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EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY: IS IT FOR REAL?

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WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

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SUMMING UP BY
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CONTENTS

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMING UP <i>FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG</i>	1
'OLD' & 'NEW' EUROPE: A VIEW FROM RUSSIA <i>YURY E. FEDOROV</i>	4
EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY – IS IT FOR REAL? <i>ROBERTO MENOTTI</i>	12
AMERICA : NO TIME FOR STRATEGIC THINKING, AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE <i>DANA H. ALLIN</i>	20

CHAIRMAN'S SUMMING-UP

FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG*

The written presentations of our panellists – Roberto Menotti (Research Fellow Aspen Institute Italia), Dana Allin (Senior Fellow, IISS, London) and Yury Fedorov (Deputy Director of the Institute for Applied International Studies, Moscow) – were completed by a number of remarks, having been urged by the Chairman to dwell on the following issues:

- the nature of the EU's strategic interests and notably the importance of distant contingencies – such as Korea, Kashmir – as compared with Europe's 'near abroad';
- the impact of the difference of strategic cultures between the EU and the US (as well as within the EU itself); and
- the long-term evolution of EU-US strategic relations.

Thus Roberto Menotti underscored the importance of the security strategy text by Javier Solana (High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy [CFSP]) in helping the Europeans "think strategically" even if, in his views, such a document could have been prepared earlier. But, he also emphasised the need not to "start backwards": the immediate focus should be on the ark-of-crisis rather than on Korea. He also noted that the current state of the debate could divide the Europeans rather than unite them.

For his part, Dana Allin noted that there would be little time in Washington for a grand strategic debate with the Europeans. He also considered that America's extreme strategic risk-aversion ('zero tolerance'), leading to preventive warfare, was one of the root causes of the transatlantic problems, along with the gut feeling in Europe that the US is the prime target of ongoing threats, rather than Europe. He saw the differences among European strategic cultures within Europe as being divisive.

Yury Fedorov made the point that the current nature of strategic threats – notably the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) – plays to US strengths, thus increasing the significance of the defence gap between the US and Europe (particularly in research and development and space applications). He noted that there was an element of paradox in Europe's evolution: while the EU has been integrating, when faced with real-world crises it has tended to split in strategic terms. He re-emphasised his written analysis of the 'Americanisation' of Russian foreign policy, driven in part by the similarity of security concerns between Moscow and Washington.

As a prelude to the debate from the floor, a senior EU official was prompted to make several remarks:

- The genesis of the Solana paper lies to a large extent in Europe's sense of failure in the Iraq crisis. Indeed, strategic cultures tend to be formed from crisis to crisis. Although a strategic culture will not in itself change as a result of one single paper, such conceptual work can help.
- One of the characteristics of the current document is that it is one of first EU texts to be threat-driven. Given the size and scale of the European Union, it is appropriate that

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the text should emphasise issues such as Kashmir and Korea; because this is a way of thinking ahead and of preparing for a more active Europe.

- ‘Effective multilateralism’ is a good formula for Europe.

The first round of the debate revealed several divides:

- Some agreed with the proposition that the EU should define its strategic interest globally, while others put forward regional priorities, in the ark-of-crisis and Wider Europe. There were diverging views expressed about the Commission’s Wider Europe Communication, wherein one participant underscored its “mediocrity” while another highlighted its “quality”, urging for its integration into Javier Solana’s forthcoming document. In the words of one participant, we should be “enlarging our vision as we enlarge the Union”.
- There was some disagreement about the ‘Americanisation’ of Russian foreign policy. One participant noted that in practice, Russia tended to operate along European lines, with region-specific policies and the importance given to soft-power tools; hence, inter alia the importance of the Wider Europe Communication.
- The US-EU relationship elicited strong views (rather than outright disagreement). If one analyst considered that the “is-it-for-real?” question could be taken to mean “different from NATO”, another expert hailing from a staunchly Atlanticist country noted that the US appeared to be trying to play the Europeans one off against the other in the case of the incipient NATO Response Force (NRF). The NRF has become a direct challenge to the EU’s Rapid Response Force (ERRF), since the US (despite its non-participation in the NRF) insists on reserving to NATO first refusal rights concerning the use of the NRF. Furthermore, the latter now has essentially the same force volume as the ERRF, thus potentially locking the cream of Europe’s forces out of the EU
- One participant raised the prospect of a US-EU debate on the legitimacy of the use of force. The desirability of such a dialogue drew little controversy.

