

Defence - Lisbon Treaty

# From ESDP to CSDP : Time for some Strategy

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**An EU grand strategy, elaborating on and completing the ESS, must define Europe's ambition as a global security actor, which can then inform a military or civil-military sub-strategy, or "white book," specifically for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).**

**Dans le cadre de ses synergies géopolitiques, le [diploweb.com](http://diploweb.com) est heureux de vous présenter la contribution du Professeur Sven Biscop à la Journée d'étude de l'IRSEM consacrée aux "Nouveaux défis à la pensée stratégique", le 6 octobre 2009, à l'Ecole militaire.**

WITH the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU's European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has been re-baptized the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The Treaty also introduces a new mechanism for capability development, Permanent Structured Cooperation, which allows those Member States that are willing to enhance military integration between themselves within the framework of the EU. Furthermore, the strengthened position of the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, who will chair the Council of Ministers when dealing with foreign and security policy, ought to give new impetus to decision-making.

Therefore, the EU is at an important juncture which merits strategic reflection about the objectives and priorities of the CSDP. The EU's interests and objectives in a region should determine to what extent it will contribute, or even take the lead, in conflict resolution and crisis management through diplomatic, civilian and military instruments.

On this point, EU strategic thinking is the least explicit. There is a missing link between the vague ambition expressed in the 2003 *European Security Strategy* (ESS) [1] - "to share in the responsibility for global security" - and the practice of CSDP operations and capability development. Even if the EU's engagement for global peace and security can be stepped up, there are, sadly, too many conflicts and crises for the EU to deal effectively with all of them, especially in a leading role. Therefore, as the 2008 *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy - Providing Security in a Changing World* states, "We need to prioritise our commitments, in line with resources". [2]

## **1. Which Types of Operations ?**

First of all, there is not even consensus about which *tasks or types of operations* the EU can undertake. Most Member States already put their forces in harm's way for national and NATO operations or coalitions of the willing. Legally, the EU's Petersberg Tasks include operations at the high end of the violence spectrum, including combat operations, yet politically the Member States are still extremely divided over the use of force under the EU flag. Some capitals still interpret the Treaty as allowing only low-intensity operations.

## **2. Which Priorities ?**

Secondly, *priority regions and scenarios* must be defined in relation to Europe's vital interests : where and why should the EU deploy troops and perhaps even go to war ?

Because of its proximity, "the neighbourhood" logically appears as a clear priority where the

EU should not only be active, but take the lead. In the ESS, “Resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict is a strategic priority” – although that clear statement does not necessarily translate into proactive engagement – and the Implementation Report adds that “We need a sustained effort to address conflicts in the Southern Caucasus, Republic of Moldova and between Israel and the Arab States”. But if “the neighbourhood” is a clear geographic priority, the ESS is less clear in determining which types of contingencies the EU should undertake which type of action. It should also be debated whether the “broader neighbourhood”, including Central Asia and the Gulf, is a priority as well.

Next to the neighbourhood, only Iran has been singled out as a priority, and the EU has indeed been “at the forefront of international efforts to address Iran’s nuclear programme”, as the Report states. Other conflicts are mentioned in the ESS : “Problems such as those in Kashmir, the Great Lakes Region and the Korean Peninsula impact on European interests directly and indirectly, as do conflicts nearer to home, above all in the Middle East.” Whether this implies the EU should actively contribute to the resolution of these conflicts is not clear at all. Sub-Saharan Africa has been an important area of focus for CSDP, though the strategy behind it has not always been clear. E.g. given that the EU twice intervened in the DRC at the request of the UN, in 2003 and 2006, why was the third request, in 2008, refused ? This demonstrates that without strategy, it is impossible to define what success of an operation means. At the tactical and operational level, the operation in Chad (2008-2009) went very well e.g., but to which strategic objective did it contribute and which long-term effects did it create ? Other strategic players are becoming increasingly active, but are mostly unwilling to contribute to crisis-management on the African continent, so what are the EU’s priorities ?

A perfect example of a European priority is being demonstrated by the operation against piracy off the coast of Somalia where the EU is working to secure Europe’s lines of communication with the world . For the first time the EU is undertaking an operation that is clearly about interests, such as the protection of shipping, in close cooperation with the naval forces of other global powers. As the title of a recent publication, “From Suez to Shanghai”, [3] shows, this can potentially become a very important priority, especially if the evolving geopolitical situation in the Arctic is also taken into account.

