

The ESDP – The Challenges Ahead

Discussion Paper

Gunilla Herolf and Udo Diedrichs

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Introduction

The ESDP as it looks today has undergone impressive development in the course of only a few years. The EU members have agreed on several basic steps, such as the Berlin Plus arrangement of December 2002, the European Security Strategy (ESS) of December 2003, and the Headline Goal 2010 of June 2004. The Constitutional Treaty, signed by the heads of state and government in October 2004, also represents a major milestone for the ESDP as it introduces a number of innovations and opportunities which will further boost the process of European security and defence integration. Even if the process of ratification of the Constitutional Treaty should fail, some major reforms – like the creation of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and of battle groups – will not be reversed.

In addition, the ESDP can point to a number of activities undertaken, including the first military mission— Operation Concordia in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), starting in March 2003, later to be replaced by the police mission Proxima. Others include Operation Artemis in Bunia in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a peace enforcement mission initiated in June 2003; and the continuation of NATO's Stabilization Force (SFOR), EUFOR-ALTHEA, in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2004. The latter is by far the most ambitious operation so far. Among civilian missions are the EU-JUST THEMIS in Georgia and a police mission in the DRC, EUPOL-KINSHASA.

In many ways the development can be seen as advancing on a learning curve—not least in terms of the coordination between military and civilian crisis management tasks, which are now widely regarded as necessary and complementary components of the ESDP. The adoption of the Civilian Headline Goal in December 2004 underlines the importance of the civilian dimension alongside the military dimensions and puts the emphasis on the need to look for long-term solutions in crisis management.

On the other hand, despite the strengthening of the institutional and procedural set-up, how far these new possibilities are used will largely depend on the political will of the member states. The gap between the concrete goals and the existing military and technical capabilities is still considerable. The heterogeneity of the Union has increased with every new enlargement. In terms of political leadership new arrangements are now required to replace the old Franco-German engine in order to ensure both efficiency and cohesion and provide for a fresh impetus and a new dynamics in the ESDP.

The focus of this discussion will be on the challenges ahead. While the EU has made crucial decisions on common threats and on designing ways of dealing with them, some crucial aspects of the ESDP are still to be decided. The discussion in the plenary will focus on some vital challenges: the future aims of the ESDP and how the ESDP can find the means to fulfil these aims.

The Aims of the ESDP

The Global Level

The ESDP can be seen as acting on three different levels: the global level, the regional level and the level of the present member states. For all these three levels different decisions will have to be taken as to what aims the ESDP should have.

The EU may act globally for several reasons.

One motive may rest on its feeling of responsibility towards its global external environment. The EU is a comparatively wealthy and influential region, with more than 450 million inhabitants. It is not unreasonable to expect that it should take greater responsibility for the world in creating stability and projecting its own norms.

Such thoughts are reflected in the Constitution. Its Article 1-3 declares:

“In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.”¹

The European Security Strategy (ESS) in the same vein describes the EU as “inevitably a global player”. Europe should be ready to “share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world”.²

A second motive for engagement on a global level is that of countering threats. Here distant threats may be just as much a concern as those near at hand, and defence against them may sometimes be undertaken far away from the home country.³ The ESS is specific on some aspects: it pinpoints some of the key strategic threats: terrorism and weapons of mass destruction are among them. Other priorities have been given as well: Africa is often mentioned as an important region for the ESDP and at the Munich Security Conference of February 2005 Javier Solana drew attention to the need to tackle the problems of Iraq and Iran.⁴

Third, *further motives* also exist, albeit not on the same constant or general level. One of them is that of the EU seeking to project itself as a global power vis-à-vis the United States.

Looking at the individual countries of the EU there is a wide spectrum of strategies towards the US, but there can be no doubt that, irrespective of individual national political perceptions, the mere progress of the ESDP will have an impact on relations with the US. In addition it will be crucial to see which longer-term impact the Iraq crisis will have upon the EU countries and their will to present themselves as a coherent force in the international system.

¹ EU Security and Defence, Core Documents 2004, Volume V, Chaillot Paper, no. 75, February 2005, p. 373.

² *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ “Summary Intervention by Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy”, *Munich Conference on Security Policy*, 11-13 February 2005.

A *fourth motive* seems on the other hand to be more general. This is that of the EU seeking to accomplish policy objectives that the US or other international powers or organizations are unable or unwilling to pursue, or which in the EU view are not handled appropriately. Examples of the first were the activities related to the Middle East as the new US administration in 2001 was perceived as inactive. An example of the latter is the present policy vis-à-vis Iran.

All or several of these motives may exist at the same time. Still outstanding, however, are the issues of establishing some *guidelines* and some *geographical priorities*, as well as *level of ambition*, for European, and in this case ESDP, engagement on a global level. While the formulations used are demanding in terms of the behaviour that the EU requires of itself, it does not specify in more detail what the Union should aim to accomplish vis-à-vis the world outside the Union.