In their reactions to these remarks, the panellists made a number of points:

- Dana Allin noted that indeed, the US ‘wedge’ strategy vis-à-vis the EU had not stopped
- Yury Fedorov observed that there is a division in Russia between Eurocentric and US-centric circles. But President Vladimir Putin had tended to choose the latter. Furthermore, the threat of international terrorism – which a number of participants agreed should be dealt with as a strategic threat, along the lines of the Solana document – brought together countries as disparate as Israel, India, the US and Russia, with elements of a possible coalition between these four countries.
- Roberto Menotti, reacting to the ‘global versus regional’ debate, noted that the EU is not a global, hard-power strategic actor – so starting with the huge region extending from North Africa to Central Asia made sense.

In the subsequent round of debate, there was an exchange concerning the meaning of ‘threat prevention’ as used in the Solana security strategy: did this encompass preventive military action or was this more specifically tied to actions related to the enforcement of international obligations in the framework of ‘effective multilateralism’? On this score, an EU expert recalled the mention of ‘coercive action’ (as a last resort) in the texts of the European Council meeting at Thessaloniki, which should be given due consideration alongside the Solana

security strategy. With regard to the scope of the EU's strategic concerns, he further added that, "We have to think afar because our interests are afar".

As the debate returned to the issue of the NRF, one analyst reminded the audience that the NRF was in part a US response to an initiative by Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Jose Maria Aznar, while another recalled that five out of the six high readiness units rotating every six months in the NRF are also in the ERRF force catalogue (while the sixth is Turkish). But this drew the retort that this prospect aggravated the situation, since the US wants to have first call on these resources.

In his closing remarks, Yury Fedorov raised the question of whether "multilateralism can be effective?" suggesting that history does not provide many positive examples in this field. Dana Allin, while noting the importance in the US of a sense of 'loss of alliance', observed that the Europeans are still closer to the US in terms of their world view than Russia or India. Nevertheless he also suggested that waiting for a 'regime change' in Washington would not be a sensible way out for the Europeans.

Roberto Menotti's statement that US actions would be crucial in shaping European policies did not come as a surprise. Indeed, in the Chairman's words, Javier Solana's document was no doubt threat-driven, but European policies – in some contrast to recent US attitudes – are also "friend-driven", and this juxtaposition of motives was not simple to manage.

‘OLD’ AND ‘NEW’ EUROPE: A VIEW FROM RUSSIA

YURY E. FEDOROV*

Europe is paralysed. The diplomatic catastrophe of the Iraq conflict has left it uncertain which way to turn, which demons to exorcise. It would be futile to conceal this identity crisis. Even the marvellous success of monetary unification cannot make us to forget the intellectual breakdown of the largest economic union of the world.

Andre Gluksmann¹

Introduction

Andre Gluksmann’s view as quoted above is perhaps a little exaggerated as a reaction to the political and conceptual crisis in Euro-Atlantic relations fuelled by the Iraqi war. The European Union is not paralysed, of course. Yet if the identity crisis affecting Europe and the strategic uncertainty produced by it are not overcome, then it is hardly possible to wait for the formation of a coherent, effective vision and policy of European security.

The strategic uncertainty of the European security

Since the beginning of the Iraqi crisis of 2002-2003 and especially after the American and British intervention in Iraq in March-April 2003, the questions posed about the future of the transatlantic security institutions erected at the time of the Cold War, the prospects for a common European foreign and defence policy, and a European security strategy have grown ever louder. These questions are essential but they remain unanswered.

