result on 23 June and the presentation of NATO's new Strategic Concept in July 2016. Given the external and internal situation in the EU, strengthening the Union's foreign policy must not be reduced to an abstract exercise that, by being too global, is barely operational.

1. Ranking priorities

Effective EU external action primarily depends on our ability to define and focus on common priorities. In the short term, the EU must concentrate on two security issues. The first is the fight against terrorism, starting with Daesh in Syria, Iraq and other vulnerable countries in Africa and the Middle East. The second is the redefinition of the EU's relationship with Russia, both overall and particularly in regards to the Middle East and Ukraine. The EU needs a *modus operandi* that allows it to cooperate with Russia on international matters but maintain a firm stance on its violation of Ukraine's territorial integrity.

In the medium term, the EU needs a solid migration policy. Moving beyond crisis management to strategic planning requires deeper analysis of the causes of migratory movements and how these are potentially affected by EU external action measures. Quelling sources of instability – terrorism, failed states, civil war – which trigger movements of people, and anticipating other factors of mobility, such as rapid growth of middle classes, urbanisation, or even the spread of digital technology, must become transversal tasks of the EU. This will allow the Union to define a balanced migration policy that addresses Europe's labour needs, as well as humanitarian crises and security challenges.

These short- and mid-term challenges are linked to more long-term structural ones, such as climate change and demographic trends in Africa, where the population is expected to double by 2050. These are not just development issues; they could amplify the instability and security threats already affecting the EU.

Ranking European priorities also means determining the instruments and areas in which the EU brings real added value. Geographically, the EU must focus on immediate neighbouring countries and Sub-Saharan Africa. Stability in these areas is strategic both in terms of limiting forced migration, and capitalising on the many economic opportunities for Europe in Africa.

An overly global approach to security issues including more distant regions such as the South China Sea may weaken, not enhance, the strategic capabilities of the EU.

Of undeniable value is Europe's ability to mobilise common economic instruments, starting with its trade policy, which incorporates not only economic goals but geopolitical and security ones as well. In addition to development and humanitarian aid, the power to levy economic sanctions by targeting financial interests are particularly effective. The return of geopolitics to continental Europe and neighbouring countries provides an incentive to strengthen the link between our economic instruments and security objectives.

Similarly, careful consideration must be given to the role of European defence policy within Europe's comprehensive approach. To ensure that the outcome of this analysis is not marginalised within a necessarily short-sighted and abstract meta-strategy, it should be accompanied by a European defence policy which sets priorities in terms of capability requirements, promotes the harmonisation of timetables and national military equipment and training policies, and allocates defence efforts among member states more fairly.

Military capability enhancement should always be aimed at deploying civil-military tools for the purpose of achieving a political goal, as seen in Europe's successful actions in Somalia in the last several years. Given the instability in our neighbourhood and the diverse nature of the challenges faced, the use of civil-military means will be more and more frequent, be it in traditional missions, border management, or in the fight against terrorist networks.

The High Representative has focused on expanding the European comprehensive approach and would like to achieve better coordination between the European Commission and the European External Action Service. Coordination between institutions is needed to ensure coherence in foreign policy, as evidenced by the inclusion of a geopolitical component to the European Energy Security Strategy of May 2014 and in EU trade policy through the "Trade for All" strategy of October 2015. But new institutional orientations alone cannot overcome Europe's weak image: they must be accompanied by a political commitment to the increased integration of external action policies and the pooling of resources.

2. Taking action now: five proposals

Europe is an important and complementary component of member states' security efforts, and citizens know this. Polls regularly confirm that public opinion is more clear sighted than political leaders, and wants more cooperation in Europe on foreign policy, security, defence and migration. A Eurobarometer survey from May 2015 confirmed that 74% of European citizens support a common security and defence policy and consider migration and terrorism to be the biggest challenges facing the EU. Restoring the legitimacy of the EU requires concrete political initiatives that, taken together in the framework of a comprehensive approach, will change conditions in our neighbourhood and address the root causes of security threats.

2.1. Provide greater assistance in the fight against Daesh

One such political initiative was France's decision to invoke the mutual defence clause in November 2015 following the terrorist attacks in Paris. The response of several member states – The UK conducting airstrikes in Syria, Germany contributing equipment and soldiers, Belgium sending troops to the Sahel, and Sweden providing air transport – proved that the EU is indeed a common security system which defends our shared values. It is a strong political symbol. But the fact that reactions among member states varied widely – and were expressed outside the framework of the EU – highlights a need to more actively discuss an operational application of the mutual defence clause to act in a more coordinated manner.

More specifically, we must broaden the scope of assistance and coordination between member states to enhance efforts to contain Daesh. Such efforts cannot be made on a volunteer basis. Each EU member must play a role in responding to this challenge by providing support in different ways (if not airstrikes, then by way of logistical support or by enhancing their contribution to other missions or operations). Europe must also work towards implementing the decision taken by G20 members to fight against the financing of terrorist networks.

