Reflections on the Common Security and Defence Policy ahead of the EU summit meeting – Europe needs a quality and realistic security strategy

Since the summit meeting in June 2015, the EU has been working to develop of a new internal policy and security strategy, which is to be reviewed at the EU summit meeting planned for June this year, dedicated to the issues of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). This is to respond to the long-term need that the experts have been warning about for a long time now. The 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) no longer responds to the dramatic changes we have witnessed in the international security environment during the last decade. Analyses and proposals are currently being developed[1], and as we have seen so far, the new concept draws on the notion of a 'great strategy' to set the ground for concrete implementing strategies, policies, doctrines, plans, and programmes. In view of the fundamental changes within and outside the EU, the new strategy should be new not only as regards the contents, but also in terms of the basic assumptions.

> *The EU should become increasingly recognized as a pillar of member states national security, complementary to NATO. This involves mainly the political and economic capabilities, and the non-military dimensions of security (information, energy, cyber and anti-terrorist security). The complementarity of both pillars of security, i.e. EU and NATO, is of paramount importance (i.e. attempts to build Euro-Atlantic security tandem).*

Approach to formulating the strategy

It can be argued that a lasting international security system can only be built through shared interests since – in the time of trial – a community of values may prove a too volatile

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[1] Towards an EU global strategy – Background, process, references, ed. by Antonio Missiroli
http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/towards-an-eu-global-strategy-background-process-references/.

foundation. This is the basic lesson in security that can be learned from the recent international crises involving the EU, both internally and externally. Today, the strategic environment for international security is changing in dramatic ways. We have witnessed accelerated deregulation of the system dating back to the Cold War era (UN, NATO, OSCE). Relative stability is being gradually replaced by instability. The economic foundations of security have been shaky (financial crisis), new challenges and threats have been emerging (global terrorism, cyber threats, asymmetric power balance in nuclear security, hybrid war, migratory pressure, etc.) In other words, the situation is increasingly uncertain, and the risks are rising.
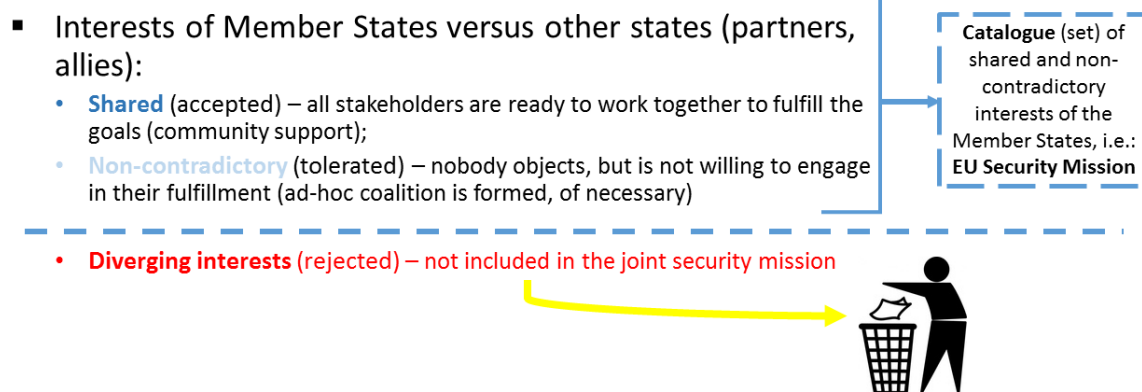
In conditions like these, there is a natural tendency to use a defence mechanism, to "fence oneself off from the outside world". Hardly anybody is looking far ahead, beyond the tactical and political horizon, which is a short-sighted approach. It is therefore no surprise that today, the decreasing level of trust between and among countries is becoming a major problem. It translates into continued weakening of the position and capacity of international organisations (EU, NATO, OSCE), whose operation is in its essence based on trust. This creates the risk of renationalisation of security policies of individual states.

Solid strongholds are necessary in order to have sufficient capacity to operate in these conditions of insecurity. It is no longer sufficient to evoke the idealistic and righteous notions of trust or solidarity, or 'the community of values'. In terms of security, existence, and survival, the real and concrete interests are at the core. In building international security, shared values must be underpinned by something more tangible. There must be shared interests identified as common for and shared by all members of a community. It is perfectly normal that individual national interests are voiced and promoted. In fact, it all boils down to finding shared or at least non-contradictory goals around which our efforts and resources can be focused. The essential task is to identify a catalogue of interests that are common and noncontradictory for all members of a community.

