

Conflict & Security

The EU's Soft Power

Not Hard Enough?

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In June 2003, at the Thessaloniki Council in Greece, the European Union approved "A Secure Europe in a Better World," the first draft of a genuine, Union-wide security strategy. For the first time, an organization of twenty-five countries agreed to set up foreign policy objectives together. European integration has created a postmodern system featuring a genuine democratic peace, an emerging institutional order, and an increasingly "amalgamated security community."¹ The production of a document to tackle Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) demonstrates the nascent, yet growing, security ties between Union members. With this document, the EU comprehensively addresses both the CFSP's internal purpose and external dimension. The reasons behind this awakening are two-fold: first, the recognition after the Iraq crisis that the Union, when divided, is powerless; and second, the acknowledgment that, with the imminent official entry of ten new members, the Union can not turn its back on the world around it.

A New America, A New Europe. For years, the United States enjoyed the recurring privilege of isolation from the tragedy of power politics. After 9/11, the United States rediscovered a real and dangerous world. George W. Bush, in contrast to his Cold War predecessors, favored a unilateralist

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approach to tackle the new challenge of international terrorism. This American willingness to move without the support of traditional allies precipitated the present transatlantic divide. Bush's unilateral tone and the global scope of the "war on terror" led to divergent security perceptions and interests across the Atlantic. The gap between an increas-

for the EU. If it had set out its own definition of a "material breach" of Resolution 1441, specified the conditions under which force might be used, and laid down a precise timetable for action, it would have been able to foresee events and to strengthen its position in Washington. Instead, the Union's attitude was essentially reactive: EU foreign

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ingly revisionist United States and a status quo Europe took a dramatic turn with Iraq, and deeply cut across Europe as member states were discussing a new draft of the constitution aimed at bringing more cohesion to European affairs, including foreign policy.²

Unlike the United States, which cited disarmament and potential links to terrorism as the strategic motives behind their objective of regime change, most Europeans focused on current capabilities and disregarded past behavior when analyzing the threat posed by Iraq.³ Consequently, they did not support regime change by force. Precisely because Iraq was a war of choice, not of necessity, and because victory was preordained, the subject of debate evolved rapidly from this particular circumstance to a discussion on general principles, from Saddam's disarmament to Washington's use of force, from the opportunity for a second UN resolution to the relevance of the UN itself, and from a specific demand of assistance by Turkey to NATO's *raison d'être*.

This represented too high a challenge

ministers decided to hand over the Iraq affair to the UN without addressing the strategic case. By doing so, they gave a free hand to the permanent European members of the Security Council, France and Great Britain, the two countries with the most contrasting views vis-à-vis the United States. Not surprisingly, London and Paris decided to focus on UN legitimacy, ignoring the European framework. In this configuration, the Union became irrelevant.

This painful reality contrasted with the ambition expressed at the EU Constitutional Convention for a more substantial EU role in foreign and security policies. The Convention, launched in 2002, sought to prepare for the consequences of the entry of ten new members in 2004. Building a consensus among twenty-five states could lead the Union into further delay, confusion, and inaction; but the Convention envisaged several ways to avoid these pitfalls. First, it proposed the possibility of "structured" cooperation, whereby several countries wanting to deepen their security relationship could do so without Union-wide

consensus. In other words, if Germany and France wanted to set up a joint capacity to plan and conduct military operations, they would be allowed to do so, even if other members refused to join.⁴ The Conference's most visible innovation rested in the creation of an EU Minister of Foreign Affairs position to coordinate policies and represent the Union abroad. This ambition for a more cohesive and active Europe in the foreign and security spheres contrasted heavily with the divisions during the Iraq crisis. Nonetheless, public opinion throughout Europe widely supported this aspiration. A majority of EU citizens constantly regret the discrepancy between the weight of the Union in economic and financial affairs and its absence in world politics. The Iraq crisis demonstrated the necessity of a common strategy for the Union.

Soft Power Plus. The opening premise of "A Secure Europe in a Better World" is the recognition that "the European Union is, *like it or not*, a global actor; it should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security."⁵ The Union can no longer ignore this strategic dimension; the tragedy of Bosnia and the poor performance of EU capabilities in Kosovo demonstrate this. However, this ambition now goes beyond increasing crisis-management capabilities to drafting a comprehensive security strategy. Written by Javier Solana, the High Representative for CFSP, the document—provisional until the release of a definitive version at the Rome Council at the end of the year—has two significant characteristics.

