

Chapter 12

Enlarging Europe's Strategic Vision

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Security and Strategy have Long Been an Afterthought in Europe

The idea of Europe may have originally been conceived to make conflict impossible among its members, but it has evolved largely out of economic and political thinking. Security has in many ways been an afterthought.¹ Reform of EU governance, enlargement to the east,² and completion of the euro-currency zone have all taken precedence over security issues, and until recently, the European security debate has been focused on institutional progress.

This remains true in 2005, despite the progress made since 1999. Five years after the Franco-British declaration at Saint Malo and the adoption of a European security and defense policy, the European Union can argue that it has a military committee, a military staff, an armaments agency, a solidarity clause in the event of a terrorist attack and, last but not least, is—or has been—involved in a number of actual operations abroad, including Macedonia and Congo in 2003, and assuming leadership over peacekeeping in Bosnia in 2004. But regardless of the titles of the documents produced in Brussels, the EU appears unable to present a true strategy. For example, although terrorism is recognized as a major threat, there is no recommendation concerning civil defense in the European Security Strategy. Security is still a divisive issue, particularly regarding matters as important as the Alliance or division of military roles between the U.S. and the EU. The most spectacular progress made after the single currency may

¹ The first attempt at defense integration dates back the early 1950s but the project was ruined almost immediately and defense was a taboo subject for almost 50 years. The Balkans wars, erupting at the gates of the European Union, played the most important role in the revival of the subject.

² On May 1, 2004, the European Union welcomed ten new members: Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

well be security and defense policy, but the most important debates within Europe are still political and institutional rather than strategic. The debate over the draft European constitution that is intended to replace the founding treaties of Rome and Nice³ and the debate over Turkey's admission to the EU far exceed any discussion of security matters.⁴

It took the decade-long Balkan wars, more than the 1991 Gulf War, to awaken Europe to new security challenges.⁵ Only in December 1998, some months before the Kosovo crisis, did a Franco-British summit at Saint Malo decide to develop an EU crisis management capability. The call was for "autonomous" capacities, backed by credible military force. At that point in time, it appeared impossible not to deal with the growing instability of Europe's neighborhood. As a result of decisions taken at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999, a force the size of an army corps with its associated command, air and maritime support, was declared operational in May 2003.⁶ But what the Europeans have acquired is a force capable of dealing with crises of limited geographic scope, limited operational complexity and limited combat possibilities.

The geographical scope of the European force remains un-circumscribed and is available for multiple purposes, leaving room for future improvements. But it appears unrealistic to most Europeans to envisage European military intervention in far flung places, even by 2015. Moreover, European airlift, sealift, C4 and intelligence capabilities seem adequate only for operations in Europe's "near abroad," with very few exceptions. This does not even include Europe's main weak-

³ The Laeken Declaration set the agenda for a constitutional convention that took place in March 2002 and concluded its work in July 2003. The text is supposed to deal with an enlarged 21st century European Union. There are indeed new provisions on security in the draft European Constitution.

⁴ There is an obvious security dimension in this debate. As a Muslim, democratic, secular and modernizing nation, Turkey would represent a major demonstration of the possibility for Europe to export its model of tolerance and peace to the part of the world that most needs it.

⁵ The 1992-1995 Bosnian war was particularly traumatic for the European Union. See Gilles Andréani, Christoph Bertram and Charles Grant, *Europe's Military Revolution* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2001).

⁶ At the EU Capability Conference in May 2003, the European Union declared that it had operational capability across the full range of Petersberg tasks, but that this capability remained limited and constrained by recognized shortfalls.

ness, which is probably its ability to carry out strategic strikes. The United Kingdom, France and Germany could all participate in military operations further away but would do so only as national forces taking part in “coalition-of-the-willing” interventions abroad. Now that more than 10 members of the European Union have demonstrated their ability to deploy the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, and now that some experience has been acquired in the Democratic Republic of Congo (with Operation *Artemis* in 2003⁷) the Europeans may gradually enlarge their vision, but they are far from prepared for serious combat operations at such distances, and even question the need to be prepared in the next decade.

A second limitation is that the force is trained essentially for peace-making and peacekeeping operations, with the latter including possible limited combat operations. In contemporary warfare, however, the ability to carry out post conflict operations may be decisive, even though it cannot replace the ability to conduct more demanding military operations.