On one point, however, a further guideline is supplied, and this concerns *multilateralism*. According to the ESS, our security and prosperity depend increasingly on an effective multilateral system. “The development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective”.⁵

Multilateralism is seen to be in Europe’s interest as well as that of others. It also conveys a message to the rest of the world in terms of international legitimacy and accountability, and underlines the EU’s intention of using violence only as a last resort, relying basically upon a strategy that could be labelled as non-aggressive.⁶ It may, however, also prove to be very complicated. Similarity of views on which the threats are need not mean that there are similar views on how to meet these threats. A crucial question is whether Europe can pursue a common policy with the US on certain issues, such as terrorism and the fight against nuclear proliferation, while at the same that time their views on the suitable means are very different.⁷ Thus, agreement on strategic objectives and on strategies are two different cups of tea, and it seems that it is the latter aspect where transatlantic disagreement will probably be high in the future.

Relations in the transatlantic context are still crucial, in particular with the US and NATO. The recent discussion about the strategic orientation of NATO, triggered off by German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, has highlighted the fact that NATO is in a situation rather like that of the ESDP—still in search of a strategic role. Paradoxically, however, the ESDP seems to have reached a stage of considerable consolidation in the last few years, while NATO cannot be sure about when the transatlantic rift that has appeared during the Iraq crisis will be overcome.

The future role of the EU in relation to the United Nations is unclear as well. The agreement adopted by the European Council in June 2004 outlines several possibilities for such relationships, which are to be further elaborated. Two main options can be identified. One of them is the provision of national military capabilities in the framework of a UN operation, and the other is an EU operation in response to a request from the UN.⁸

⁵ *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003.*

⁶ See Ortega, M., “Conclusion, Region-Building in Europe and Across the World” in Ortega, M. (ed.), *Global Views on the European Union*, Chaillot Paper, no. 72, November 2004, p. 119.

⁷ Cameron, F., and Quille, G., *ESDP: The State of Play*, EPC Working Paper no. 11, September 2004, p. 8.

⁸ *EU–UN Co-Operation in Military Crisis Management Operations. Elements of Implementation of the EU-UN Joint Declaration*, Adopted by the European Council (17-18 June 2004). A variety of combinations of roles are

The Regional Level

The question of aims and necessary choices should also be raised in terms of the regional level. Here one relevant question is which countries are likely to be candidates for EU membership at some time in the future and which countries are not. Two basic strategies are at hand: expansion (enlargement) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). In general terms, however, the EU neighbourhood is highly heterogeneous. For the Balkans, with the prospect of eventual EU membership, the situation is different from that of the southern Mediterranean countries, some eastern countries, including the Caucasus, and the Middle East. Additionally, the strategic decisions taken by the EU in the neighbouring countries is an increasingly important factor to be taken into account: Turkey and Ukraine are two cases in point. Both would prefer membership of the Union to relations based on close external contacts. Decisions regarding Ukraine in particular could have a potentially devastating effect by weakening the impact of the whole ENP process if others would see themselves as “the residual” when watching Ukraine advance to candidate status.

The ESS emphasizes the threats which, while seen as relevant on a global level as well, are even more relevant for the EU when they arise from its neighbourhood, since they will then have direct effects on EU member states. The impacts of regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime described in the ESS are all closely connected to each other, and the way in which the EU can meet them and the effects of its policies will be highly dependent on how people perceive the EU’s overall relationship to the countries in question in the future.

Russia for the foreseeable future remains a particular kind of entity for the EU, and Russian commentators often deplore the lack of an EU strategy vis-à-vis their country.⁹ While its size and location make the possibility of eventual EU membership complicated, no stability can be achieved in Europe without Russia being at ease with its relationship to Western Europe and forming a part of an overarching European structure in security and defence. At the same time European states cannot compromise over their support for democratic institutions and free elections in the former Soviet republics. Future tensions with Russia could be the result, further aggravated by the perception in Moscow that ENP or membership offers are part of an aggressive approach by the EU to minimize Russian influence in Eastern Europe.

The EU Member States

A third level is that of the EU member states. While territorial defence remains as a task, the threats that the ESS sees as currently most crucial are of another character. Terrorism, as well as weapons of mass destruction, will harm people in ways that make other countermeasures more important than military forces. The boundaries between external and internal security

envisaged in the document. One of them is that the EU could establish a “clearing house process” in which member states could, on a voluntary basis, exchange information on their contributions to a given UN operation and, if they so decide, coordinate these national contributions. When establishing an EU operation in support of the UN the Union could either pursue this as a stand-alone operation or take responsibility for a specific component within the structure of a UN mission (a so called “modular approach”). Two types of rapid response operations are considered, (a) the “bridging model”, providing the UN with time to mount a new operation or to reorganize an existing one (for example, Operation Artemis in the DRC); and (b) the “standby model” which calls for immediate reaction and is therefore very demanding.