The current uncertainty is in many respects a result of the divisions between NATO member states on the war in Iraq. In addition to transatlantic differences, a boundary line between European states has emerged with respect to basic strategic issues. The latter split has been called a division between ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe. This very expression is in fact a shorthanded, simplistic and in many respects incorrect designation of a complicated set of developments in European international relations.

Yet many believe that the Iraqi war was not the basic cause of these divisions but has accelerated and fuelled the decline of Western defence and security unity – including the identity crisis in European security – which began after the end of the Cold War. In this light, the formation of a set of bilateral security relations between the US and the member states of Europe is often seen as more important than the presumptive disintegration of multilateral institutions, the first of these being the North Atlantic alliance. Dr Jonathan Eyal, the Director of Studies at the Royal United Services Institute, observed that,

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¹ Gluksmann, Andre (2003), “West versus West”, *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, 28 April.

The old transatlantic community is being slowly dismantled by both sides, giving way to ad hoc bilateral military links between Washington and some Europeans...When the dust settles over Iraq, it will become clear that the dispute between Europeans and Americans has merely accelerated a process of decay in their relations, which began slowly and almost imperceptibly, with the collapse of communism.²

If this vision is true, the development of a sustainable and coherent European security strategy is hardly possible because of the split among European nations with respect to fighting terrorism, handling 'rogue states' and the like. At the same time, there is also a theory that growing globalisation is leading, in the end, to a deeper defence and security cooperation among the advanced democracies of the West. In this light, the principal question arises as to whether the current crisis in Euro-Atlantic relations is a tactical, short-term phenomenon or whether the community of democratic nations is fundamentally dividing with respect to primary international security issues.

The 2003 crisis in Euro-Atlantic relations is of significant importance not only for the family of advanced democratic nations but also for Russia. The crisis has called into question certain Russian conceptual views and has compelled Moscow to make some difficult strategic choices.

Three models of European security

To assess the possibility and the character of European security strategy it is important to outline the probable structures of security relations within Europe and between Europe and the US. Three basic models of these relations may be useful to analyse the future of European security.

The restoration of transatlantic defence and security solidarity

The first model presumes that growing globalisation and interdependence will lead in the final analysis to a restoration of transatlantic solidarity in defence and security areas. Such a development is possible if common perceptions of threats and a common strategy for preventing such threats are formed by the US and Europe, which means that sooner or later Europeans will have to share the same basic attitudes of current American strategic thinking. In the framework of this model, NATO would return to its former role as the central defence and security institution of the West; however, a deep transformation of the North Atlantic alliance would be necessary. Along with keeping its traditional function of defence of the North-Atlantic area, NATO would require new missions and effective capacities to fight terrorism, prevent WMD proliferation, implement peace missions and to handle – or even correct – dangerous regimes that lie south of Europe. European armed forces and military institutions would continue to emerge as an additional resource to NATO. A limited cooperation between Russia and NATO is also possible with respect to fighting new threats.

NATO's decline and the rise of European defence and security institutions

The next model of European security development presumes a further decline of the transatlantic defence and security structures and the development of Europe as a relatively independent locus of power that is able to defend itself against a variety of traditional and new threat. In this scenario, Europe would also have a role in maintaining peace and stability in the

² Eyal, Jonathan (2003), "Battle of the Atlantic", *The World Today*, Vol. 59, No. 3, March, p. 6.

wider European area, such as the Balkans and the Black Sea regions, as well as in the neighbouring areas of the Mediterranean and the Near East.

The implementation of this scenario is possible if:

- transatlantic differences grow in security doctrines, concepts and strategies;
- European nations are able to develop common threat perceptions and strategic doctrines;
- the EU security and defence institutions are effective enough; and
- the member states of Europe are able to increase their defence expenditures and build armed forces that are equipped with high-technology weapons and C4IR systems (control, command, computers, communications, intelligence and reconnaissance) comparable with these of the US.