Note that national interests of individual countries can be recognised either as common (converging, shared), noncontradictory, or conflicting with the interests of other members of a community (or an alliance). Shared interests can be fully accepted by other partner countries (allies), and the allied countries may readily declare their full involvement in pursuing these goals. Whenever noncontradictory interests are at stake, the allied countries

may tolerate them in political terms, but should not be expected to proactively pursue them. Finally, diverging interests will not become a part of a joint mission and must be rejected.

Defining EU strategic mission as an amalgam of national interests of individual Member States

- Interests of Member States versus other states (partners, allies):
  - **Shared** (accepted) – all stakeholders are ready to work together to fulfill the goals (community support);
  - Non-contradictory (tolerated) – nobody objects, but is not willing to engage in their fulfillment (ad-hoc coalition is formed, of necessary)

  - **Diverging interests** (rejected) – not included in the joint security mission

Catalogue (set) of shared and non-contradictory interests of the Member States, i.e.: **EU Security Mission**

Both converging and non-contradictory interests may become the cornerstones of the strategic security mission of the EU. A strategy that relies on shared interests is the best and the only feasible strategy in these uncertain times that can become successful.

What should be the main focus of the European security strategy?

The question arises as to what to include in the new European security strategy. Each strategy should accommodate four main components: strategic interests and goals of the operator of the strategy (or the mission of an organisation if a multi-stakeholder strategy is at stake, in this case, the EU); evaluation and prognosis of strategic conditions (security environment) setting the framework for implementation of the interests and goals in question (the mission); operational strategy – or the strategic action concept to accomplish the agreed goals in the foreseeable conditions, and the preparedness strategy concept of preparing assets and resources to implement the necessary actions (in other words: the concept of preparing and maintaining a security system for successful execution of the operational strategy).

I Security mission of the European Union

The real security mission of the European Union is an amalgam of shared and non-contradictory national interests of the Member States and the resulting strategic goals of the Community. Within this broad mission statement, the following goals and tactical tasks are incorporated:

▪ Mutual support between the Member States in any and all activities undertaken for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, mainly in the political and economic sense and in other non-military dimensions and sectors related to security, and – if mutually agreed upon by the Member States – in the military area;

▪ Cooperation for reinforcing shared and individual capabilities of the Member States towards ensuring security;

▪ Taking concrete action to ensure that the citizens of the Member States live in freedom and security and are free to exercise human rights and civil liberties within the EU territory and elsewhere, without compromising the security of other individuals and the security of the Member States;

▪ Assistance in individual protection of citizens and collective protection of population against accidental and intentional threats to their life and health as well as against any violation, loss or degradation of the assets at their disposal;

▪ Joint action for protection and provision of sustainable social (e.g. the problem of migration) and economic development (energy security) of the EU Member States.

II Evaluation of the security environment

The security environment should be approached from three different levels: global, regional, and intra-European, taking into account the risks, challenges, and opportunities.

a) The following major determinants of risks can be recognised for the coming years:

▪ Global competition among superpowers for leadership and the shape of the new global governance;

▪ Regional conflicts involving key global players, especially in the Arc of Instability stretching from North Africa into the Middle East to parts of Southeast Asia;

- The consequences of confrontational Russian policy and the prolonged neo-Cold-War stand-off between Russia and the West and the resulting political and strategic pressure related to hybrid war on the EU Member States, causing disruption in integration processes and affecting the willingness and capacity of the Member States to act together;

- Transnational threats, including cyber threats, proliferation of weapons of means destruction and their mass of delivery, organised crime, including various forms of intra-European terrorism (such as terrorism feeding on religious fundamentalism, anarchism, or separatism).

b) The following challenges emerge:

- Maintaining a rational approach to risks related to the negative consequences of globalisation as well as information and bio-tech revolution;

- Being prepared to effectively tackle the current security crisis in Europe, and the erosion of nuclear and conventional agreements on arms control, including the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and Treaty on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF Treaty);

- Challenges arising out of internal EU crisis, including the need to keep Europe's integrity in the face of compromised integration processes (against the background of Russia's intelligence pressure, migration crisis, financial crisis, energy policy, etc.)

c) Security-related opportunities for the EU can be seen in:

- Trans-Atlantic cooperation, including EU-NATO cooperation and cooperation with China and peaceful uses of common global resources (such as the oceans, air space, outer space, and cyberspace);

- Maintaining EU's attractiveness for the neighbouring states, supporting democratic political changes and opening up new trade and investment markets around Europe;

- Reintroduction of realistic strategic thinking, promoting the empowerment of the EU strategy in security practices.