First, in a completely new way for the EU, the Solana document is a threat-driven paper; it identified three major

threats to Union security: international terrorism, WMD proliferation, and failed states. The Union recognizes that the first line of defense lies abroad for all three. If this analysis sounds familiar compared to the *U.S. National Security Strategy* of September 2002, the message to Washington is in fact seriously nuanced. First, Europe is at peace, not at war. Although the possibility of a terrorist attack against the Union is duly underlined, the document is not a call to arms or an appeal for homeland defense. Second, if the security threats are similar, their management is not. In the Union's view, addressing these threats cannot be limited to military force: the Union intends to take a broader approach, combining the political and the economic, the civil and the military. There is no effective solution for terrorism that is not global in scope. Strengthening international regimes and progressive conditionality remains the best method to counter both proliferation and terrorism. Without excluding the use of force, the Union clearly rejects the strategy of a preventive strike.⁶ Lastly, while the Union recognizes that "failed" or failing states—not "rogue," a category that does not exist in EU terminology—are a major source of instability, it advocates the extension of good governance rather than regime change. From a similar analysis of the post-9/11 environment stems a more diversified and comprehensive strategy. The world is indeed more dangerous for the Union, but it is also more complex.

Second, the strategy builds on the Union's capital and identity by extending the zone of security around Europe, strengthening international order, and countering the aforementioned threats. It focuses on two key concepts: "pre-

emptive engagement” and “effective multilateralism.” The first refers to the Union’s approach to stability and nation-building that, unlike Washington’s, includes police personnel, civil administration and civil protection officials,

The second concept, “effective multilateralism,” captures the essence of the Union’s rule-based security culture, stressing that “the fundamental framework for international relations is the United Nations Charter. Strengthening

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civilian authorities, and justice officers to strengthen the rule of law. The Union has now enlarged the application of this specific approach to include neighboring countries like Moldova, Ukraine, and Belarus. This, in turn, demands a new strategic partnership with Russia, which remains an indispensable actor in the region as the Kosovo conflict demonstrated. European Commission President Romano Prodi has set a vision of the EU offering its neighbors “everything but institutions.” The Union aims to promote the emergence of a “ring of friends” across Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, bound by shared values, open markets and borders, and enhanced cooperation in research, transport, energy, conflict prevention, and law enforcement.⁷ This strategy of “preemptive engagement” encapsulates the European way of dealing with instability that includes rapid deployment of troops, humanitarian assistance, policing operations, enhancement of the rule of law, and economic aid. Therein lie the Union’s added value and specific know-how, a dimension lacking in the U.S. arsenal where, as Condoleezza Rice once said, 82nd Airborne soldiers are not supposed to help kids go to kindergarten. This U.S. weakness is Europe’s strength.

the United Nations, equipping it to fulfill its responsibilities and to act effectively, must be a European priority.” The Union is keen to stress the core fundamental values of sovereignty and collective action, because the true meaning of international norms and rules lies in the definition of what is and what is not permissible in the international arena. The Union reaffirms that the UN Security Council should remain the forum for legitimizing the use of force, but recognizes that rules need enforcement. The “effectiveness” element implies that in emergency situations immediate actions are not always compatible with a formal application of international public law. The Kosovo precedent and the Iraq preventive war are the unwritten references of what is allowed and what is not.

Both “preemptive engagement” and “effective multilateralism” are by nature elusive notions that will receive more precise definition in concrete situations. They represent nonetheless a significant departure from a civilian-only Union: the use of force, albeit as a last resort, is deemed necessary in specific circumstances. This message, soft power plus, should be welcomed by Washington.

Responding to Challenges.

Drafting a common strategy raises numerous challenges: to reach an agreement sufficiently broad to include widely varying strategic traditions, but precise enough to become a motor of international action; to maintain credibility in the eyes of the major international actors, above all the United States; and to address the new threats without renouncing the Union's particular assets and identity. Judged upon these criteria, the Solana doctrine is a major success. However, tensions persist throughout the document.

The first point of contention relates to the precarious balance between realism and idealism. Of course, every foreign policy initiative contains elements of both, and much of the supposed antagonism between these two poles is fake. Nonetheless, for the Union these two dimensions represent national sensitivities. The risk of disagreements and divisions is real. For example, the deliberately vague notion of "preemptive engagement" runs the risk of clashing with UN orthodoxy. The word carries a message of a more proactive Europe, but, at the same time, a preventive strike like the Iraq war remains contrary to the philos-

new assertiveness of the Union regarding the Iranian nuclear program and the absence of any specific mention of a UN mandate in the document seem to indicate a pragmatic approach.

