

## **The Role of the EU: From Crisis Management towards Common European Defence?**

(Ambassador Martin Vukovich)

The European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) - probably the most ambitious integration project since the introduction of the Euro - was initiated in 1999 in the wake of a series of bloody wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. European politicians became increasingly frustrated by their inability to prevent and stop warfare in the immediate neighbourhood of the European Union. This traumatic experience convinced the governments of the EU member states

- that a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSFP) without military muscles is lacking credibility and
- that the EU should be able to maintain peace and stability at least in its periphery.

The driving forces of the ESDP are – since its inception – France and the United Kingdom. These two countries have by far the most important military means and capabilities among EU member states. They are the only one capable of projecting military power far beyond their national territory. Both countries traditionally represent opposite concepts of European Security and Defence Policy: France is a staunch eurocentrist, while the United Kingdom is the standard-bearer of atlanticism in Europe. A compromise was reached between these two positions at the British – French summit meeting in St. Malo in December 1998. The United Kingdom did accept that the EU will also deal with military crisis management (in addition to NATO); in exchange France did recognise that NATO remains the cornerstone for collective defence of its members. This compromise is considered to be the foundation of ESDP which was launched by the European Council of Helsinki in December 1999.

As the EU expanded its activities into the area of defence policy, a domain which so far was the prerogative of NATO, and with the transfer of crisis management functions from the WEU to the EU (Petersberg tasks) it became necessary to define the respective responsibilities of EU/ESDP and NATO within the European security architecture and to establish rules for the interaction of these two organisations different in nature but of equal importance for peace and stability in Europe.

1. First of all it was necessary to lay down the parameters for EU crisis management. According to the decisions of the European Council of Helsinki the EU will only launch military crisis management operations where NATO as a whole is not engaged. This does not mean that the EU is subordinate to NATO in crisis management, nor does it imply a “right of first refusal” for NATO. This fundamental rule should simply avoid frictions and duplications between autonomous organisations.

2. At the same time it was emphasised that EU crisis management will be guided by the principle of inclusiveness, permitting the participation of European third countries in EU operations. Trustful cooperation between EU and NATO in crisis management is in the best interest of European stability and security.
3. As a consequence the EU offered the possibility to European NATO countries which are not yet members of the EU to participate under certain conditions in EU – led crisis management operations (after the present enlargement of EU and NATO only 5 countries will belong to this category). European non – EU – NATO countries also take part in regular consultations with the EU on ESDP matters. The so called “third country arrangements” established by the European Council of Nice in December 2000 were further improved in December 2002 at the insistence of Turkey.
4. Thus the way was finally opened for the conclusion of cooperation agreements between EU and NATO, an important prerequisite for a fully operational ESDP. The EU has now access to NATO’s planning facilities at SHAPE as well as to pre – identified military capabilities of NATO (Berlin +). Furthermore EU and NATO agreed to exchange classified information relevant to crisis management operations.

These cooperation agreements with NATO enabled the EU to start its first military crisis management operation. After the launch of a police operation in Bosnia - Herzegovina (EUPM) in January the EU took over from NATO the military operation “Allied Harmony” in Macedonia which is now running since March under the EU code name “Concordia”. The EU military mission in Macedonia is using NATO command structures (SHAPE and the Southern Command in Naples). A much larger military operation may be taken over by the EU from NATO in 2004, namely SFOR in Bosnia – Herzegovina. Thus the Western Balkans are becoming the main testing ground for mutually supportive crisis management by EU and NATO. Both organisations have engaged in a strategic partnership in crisis management.

The EU is striving for military capabilities enabling her to conduct crisis management operations, where appropriate, without assets and capabilities provided by NATO. The first such operation just began in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of Congo where the danger of a new humanitarian disaster is imminent. According to the framework nation concept France will provide most of the troops required for this ESDP operation mandated by the UN Security Council. The planning, command and control will be done by a headquarters in Paris.

An essential precondition for autonomous crisis management by the EU are adequate military capabilities. They are still lacking in the strategic field. Therefore seven EU member states decided to procure by the end of this decade 160 A 400 M, the newly developed long – haul transport aircraft of Airbus Industries. The French – German satellite programme “Helios” is supposed to provide the EU with strategic reconnaissance capabilities. Command and control facilities of EU member states will also be improved.

However, unnecessary and possibly damaging duplications of NATO structures must be avoided by all means. In this context Austria believes that the recent proposal for

the creation of a nucleus collective capability for planning and conducting operations for the EU was not very helpful. Such an autonomous European structure might be perceived by some NATO countries as an institution competing with SHAPE; it could therefore undermine trustful relations between EU and NATO.