Even within the framework of peacekeeping operations, the complexity of the task is now such—given the need for stabilization, counterinsurgency and nation-building capabilities- that most European countries are discovering shortcomings in an area where they are supposed to lead.⁸ Following the particularly difficult Iraqi experience, for instance, the British government decided in the fall of 2004 to create a new department to work alongside its ESDP, NATO and UN teams to improve civil/military management of crises. The Nordic countries and the UK might now be in the forefront of international expertise in this particular area. Germany has been setting up a new organization aimed at training and recruiting peacekeepers, taking into account the complexity of the operations already mentioned above.

The importance of such peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and stabilization missions is fully recognized throughout Europe. But this does not mean that the absence of any European agreement on high intensity combat operations is not a problem to address (only

⁷ This rather short operation did not “solve” the security problem of this most volatile region. But it prevented a mounting crisis.

⁸ Currently, European soldiers are often better than American ones at most of peacekeeping operations, but the Pentagon is learning.

the United Kingdom is seriously preparing itself for such contingencies⁹). Can Europe count on its ability to avoid major conflict operations indefinitely? Probably not. Will it suffice to claim that anything more serious would be dealt with by NATO? That remains to be seen. It would be true only if the European nations would collectively invest more than they currently do in the Alliance, politically and militarily.

Things are improving, however. After the creation of the NATO Response Force, a new concept has emerged in the European Union—EU “battle groups” proposed in February 2004 by France, Britain and Germany. The objective is to have more mobile, light and flexible forces, drawing lessons from various recent interventions.¹⁰ These forces are meant to complement, rather than replace previous peacekeeping forces. It is worth noting, however, that only France and Britain—and possibly Germany—can meet the 2007 deadline for establishment of such battle groups.

Last but not least, even those European nations having the necessary knowledge and expertise are currently overextended, with no forces available for any new operation. All European forces that can be deployed are in fact currently deployed abroad (mainly in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in the Balkans, and in Africa, for example in the Ivory Coast). To give a concrete example of the consequences to be drawn from such a situation, a decision to support African forces in Darfur, which is very much needed, would probably be almost impossible to implement apart from the provision of logistical support. The need by far exceeds the size of the European force.

This is why a group of nearly 450 million citizens, enjoying peace and prosperity, and producing more than a quarter of the world’s GNP still appears to be limited in its influence, in its action, and in its ability to generate stability in a troubled world. There is no sense of collective responsibility for the management of crises. There is no col-

⁹ Conversely, learning from Iraqi post-conflict experience, the Pentagon is now stressing the importance of stabilization missions and the necessity to acquire a sufficient number of trained troops to help with nation-building.

¹⁰ The proposal was for the establishment by 2007 of up to nine “battle groups” of 1500 soldiers capable of being deployed quickly—within two weeks—to trouble spots beyond the EU’s borders at the request of the UN. Each battle group would be able to draw on air and naval assets. The initiative was agreed by EU defense ministers in April 2004.

lective will to become a more active political and military player in the years and decades to come.

No Threat Assessment, not even in the 2003 European Security Strategy

Documents on European defense include no threat assessment. The subject is still far too divisive. This remains true after the consensus reached on the European Security Strategy published in December 2003, where “key threats” are listed. They appear in very general terms (terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organized crime) and nothing close to a “strategy” is defined to deal with any of them. Granted, the very idea of a specific European security concept was still taboo five years ago, and much has been done since 1999. But when progress is compared with the evolution of circumstances in the real world, as it should be, the conclusion is clear : it is too slow, and still running behind events. In addition, the work done did not prevent major internal divisions on Iraq. Moreover, old divisions related to NATO still exist.

Whereas Americans tend to overemphasize threats, Europeans tend to overlook them. This characteristic is reinforced by the presence within the European Union of countries for whom any common security and defense policy should be restricted to peacekeeping operations outside EU territory. It is further bolstered by an apparent inability to recognize the existence of possible adversaries. Even a country such as France, the second conventional military power after Britain, would not accept the simple proposition that it may have adversaries.¹¹ Only a right-wing minority in Italy would recognize the existence of a possible threat originating in the Mediterranean, even though Italy is the only NATO country to have come under such attack (in 1986, when Libyan missiles were fired at Lampedusa). Europe wants to be loved and does not understand why it should not be.