The second potential conflict concerns the Union as a global actor or regional power. For some European countries, especially the new members, the new threats cannot supercede the old ones like internal instability, ethnic conflict, civil wars, drug trafficking, and criminal networks. These risks must remain the priority of the Union. But for others, the EU security agenda must address the new environment, especially WMD and international terrorism. The hierarchy of priorities remains to be clarified. Behind this problem lies a deeper uncertainty about the ultimate borders of the Union. The enlargement of the EU has been a successful process, but the recent expansion begs a fundamental question: where will it end? If there is a willingness to shape a more active neighborhood policy, the scope of this strategy seems far-reaching. Ukraine, South Caucasus, and the Black Sea basin are now immediate neighbors. This tension between the EU as a regional stabilizer and the EU as a global

Strengthening the UN must be a European priority.

ophy of the Union. If humanitarian tasks are obvious examples of uncontroversial preemptive actions, it is less clear if preemption could be applied to WMD proliferation. Behind this potential confusion lies the old debate about the range of application of UN Article 51 and the elusive notion of immediate danger. The

actor stands out regarding Russia. The Union sees Moscow as an essential partner for effective policy in Moldova and Belarus; at the same time, Moscow's cooperation with Iran could become a serious problem. In any case, this policy will require serious security dialogue with Russia. Lastly, the paper remains

silent about the pressing issue of Turkey, while it underlines the threat that a country like North Korea could represent for the Union. With a moving border, the Union encounters difficulties

European interest in world affairs.

For actual operations, the Union relies on two specific methods. One is to implement the Berlin-Plus agreement, whereby the Union could use NATO

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in finding the right balance between its regional priorities and its global role.

The third tension refers to the definition of the Union as a genuine united actor or as a mere framework. With the ten new countries, seventy-five million people who have lived under Soviet domination now join the "old" Europe. A security doctrine for twenty-five countries with different, if not divergent, security cultures and heritages is indeed unique. Some members are still officially neutral; some have barely an army, while others have a nuclear deterrent and world influence. The sheer heterogeneity of the Union's members means that decisions in foreign policy will be extremely difficult to make. The Convention has proposed several ways to avoid the pitfalls of indecision and inaction, such as the creation of a Union Minister of Foreign Affairs and the possibility of "structured" cooperation in defense matters. Coordination of national interests is a prerequisite for the expression of a genuine European interest. The Solana document calls for the creation of a stronger EU diplomatic service to further this goal. This could lead to fundamental changes in the formulation of the Union's foreign policy. An epistemic and diplomatic community could more systematically enhance the identification and the pursuit of a truly

assets if the Alliance is not engaged as a whole. This was the case in Macedonia where the EU took over from NATO Operation Allied Harmony in March 2003. The other is to rely on a "lead" nation to provide the bulk of the means for an operation abroad and to coordinate other EU countries' efforts. This was implemented in operation Artemis in Africa last summer. In both cases, however, the Union, without the necessary capabilities of its own, is more a reference point than a genuine actor. There is no such thing as a European force that could be collectively mobilized. So far, the Union's foreign and security policy is nation-based. Since there is no majority ruling in CFSP and defense relies on very few countries, the Union remains more a moderator than a force on the ground.

Goals. Sharing more global responsibilities, enhancing an effective multilateralism, and taking on a preemptive engagement strategy are ambitious goals that will stay unfulfilled if the current inadequacy between ends and means persists. The security strategy demands a major improvement of the Union's capabilities. Paradoxically, the short-term effects of the Solana paper will be felt in the internal landscape of the Union rather than in the international

arena. Even though the Union is the world's largest provider of aid and contributes 40 percent of the UN budget, foreign and security policy at the EU level currently has a dramatically insufficient budget of 35 million euros. The bulk of the effort concerns the defense realm. The new ambition of the Union has serious operational implications. Implicit planning assumptions envisage a geographic radius for EU military crisis management of up to approximately 4,000 kilometers from Brussels. With an enlarged Union, the potential radius for purely humanitarian operations stretches up to 10,000 kilometers from Brussels.⁸ This has huge consequences in terms of projection and sustainability of forces. Several improvements must be addressed now in order to have an adequate defense tool ready in 2010.

The first urgent step is force transformation, meaning conversion from conscription to professional armies, and the adoption of network-centric warfare techniques that until now have been introduced only in Sweden and Great Britain, and partially in France. In any hostile environment, the risk of casualties remains too high. The Union must enhance the modernization of its capabilities in order to fight according to criteria demanded by modern democracies. Effective command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance are absolute requirements. Thus, incentives must be put in place for member states that will not dramatically increase their defense budgets; for instance, a European fund linked to the future Capabilities Agency could be established. Research and development activities must be better funded and coordinated because common procurement and common programs in

developing and maintaining capabilities could lead to rapid benefits. For this the Union has to improve spending, not just spend more.

The second priority is deployability. The Union has nearly two million men under arms; the member countries spend around 160 billion euros a year for defense. Yet, the Union barely has the means to deploy 10 percent of these troops. At Helsinki in December 1999, the Union defined its Headline Goal objectives. The aim was to put at the Union's disposal forces capable of carrying out all the Petersberg missions, in operations up to army corps level, i.e. 50–60,000 troops. This target was supposed to be met by the end of this year. However, with a far more ambitious security framework, this deadline seems obsolete. Member states should commit far more troops. The Union and the Helsinki catalogue must be enlarged. Most importantly, severe shortfalls persist: strategic transport, air-to-air refueling, air-ground surveillance, all-weather strategic theater surveillance capabilities, combat search and rescue, electronic intelligence, and precision guided munitions. The Union effort has to move from the quantitative to the qualitative.