The EU is continuing in its efforts to close remaining gaps in the EU headline goal. The European Capabilities Action Plan (ECAP) is now entering into the decisive stage of its implementation; more than 10 project groups covering a wide array of capabilities have recently been established. An EU – NATO Capability Development Mechanism is assuring coherence between ECAP and NATO's Prague Capabilities Commitment.

For more than a year the Convention on the Future of Europe has been deliberating on the institutional reform and on measures to deepen the EU integration. In this context a number of proposals were made on the further development of ESDP. Recently the presidium of the Convention presented a draft for a Constitutional Treaty which will be on the agenda of the next EU Intergovernmental Conference due to begin this fall. A special chapter of the Constitutional Treaty will be devoted to the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the EU. Although it is hard to predict what the governments of the EU member states will decide by consensus at the end of the IGC in the first half of 2004 a number of ideas have already garnered broad support:

- The tasks of the ESDP will be widened. In addition to the present Petersberg tasks the EU may also deploy military and civilian means for joint disarmament operations, military advice and assistance tasks, support action in combating terrorism at the request of a third country as well as for post-conflict stabilisation.
- A European Armaments and Strategic Research Agency will be established to assist EU member states in improving their military capabilities by strengthening the industrial and technological base of the defence sector, improving the effectiveness of military expenditure, coordinating defence technology research and by harmonising operational needs.
- Closer cooperation among a group of EU member states may also become possible in the context of ESDP (so far this is explicitly excluded by the present EU Treaty of Nice). Such a core group could be formed by member states which fulfil higher criteria for military capabilities and are able to participate in particular demanding military operations. A closer cooperation in ESDP matters would be preferable to a cooperation of some EU countries outside the EU framework. However, special incentives should be offered to military weaker member states to improve their capabilities and to catch up with the front runners. ESDP should not become a two-class society consisting on one side of EU countries actively participating in efforts to beef-up their military capabilities as well as in robust military operations and on the other side of member states which are simply leaning back.
- A solidarity clause will foresee that the EU mobilises all the instruments at its disposal, including military resources, at the request of a member state to prevent a terrorist threat or to assist a member state in the event of a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster. Under this clause military means could only be used within the boundaries of the EU.

Finally the Constitutional Treaty may include provisions which would open the road towards common EU defence. So far the EU treaty only mentions the possibility of common defence: "... a common European defence policy which might lead to a common European defence, should the European Council so decide" (present wording of 17 of the TEU). The Constitutional Treaty could stipulate a clear commitment to this perspective: "... progressive framing of a common defence policy for the Union. This will lead to a common defence, when the European Union, acting unanimously, so decides". In addition to that the present draft of the Constitutional Treaty permits a closer cooperation of a group of EU member states on mutual defence. If one of the member states participating in such cooperation would become a victim of armed aggression on its territory, the other participating states shall give it aid and assistance by all means in their power, military and other, in accordance with article 51 of the UN Charter.

Any discussion on collective EU defence raises very delicate questions related to the transatlantic security partnership and must therefore be conducted with particular care. So far the United Kingdom and other member states have voiced their opposition against a common EU defence. On the other hand France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain and Austria are principally in favour and proposed a flexibility clause (a closer cooperation on mutual defence could be agreed in an optional protocol to the Constitutional Treaty).

A number of arguments are put forward by the supporters of an EU defence:

- A full-fledged Union, which avails itself of an internal market, a common currency and a Common Foreign and Security Policy, can in the long run hardly remain without common defence. The military muscles the EU needs for international crisis management can be further developed into adequate capabilities for collective defence.
- Military burden-sharing between Europe and America will be accompanied by political power-sharing. The globalisation of the US Defence Policy as a result of the worldwide fight against terrorism will probably increase Europe's responsibility for its own defence.

However, improved military capabilities and greater responsibility of the EU in defence matters do not imply that institutions which were most successful over the past decades in preserving peace and security in Europe will become obsolete. On the contrary, NATO and the transatlantic relationship could be rejuvenated by a strengthened European defence identity.

The Austrian members of the EU Convention, Hannes Farnleitner and Reinhard Bösch, made a contribution last November in the working group "Defence" under the heading "A new Impetus to the European Security and Defence Policy". As they pointed out in their proposal, a common EU defence will only be feasible if it is a closely interlinked with the European pillar of NATO.