Memories of past wars may lead to prudence, but they also encourage denial, while excessive dependence on the United States tends to nurture a culture of irresponsibility all over Europe. Finally, although

¹¹ Three different threats issued by al- Qaeda against France did not alter this position, at least officially.

threat assessment is not a science, it does rely on military, technical and political knowledge, which requires good intelligence. And strategic intelligence is hardly a European strength, particularly at the European level—although September 11 has encouraged significant intelligence sharing. Ever-expanding agendas, coupled with the problem of insufficient human and technical resources, prevent Europe from making more useful contributions to the management of crises erupting in Africa (with the exception of Ituria (mainly France) and Sierra Leone (United Kingdom), in the Middle East (with the exception of Britain in Iraq) and most especially in regions farther away from European territory.

One of the conclusions of any threat assessment will be that interventions far away from home will increasingly be needed to protect core interests. Europe is acquiring strategic transport capabilities, including a new generation of aircraft, better command, control and intelligence capabilities, drones and stand-off weaponry. But current planning still expects that ten years from now Europe—with the exception of the United Kingdom—will continue to lack the sophisticated fire power it is likely to need. Its overhead observation capabilities will improve, But early warning and surveillance assets will remain limited. And if Edward Luttwak is right in saying that “the new strategy of elite forces with air power has become the essential military instrument of today,” then the problem is essentially one of training elite units and reducing still oversized armies. Europe should retain its ability to contribute to “state building.” This requires infantry, but the current situation, where the EU-25 can deploy at most 85,000 troops out of 1.2 million ground soldiers, shows that Europe’s armies need urgent reform.

Lack of Strategic Intelligence Capabilities and Only Limited Improvements Planned

One of the top priorities of European defense policy, reiterated *ad nauseam* in any assessment of current European weaknesses, is the development of intelligence capabilities. In recent history, public focus on intelligence has never been greater. Intelligence shortcomings and the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq have led to close scrutiny of the role of intelligence agencies in both the United States and Britain. One can only regret that the scrutiny has been limited to

those two countries, when in fact the shortcomings were common to all countries, even those which were unwilling to go to war.

A large part of the information made available in Europe remains American in origin and is unevenly distributed in European countries. Collective endeavors are being developed as part as the war against international terrorism. European intelligence agencies have been improving their expertise in this area since the 1970s, and more significantly after September 2001 (New York and Washington) and March 2004 (Madrid). In many other areas, these agencies may have little to share with their counterparts. The United Kingdom, which enjoys a special relationship with the United States on intelligence matters, is also the only European country with both sophisticated intercept and human intelligence capabilities. The UK lacks overhead capabilities, however, for which it relies on the United States. In November 2001 the UK decided to allocate an additional 10 million pounds to its intelligence agencies, but this limited amount reflects more than anything else the difficulties of rapidly changing capabilities. After one judicial and three parliamentary inquiries in Britain, new measures were adopted in 2004.

France and Germany are next in terms of capabilities, which they have been trying to improve as well in recent years. They do have overhead imagery and their current capability is increasing with Helios 2 (France, Belgium and Spain, operational in 2005), and Sar Lupe (Germany, operational in 2007), but also with Pléiades (France, operational in 2008), and Cosmos Skymed (Italy, operational in 2006).

For most of the “countries of concern” however, Europe has not yet reached the stage where it could balance U.S. analyses and it does not possess a capacity for systematically assessing the military capability developing on its periphery. Nor does it have early warning or surveillance capabilities. In short, Europe has yet to develop an independent identity in the intelligence field. Some have suggested creating a Joint Intelligence Committee so as to give the European Union's High Representative a greater capability to analyze intelligence that comes from member states. For now, a more likely step would be expanded bilateral intelligence sharing, starting with the war against terrorism (where a European P5 has been in place since the March 2004 terrorist attack in Madrid), and evolving later to cover broader issues.

Europe's Strategic Vision is Limited to its Neighborhood

One of the most striking characteristics of Europe's strategic vision—or of the European attitude toward security—remains its geographical limitation. Only three regions are perceived to be really relevant to European security: Russia and the former republics of the Soviet Union ; the Balkans ; and the Mediterranean, including the Middle East. Africa is often mentioned but no definitive conclusion were drawn from operation *Artemis* launched in June 2003 as the first EU military operation outside Europe without NATO assistance.¹² EU support to the 3, 000 African Union troops in Darfur is logistical, no infantry is involved.