Thirdly, improvement in planning is necessary. A permanent planning cell at the Union level with a better understanding of forces at their disposal is necessary. This does not mean an anti-NATO Europe. It is part of what has been called "constructive duplication."⁹ Moreover, since European military operations do exist, a common doctrine should back them.

Fourth, even in the civilian area of operations, capabilities must be improved. EU operations have so far been limited to police actions, like in Bosnia.

However, a preemptive engagement strategy will need to bring in border guards, civil administrators, home and justice affairs officials, and NGO experts. This will require cooperation between the Council and the Commission, collaboration between the EU Military Staff and civilian officials and, most importantly, common planning. Logically, this would culminate in the development of more comprehensive forces packages of rapidly deployable civilian personnel and equipment. The Union is rightly proud of its achievements in stabilizing the Balkans. Enlarging the scope of this policy to remote areas like Ukraine or the South Caucasus, will demand major efforts. Soft power cannot be practiced on the cheap.

Behind a European defense policy lies a fundamental question: are European countries friends forever? If the answer is yes, there should be no difficulty in implementing horizontal specialization among member states whereby respective niche capabilities could become collective assets. The obvious reluctance to proceed along that road means that national security remains the ultimate criterion.

Conclusion. The Solana document recognizes that the privileges of the post-modern world are not shared elsewhere, and that to protect and project stability, soft power may not be enough. This in turn requires a European revolution in military affairs. The European security strategy opens the road to a more responsible Europe in the realm of global security. Yet, the Union is not a nation-state. If there were a precedent to this historic document, it would be George Washington's 1796 Farewell Address. Then, as now, the ultimate challenge was to foster unity among member states. The genius of George Washington was to combine idealistic ambitions and power necessities. The challenge for Europe is similar: to develop a world role that combines European values and interests. But unlike the young American republic, which could adopt a policy of benevolent neutrality, Europe has no such geographic advantage. The international environment will sooner rather than later require that this new ambition be met. The credibility of the Union is now at stake.

NOTES

1 The term was first coined by Karl Deutsch, *Political Community at the International Level: Problems of Definition and Measurement* (Princeton: Foreign Policy Analysis Series no. 2, 1953), 1–25. It was subsequently developed in Karl Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the light of Historical Experience* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

2 The term revisionist is not pejorative. It depicts the reality of the current international system. The term was first used by Hans Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946). For further developments on this notion, see Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration, Essays in International Politics* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 81–102.

3 If governments did align differently, public opinion throughout Europe was largely opposed to the war.

4 This of course refers to the Summit between Belgium, Luxembourg, France, and Germany on 29 April, 2003 where the four countries declared their

intention to set up such joint capability. In their declaration, it is stated that "Dans le souci d'améliorer les capacités de commandement et de contrôle disponibles tant pour l'Union européenne que pour l'OTAN, les quatre Ministres de la Défense entreprendront les démarches nécessaires en vue d'établir, pour l'année 2004 au plus tard, un quartier-général multinational déployable pour des opérations conjointes et qui serait basé sur des quartiers-généraux déployables existants." This triggered fierce hostility in Washington and London. However, Prime Minister T. Blair has basically agreed to an independent HQ inside ESDP infrastructure. The text is available at <http://www.diplomatie.be/fr/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=6279>.

5 Javier Solana, "A Secure Europe in a Better World," Internet, <http://ue.eu.int/pressdata/EN/reports/76255.pdf> (Date Accessed: 24 November 2003)

6 In a declaration agreed in May, the Union has

set up its strategy vis-à-vis WMD proliferation: "Political and diplomatic preventative measures (multilateral treaties and export control regimes) and resort to the competent international organizations (IAEA, OPCW, etc.) form the first line of defence. When these measures (including political dialogue and diplomatic pressure) have failed, coercive measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter and international law (sanctions, selective or global, interceptions of shipments and, as appropriate, the use of force) could be envisioned. The UN Security Council should play a central role." Available at

<http://ue.eu.int/pressdata/EN/reports/76328.pdf>.

7 See the Commission Communication of March 2003, *Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*.

8 Such planning assumptions were first formulated at the informal meeting of EU Defence ministers at Sintra, Portugal, on 28 February 2000. However, they do not yet constitute an official EU 'doctrine' nor are in any way binding politically.

9 See Schake Kori, "Constructive Duplication: Reducing EU Reliance on US Military Assets," (London: Center for European Reform, 2002).