III Operational strategy

The following strategic priorities in security-related operations of the EU can be identified:

- Deterrence and containment, i.e. maintaining and demonstrating political unity, determination, capability, and readiness to act within the agreed security areas;

- Promoting and consolidating international security community, especially through the Common Security and Defence Policy, common European energy security, information security, and cyber security, as well as cooperation with NATO, and the enhancement of strategic partnerships, with a focus on the partnership with the US;

- Support of and involvement in international security operations, including coordinated action by the international community to avert security crises or prevent them from spreading.

The EU may engage in the following types of strategic actions for security:

- Working to stabilize the security environment by promoting and extending security cooperation within and outside the EU in non-military dimensions, with a focus on the energy sector, information security, and cyber security, and – within the framework of prior or ad-hoc agreements – in the military area.

- Crisis response actions – mutual support in monitoring, information sharing, containment and management of military emergency situations, especially in terms of energy, information or cyber crises, as well as those caused by natural disasters and technical failures; concerted response to conflicts and emergencies outside the EU compromising the interests of the joint EU missions;

- Defensive actions – mutual support and enforcement of the principles of the Lisbon Treaty in the area of deterrence and containment of aggression, including hybrid aggression, especially in its non-military dimension (cyber-defence, information operations, counter-terrorism, etc.)

IV Preparedness strategy

The EU preparations to take security actions should primarily be focused on the following priorities:

- Streamlining the operation of the EU institutions responsible for security coordination and management;

- Developing defence and protection capabilities of the EU Member States, including by setting up a pan-European system for energy security, information security, and cyber-security.

- Promoting the security issues across the EU by awareness-building campaigns and education.

Maintaining and transforming the European security system requires the following preparatory measures:

- Improving the existing groundwork and establishing a sound basis for cooperation within the framework of EU security coordination and management system, for example by setting up an effective strategic planning system;

- Enhancing European capabilities concerning defence and other security dimensions, including by means of strategically oriented scientific, technological, and industrial cooperation among the EU Member States;

- Consolidating the European area of freedom, security, and justice;

- Developing the capabilities of individual Member States to provide intelligence, social, and economic support for the European security agenda.

the "Great EU Strategy" drawn up to address the discussed issues can become the basis and a starting point for developing and accepting the next round of strategic papers (implementing policies, doctrines, plans, programmes).

Conclusions and recommendations

1.   The EU is at a critical juncture: it must take action and adopt a strategic approach to the security issues, or it will otherwise lose its position as an important actor in this area.

2.   The summit meeting in June dedicated to the Common Security and Defence Policy is a perfect opportunity to start the process of strategic development of the European security in the radically changed international environment (a crisis in the east and in the south) and internal circumstances (internal crisis of EU's cohesion).

3.   To take advantage of this opportunity, the new strategy should be reality-based rather than wishful thinking. This implies a strategy devised on the basis of mutually acceptable (shared and non-contradictory) national interests of the EU Member States instead of invoking shared values only.

4.   The EU should become increasingly recognized as a pillar of member states national security, complementary to NATO. This involves mainly the political and economic capabilities, and the non-military dimensions of security (information, energy, cyber and anti-terrorist security). The complementarity of both pillars of security, i.e. EU and NATO, is of paramount importance (i.e. attempts to build Euro-Atlantic security tandem).

5.   EU member states should seek to make it as realistic as possible, taking into account the differences in the interests, in order to ensure the necessary cohesion within and outside the EU, to the extent possible.

6.   Establishing measures to implement the Strategy in a joint effort will be particularly complicated and difficult. There is a good chance that solid foundations for the Strategy will be laid; but it is implementation that should be the focus of EU institutions and member states efforts following the summit meeting while working towards implementing the conclusions reached.

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The Casimir Pulaski Foundation is an independent, non-partisan think-tank specializing in foreign policy and international security. The Pulaski Foundation provides analyses that describe and explain international developments, identify trends in international environment, and contain possible recommendations and solutions for government decision makers and private sector managers to implement.

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