Importantly, the collective security system of the UN, and therefore of the EU as its main supporter and with two permanent members on the Security Council among its ranks, can only be legitimate if it addresses the threats to everyone’s security – too much selectivity undermines the system. Even though it cannot always play a leading role, the EU must therefore also shoulder its share of the responsibility for global peace and security by playing an active role in the Security Council (notably via its strategic partnerships with the non-EU permanent members) and by contributing capabilities to UN(-mandated) crisis management and peacekeeping operations. Notably if the threshold to activate the mechanism of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) [4] is reached anywhere in the world, the EU, in view of its support for the principle and its vital interest in upholding international law, should contribute. Having not been mentioned in the ESS, R2P is included in the Implementation Report- a positive signal.

### 3. Which Scale ?

Finally, the EU must decide *what scale of effort* to devote to these priorities. Quantitatively, CSDP is based on the 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal, i.e. 60,000 troops, but this seems to have been overshadowed by the much more limited battlegroup project. The actual availability of the forces declared cannot be assessed because Member States declare numbers that in theory they are willing to deploy for CSDP operations, but no real pre-identified units. Furthermore, most Member States have declared similar numbers to NATO operations as well. If all ongoing CSDP, NATO, UN and national operations in which EU Member States participate are counted, Europe today deploys more than 80,000 troops, but they obviously cannot mobilize 60,000 additional troops for expeditionary operations. Even with the combined CSDP and NATO level of ambition and if collective defence is taken into account, they still fall far short of the total combined armed forces at the disposal of the EU-27 : 2 million troops. There is currently no vision about how many of those troops Europe really needs.

### Conclusion

An EU grand strategy, elaborating on and completing the ESS, [5] must define Europe's ambition as a global security actor, which can then inform a military or civil-military sub-strategy, or "white book," specifically for CSDP. As Member States have but a single set of forces, the question is not what the CSDP level of ambition is or what is the level of ambition of NATO ; the question is what the EU, as the political expression of Europe and as a comprehensive foreign policy actor, wants to contribute as a global security provider, regardless of whether a specific operation is undertaken under CSDP or NATO (or UN) command.

It is in the EU, therefore, that Member States logically ought to make the primary *political* decision of whether or not to act in a given situation. If their decision entails military action, the secondary step is to select the organization through which to act - NATO, CSDP, the UN, the OSCE, or an ad hoc coalition - which will always be a tailored solution, based upon which partners want to go and which organization is best suited for the case at hand. It is in the EU as well that Member States can build more deployable forces through various forms of cooperation and pooling between Europeans via Permanent Structured Cooperation, which will be available for all potential frameworks for operations.

A "white book" must thus cut across organizational divides and cover the full spectrum of operations, including a transparent assessment of what is really needed for collective defence, in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty's stipulations about the Solidarity Clause and "mutual defence,". Currently existing plans are too much of a paper exercise : it is far from clear which capabilities are effectively available for collective defence. How many forces should the EU-27 be able to muster for crisis management and long-term peacekeeping ? For which priorities ? What reserves does that require ? And what are the needs of collective defence ? In all probability the result will be that Europe does not need 2 million uniforms, but can use some additional strategic capabilities.

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**Plus** sur le Programme Sécurité & Gouvernance mondiale dirigé par S. Biscop, sur le site de l'Institut Royal des Relations Internationales

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## **P.-S.**

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## **Notes**

[1] See <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

[2] See [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/reports/104630.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/reports/104630.pdf).

[3] James Rogers, From Suez to Shanghai : The European Union and Eurasian Maritime Security. Occasional Paper 77. Paris, EUISS, 2009, see <http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/op77.pdf>.

[4] Endorsed at the UN Millennium+5 Summit in September 2005, R2P implies that if a State is unable or unwilling to protect its own population, or is itself the perpetrator of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes or crimes against humanity, national sovereignty must give way to a responsibility to protect on the part of the international community. In such cases, the Security Council must mandate intervention, if necessary by military means.

[5] Sven Biscop (ed.), The Value of Power, the Power of Values - A Call for an EU Grand Strategy. Egmont Paper No. 33. Brussels, Egmont, 2009, see <http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep33.pdf>.