In this scenario, Russia could turn into a constructive partner for Europe, in fighting some of the new threats and could also be a source of some advanced military technologies. At the same time, Russia may choose the US as a more promising security partner, bearing in mind the growing similarities in Russian and American security thinking and the common security concerns related to developments in the Far East.

The decline of the transatlantic and European security identities and the formation of ad hoc 'coalitions of the willing'

The third scenario postulates the further development of the trends in Euro-Atlantic relations that appeared at the time of Iraqi war. These include:

- the growing differences in threat perceptions, security concepts and interests between, on the one hand, the US and a group of European nations, and on the other hand, between two groups of European member states;
- the decline (but not crash) of NATO and EU security institutions due to the split between 'old' and 'new' Europe;
- the formation of a set of bilateral security and defence relations between the US and some European countries in form of 'coalitions of the willing' or in more stable and institutionalised forms.

For Russia, such a development creates the problem of choosing a strategic partner. It may be either the US (which seems most probable at the moment) or a group of European member states that in one way or another would be in opposition to the US.

'Old' and 'new' Europe: the roots of division

The ability of Europeans and Americans to form common threat perceptions, security concepts and doctrines as well as the ability of Europeans themselves to develop and maintain such a security identity are key factors in the future of European security. To assess the probability of these developments taking place, one needs to outline the roots of the centrifugal processes that were fuelled by the Iraqi war.

In fact, the divisions produced by the war occurred for a variety of reasons. France, whose political elites and public are still strongly affected by traditional Gaullist views, might have been concerned by the possibility that a successful war in Iraq would strengthen the American position in global geopolitics to the prejudice of French international interests. Some German political elites might have shared similar concerns. Yet the negative attitude in Germany

towards the British and American intervention in Iraq was mostly the result of Germany's domestic political situation, and the dependence of the German social-democratic government upon an anti-American and antiwar sentiment typical of a left-wing European political mindset. Nevertheless, the support of the British-American operation in Iraq by a number of European member states to some extent may have resulted from a desire to strengthen their own international profiles, against a background of worsening French-American and German-American relations.

These are, however, only some of the reasons that fuelled the controversies in Euro-Atlantic relations on the eve of and during the war in Iraq. The controversies also resulted from the difference in threat perceptions.

Since 11 September 2001, Americans perceive the threats related to international terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and WMD proliferation far more dramatically than Europeans. Although these differences in perceptions have contributed to the crisis in Euro-Atlantic relations, they cannot fully explain it. Furthermore, such differences, albeit visible, are not fundamental; a few months before the intervention in Iraq, approximately half of Europeans were seriously concerned by the rise of international terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, WMD proliferation and developments in the Arab-Israeli conflict (see Table 1). The only considerable distinction between American and European threat perceptions was related to China.

Table 1. Comparison of the threat perceptions held by the US public and the European public in 2002 (in percentages)

Types of Threat	% that answered "extremely important" (Europe) or "critical" (US)		Difference in public opinion
	US	Europe	
International terrorism	91	64	27
Iraq developing WMD	86	57	29
Arab-Israeli conflict	67	42	25
Islamic fundamentalism	61	47	14
Immigration	60	37	23
China as a world power	56	18	38
Global warming	46	49	-3
Political turmoil in Russia	27	14	13

Sources : Ortega, Martin (2002), *Iraq: A European Point of View*, Occasional Paper No. 40, p. 10, December, The EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, cited in the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations/German Marshall Fund of the US (2002), "Comparing American & European Public Opinion on Foreign Policy", *Worldviews Survey 2002*, p. 9, September, CCFR/GMF, Chicago.