2.2. Develop a medium-term strategy for Syria

Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are further proof that military intervention alone cannot provide long-term stability in a country. Europeans must back up military efforts by actively seeking a political solution to

the conflict in Syria, based on the lessons learned from failed political transitions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. In its interactions with global and regional powers most closely involved in a conflict, the EU must act not as a spectator but as a catalyst to dissuade them from intensifying a war by proxy. Member states do not always need to speak with one voice, but they do need to work together so that many voices send a single message.

2.3. Stand firm and united both “with and up to” Russia

Actions to combat Daesh must not prevent Europe from upholding stringent demands from Russia where Ukraine is concerned. The united front Europe has shown by extending sanctions and demanding compliance with the Minsk Agreement for the progressive lifting of sanctions is commendable. The EU should also abandon any second thoughts concerning Ukraine’s accession to the EU. The necessary conditions have not been met, and a democratic transition in this country depends first and foremost on heightened support for economic and political reform efforts.

2.4. Provide an immediate response to the migrant crisis

The EU must fulfil its moral obligation to take in refugees, but also respond to citizens’ concerns regarding migratory flows and the security risks of migrants circulating freely within the Schengen area. Strengthening external borders and internal vigilance to preserve the human and economic benefits of an area in which over 400 million people move freely was long overdue. In this context, we applaud the Commission’s initiative to create a European Border Guard which pools European capabilities in order to better control the EU’s external borders, and we recommend that the Council’s decision be implemented quickly. Regaining control of developments at our borders also requires an increase in resources and the number of European processing centres for asylum seekers (“hotspots”) in Greece and Italy; an overhaul of the Dublin System, and a harmonisation of asylum law in member states.

The example of the refugee relocation system, which has only transferred a few hundred people instead of the 120,000 originally planned, highlights the utmost importance of implementing all of these cooperation tools. It is not the time to exclude a member state from the Schengen Area; instead, we must respect decisions taken together. Agreements signed with third-party

countries must also be implemented, such as the one reached with Turkey regarding the settlement of Syrian refugees, the fight against human trafficking and border surveillance. The revision of the Customs Union launched by the EU at the request of Turkey should be tightly conditioned on the implementation of this agreement. Furthermore, making the budget of the European Commission more flexible, including where the ENP is concerned, cannot wait until 2017, as planned. The EU must appear more reactive in the face of declared emergencies by providing financial support for UN operations and the third countries affected by rapid inflows of refugees.

2.5. Deepen and expand cooperation in the area of security

To ensure internal security, member states must multiply the amount of information exchanged between police and intelligence services. The creation of Europol’s European Counter Terrorism Centre is a step in the right direction but its success will depend on the support and trust of national services. Due to the connection between internal and external security, we must also step up cooperation with our neighbours in the fight against radicalisation and terrorism. For this reason, we support the focus which the new ENP places on measures to enhance the resilience of partner countries dealing with extremism by toughening efforts to uphold the rule of law and reform security and border management policies.

More extensive cooperation on security and defence issues is also needed between member states and the European Commission. A more flexible use of the Commission’s financial instruments is necessary to achieve security goals, for example via dual-use research projects in sectors where capability is lacking (e.g. drones and satellites). At the operational level, the Commission can also help to enhance civil-military synergies by financing measures that supplement the Common Security and Defence Policy, such as the “Train and Equip” initiative. The EU trained troops in Somalia and Mali but was unable to provide the costly equipment they needed.

Lastly, to ensure continuity in the EU’s strategic debate on security and defence, and to enhance its ability to anticipate crises or conflicts, the Council should organise a “Security Council” meeting once a year to assess medium- and long-term threats and review the resources at its disposal. This Council would monitor the use of intergovernmental cooperation instruments,

such as Battle Groups and Permanent Structured Cooperation, and strengthen the role of the European Defence Agency, which can submit proposals to the Council for concrete, long-term projects to develop Europe's industrial and technological base in one or two priority areas of defence according to common capability shortcomings. A European Security Council should reach decisions that are directly operational to prevent its analysis from remaining abstract and ineffectual. It could unanimously adopt clear guidelines

made operational by a decision of the Foreign Affairs Council acting by a qualified majority.¹

The EU cannot be criticised much longer for concessions that national governments are unwilling to make in order to strengthen common ability to meet external challenges. It is time for national leaders, who shape the future of the Union, to work together and live up to the expectations of a majority of citizens by giving the EU real powers of anticipation and influence. Where security is concerned, unity is strength.

1. Sven Biscop, "EU Global Strategy Expert Opinion", No 4, EU Institute for Security Studies, January 2016.

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