Russia has precipitated the most dramatic modifications of the European map in the last twenty years. It remains today a major variable for Europe's future. Its partnership with the European Union is described as “the most important, the most urgent and the most difficult” as Europe begins the 21st century. An effective partnership with Russia may be particularly challenging at a time when the Russian Parliament, political parties and media have all retreated to the political background while numerous signals of further political regression are emerging.

The Balkans constitute rather a different story. They have figured prominently three times in recent European history, at the beginning and at the end of the 20th century, and during World War II. Their presence on the European stage was dramatic in all three cases. After the end of the Cold War, the Balkans have come to represent what Europeans perceive as unfinished business on Europe's soil : peace and reconciliation. European troops may be needed for another ten years in Bosnia (where improvement is real) and Kosovo (where the situation remains worrisome, in part because no choice has been made concerning final status).

The third region, comprising the south shore of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, may well represent the most complex set of issues. The thaw that was produced elsewhere by the end of the Cold

¹² It involved 1,800 military personnel, mostly French, deployed to stabilize the security situation in Bunia, the capital of the Ituri province.

War did not occur there. On the contrary, the first conflict to erupt after the break-up of the Soviet Union took place in the Middle East in 1991 (Gulf War) and it produced the most impressive international coalition since the Korean war. The more recent (2003) Iraq war was in a real sense the completion of that initial episode. Iran's nuclear ambitions have already had consequences in the region and beyond, and Europe is deeply involved in the success or failure of current attempts to stop them. Europe will continue to depend on oil from the region, and the Mediterranean, together with the Gulf and the Strait of Malacca, is a crucial transit and potential choke point for global oil supplies and trade. Finally, it goes without saying that Europe may be affected by the evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—an issue beset by tension, violence and pessimism, despite the new hopes raised by the election of a new Palestinian president. Europe supports the Israeli disengagement plan from the Gaza strip, hoping that negotiations will start again in the near future. Before negotiations start again, it will be essential to promote activities aimed at supporting the success of a future peace agreement.

Europe will also be affected by flawed policies in Northern Africa, where the dominant population groups are young, often poorly educated, and burdened by high unemployment rates. In some respects, the Middle East may now be considered an internal European problem, with 15 million Muslims living within Europe's borders, many of them coming from the Middle East. Last but not least, Europe cannot act as if democratization of the Middle East has become only America's mantra, when it has been a European objective since 1995. But European policies have thus far produced poor results in this respect, because stability continues to be the most favored objective and because stable relations with regional governments are accorded higher priority than the well-being of people.

The more the European Union enlarges, the closer it comes to areas of instability. In 2007, Romania and Bulgaria may join. At a later stage, the Balkan nations and Turkey may enter as well. The possible future accession of Turkey can be assessed in terms of a remarkable example of a major Muslim country, modern, moderate, secular and westernized. Such movement eastward and southward will alter some of the current security paradigms of the Union. While stability is supposed to expand with enlargement, unstable or malfunctioning states

will also become closer to Europe's borders. This will require more than a Barcelona process, even revitalized, or a strategic partnership with Moscow, especially at a time when Russia may again become a destabilizing factor in the Caucasus.

Although Asia is the Most Probable Center of International Security, it Remains the Neglected Continent for Europe

Apart from those three regions (and to some lesser extent Africa), Europe's vision appears to be very limited on security matters. Asia for instance is largely absent from Europe's security radar screen, even though Asia is likely to replace Europe as "center stage" for international security in the 21st century. Europe does not seem to be drawing the necessary conclusions from this strategic reality. Before the war in Afghanistan, Central Asia was barely mentioned in Europe. When it was, the focus was energy, not security. Now that enlargement is shifting the Union's external borders to the East, a different vision might emerge concerning the Caucasus and Central Asia, but the very idea of defining the *Ostpolitik* of our time is still remote.