⁹ See, for example, Arbatova, N., “Europe: How Wide? How Deep? – A Russian View”, in *Europe: How Wide? How Deep? Challenge Europe*, Issue 12, October 2004, European Policy Centre (EPC).

are becoming blurred, and so far the approaches adopted to deal with this more complex security situation have not been entirely convincing.

There is also the question what demands the citizens of the EU member states will have on the ESDP. While within the area of security and defence the governments of member states are usually the representatives of their populations, governments also need to give consideration to the way in which their voters perceive the security situation.

This means that the ESDP must be relevant for and satisfy the wishes of the European peoples in their search for stability and security. What are their wishes? Is it possible that in the future, with populations that are sometimes quite sceptical about the EU/ESDP, the priorities of the electorate – not least when given added push by the media – will influence the choices made more than they do today? Such influence, if it takes place, may go in different directions. It may lead to more emphasis on disaster relief in foreign countries as people take in the sufferings in Sudan as well as those of the tsunami victims in the countries of the region affected. It may also lead to increased crisis management capabilities in the civilian sphere for EU members themselves as people see the most likely threat to themselves as coming from such sources as the tsunami.

The Capabilities

How will the EU acquire the capabilities necessary to fulfil the aims and the priorities that it chooses? The European Headline Goal 2010, the EU battle groups, the civil–military cell and the EDA could together lead to a new stage in development, emphasizing the qualitative dimension of capability improvement. The key element of the Headline Goal 2010 is to acquire the ability to deploy force packages at high readiness in response to a crisis either as a stand-alone force or as part of a larger operation enabling follow-on phases. The situation today, however, is that we are offering a great deal but in doing this we are creating overcapacity in some capabilities, while we are lacking in others in comparison with the concrete goals that have been set up.

So far, it is difficult to say where the most serious capability gaps exist. Depending on the choice of geographical scope and the type of peacekeeping operations, different kinds of support are needed, since missions taking place far away from Europe will require more in terms of transport capabilities and logistical support. Peace enforcement needs other kinds of military forces, preparation and resources than peacekeeping in more benign environments. If we are envisaging long-term engagements we will have to look at other means than if we believe that the problems can be solved within a shorter time frame. A decision to enlarge the Union to include new countries will create other kinds of burdens – primarily economic and administrative ones – whereas decisions not to accept them as members could be a challenge for the ways in which the EU can support the countries in question by economic, security and other means. For the EU's own citizens the choice of capabilities will also be seen as allocation of taxpayers' money.

Other decisions, for example as regards the types of capability are related to the profile sought on a global or regional level. The choices on which weapons to select depend on the division of labour in the international environment in which the EU will be engaged together with other nations and organizations. This means that at times politically difficult choices will also have to be made – between a certain capability that will make the EU highly visible, and a

less visible one within an area in which the EU performs better than others and will therefore be better suited to meet the requirements of the crisis at hand.

Above all the challenge for the build-up of the capabilities will be the surprise element of the tasks. The EU will need to be prepared for a variety of tasks across a wide geographical area, involving a complex constellation of means, envisaged for a variety of time perspectives, all of which may be unknown until a particular event makes rapid involvement necessary.

How Do We Handle the Challenges?

In a situation in which a range of hard and complicated decisions have to be made, the EU needs to be both efficient and cohesive. The questions are therefore how far the old and the new EU members can count on a number of common aims and objectives, whether there is sufficient readiness for mobilizing resources and means, and whether the organizational design for the ESDP fits into a coherent and efficient framework which allows objectives to be translated into reality.

This means that there has to be a good balance between the actions of the Commission, the Council and the member states. In addition, there has to be a way to encourage the population of the EU countries, whether enthusiasts or critics, to identify with the EU's efforts to fulfil its goals within the ESDP. Even at this stage the way in which most people perceive European challenges is filtered through the lens of their own country rather than being seen as a challenge for Europe or the EU as a whole.

What can the ESDP accomplish that is discerned as European rather than based on the individual countries? Conflict resolution in Macedonia in the spring of 2001 stands out as an excellent example of cooperation in which countries and institutions (NATO, the EU, the OSCE and the UN) contributed with their particular strengths and in the interests of resolving the acute crisis while also preparing for future stability. No particular country can take credit for it but all can pride themselves on having abstained from pursuing their own way at the expense of others.

The Macedonian conflict resolution took place after we had seen the opposite taking place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It stands out as an example of what can be achieved when the EU and its member states, together with the US and a series of institutions, pool their resources to tackle particular problems on a basis of common values and in full unity as to the framework of action. In this way it stands out as a model for the EU and the international society as a whole for the future.