South Asia is even farther from the European Union's interest. Since 1998, a dialogue has been underway between India and some European countries, but the significance for Europe of events in South Asia is still neither perceived nor understood. Otherwise, some arms deals would probably have led to more debate than has been the case (submarines to Pakistan for instance). Finally, East Asia, with its numerous explosive security problems (Korea and Taiwan being the most significant), is hardly present in any European security discussion, with the exception of North Korea's nuclear program, and even there no action whatsoever was suggested when Pyongyang withdrew—illegally—from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in January 2003. Even China's ballistic missiles and its nuclear modernization (new solid fuel mobile missiles, new submarines, MIRVed warheads) are barely mentioned.

There are a number of reasons to include Asia in Europe's strategic thinking. The most dangerous international issue, one that can draw the world into major conflict, is the issue of Taiwan. A former Chinese defense minister, General Chi Haotian, has been quoted in

the context of this dispute as saying that war with the United States was “inevitable” and that China “must be prepared to fight for one year, two years, or even longer.” Those are strong words. After September 11, 2001, some more conciliatory statements were made, reflected in academic writings: “With the dawning of the 21st century, especially considering the 9/11 attack, the world entered a new post-post cold war age. International relations in this age will perhaps be featured by the mixture of cooperation and confrontation but with cooperation as the main theme.” But the truth of the matter is that no one can predict the way Sino-American relations will evolve in the next twenty years. Each of the three main actors, America, China and Taiwan, has a considerable capacity for misunderstanding the other two. The idea that any conflict over Taiwan would remain regional is pure fantasy.

Europe should behave as a responsible ally in this part of the world—even if the EU has mainly economic links in the region. The possibility of U.S. military involvement is real. Europe cannot ignore this and advocate the lifting of the arm sales embargo to China. This is not only divergence of view, it is a question of political responsibility, of prudence—and even of wisdom. What would be the first use of new European weaponry in China if not to better prepare confrontation with Taiwan? At a time when the recognition of globalization is ubiquitous, with ever more interconnected events around the globe, who can believe that a major East Asian crisis will remain local? And why does Europe not support the Chinese democracy against the authoritarian mainland? Is “the community of values” that it pretends to promote supposed to stop at the gates of Asia?

Concerning the Korean peninsula, two European countries (France and the United Kingdom) are party to the 1953 armistice (agreed at the end of the Korean war). Political and legal commitments would follow should conflict erupt. In addition, since the cost of unification will be far higher—politically, economically, and in human terms—than the cost of German unification, how will European nations having diplomatic ties and embassies in Pyongyang act to lower tensions? How are they trying to prevent North Korean WMD and ballistic missile proliferation? How do they react to information concerning the hidden North Korean Gulag, about which first-hand testimonies are beginning to emerge?

The evolution of Sino-Russian relations is also significant for the Europeans. Russia, which is also an Asian power, finds itself weaker than China for the first time in its history. This situation is going to endure over the coming two decades, no matter what Russia may achieve in terms of recovery. This is well understood in Moscow, which is deepening its cooperation with Beijing, hoping for the best. But the future relationship between the two countries remains unclear, particularly in the Russian Far East. Will Russia acquiesce to growing Chinese power or find ways to quietly limit it? To what extent will Moscow continue to arm Beijing for commercial reasons?

East Asia sells sensitive hardware and technologies to the Middle East and North Africa, where clear risks and even threats to European territory may appear in the next decades. Numerous publications have covered China's sales to Syria, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Libya; North Korea nuclear sales to Iran, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Iraq; and the cooperation of both countries with Pakistan, along with the impact of that activity in the Middle East. European governments are now looking more carefully at those sales. They should also react to them in a more proactive manner, addressing the issue with China and North Korea. After all, in Thessaloniki in June 2003 the European Council adopted a "declaration on non proliferation of weapons of mass destruction" that included basic principles and a joint action plan. Asia is not that far away when proliferation and arms deals are concerned. The Europeans should not forget it.

Conclusion

Some real progress has been made in the last five years, but there is much more to do in the next five

Europeans still tend to assess risks and threats in the light of their capabilities, defense budgets and political will. As they enlarge their territory, they must also enlarge their strategic vision. Peace and prosperity are not widely shared in the present world. The European responsibility is to continue expanding both while at a minimum avoid doing harm, for instance by selling arms to the wrong places. Europe is not currently equipped intellectually, diplomatically or militarily to be at best anything else than a regional actor. Nonetheless, despite its wishes or aspirations, its responsibilities range beyond such a limited role.