At the same time Europeans were very worried that the war in Iraq might lead to mass human loss, especially among the Iraqi civilian population, and that even if British and American forces were to defeat Saddam's regular armies, an intense guerrilla war would be inevitable. Further, there was concern that the power struggle among the Iraqi factions would prevent a post-war settlement. Also, the antiwar attitudes typical of many Europeans – as well as some Americans – resulted from some analytical assessments that the intervention in Iraq would lead to a deep destabilisation in the Middle East and ignite a powerful wave of Islamic terrorism that would deluge both Europe and the US. As a result, by the end of 2002 and the

beginning of 2003, somewhere between 75–90% of the population in the UK, Poland, the Netherlands and Turkey (countries that traditionally support American policy), were against the war in Iraq.³ The victorious, short-term war and the failure of the catastrophic forecasts have neutralised the effects of these views and concerns in Euro-Atlantic relations. Yet the relations have not been fully restored; antiwar and anti-American feelings still exist in Europe.

The transatlantic crisis is also produced by the distinctions between 'American' and 'European' strategic cultures. In contrast to the US, in Europe the existence of an outer threat is a natural and customary element of a political entity, which has been formed by ages of political history. This may make the perception of the threats related to international terrorism in Europe appear less dramatic than in America. Besides, since the painful First World War, a visible trend towards the political settlement of conflicts has developed in European democracies. In particular, the 'strategy of appeasement' that permits a compromise with aggressive totalitarian regimes in order to prevent war began to play a noticeable, but not dominating role in European political thinking. In addition, there is the idea that the most effective way to assure international security is to strengthen legal norms and to build strong multilateral international institutions able to provide their execution. Also, the 'strategy of engaging' dangerous states and regimes into international efforts and institutions to promote a new set of motivations has acquired a special importance. This strategy seeks to prove to rogue states that cooperation and the refusal of aggressive intentions are more fruitful than confrontation. Many among the European political elites and the European public believe that the use of military power cannot destroy the roots of threats, which are related to the growth of extremist movements in the Islamic world. Many in Europe also believe that these threats are generated by social inequality and poverty. That is why economic assistance and building a more equitable and just social order are seen as more effective tools of preventing terrorism than the use of force, which may consolidate extremist forces and enlarge their social and political bases.

In the wake of the terrorist assault of 11 September, some principal and most probably irreversible changes have undergone in the American strategic mindset. The current American administration and a large part of the American political domain are convinced that the threats of terrorism are too high and acute, that political methods of preventing these are not effective enough. The threat of or actual use of force is seen as a necessary, and in many cases the only way to fight terrorist networks or the states that support terrorism, encroach upon the territories of other countries and proliferate WMD. The strategic philosophy of the administration of President George Bush presumes that multilateral institutions, such as the UN or NATO, can play a useful role in maintaining international security yet they are too bureaucratic, too slow and less effective than 'coalitions of the willing' or unilateral actions. Sometimes, the European orientation towards political solutions and multilateralism is seen in the US as an indication of European 'fatigue' and opportunism.

The opponents of the current American approach believe that the US policy may endanger the very idea of collective governance of global economic and political developments. This is a weighty argument because there are no guarantees that despite of being the most powerful nation, the US will be able to assure international security and to provide stable global economic and political order when acting unilaterally.

³Gordon, Philip H. (2003), "The Crisis in the Alliance", Iraq Memo No. 11, The Brookings Institute, Washington, D.C., 24 February (see <http://www.brookings.edu/views/op-ed/gordon/20030224.htm>).

The differences in strategic views and attitudes between Europe and the US result not only from the diversity of their political philosophies but also from the visible gap in their military power. With the exception of France and the UK, European countries are not able to implement large-scale military operations outside of Europe. The creation of a united European force is proceeding too slowly. The adaptation of the existing armed forces of European member states to the new geo-strategic landscape needs large financial resources; however, European member states are not ready to allocate such resources to modernise their military machines in accordance with the emerging revolution in military affairs and to equip them with modern weapons and other technologies. Yet without an increase in defence spending and greater cooperation in military areas, including the development and production of weapons and C4IR systems, it is difficult (if even possible) to wait for a coherent European foreign, security and defence policy.

The gap between American and European military power is highlighted by Europe's lag behind the US in per capita defence expenditures (see Table 2). The total military number of personnel among the European NATO member states is about 2.3 million, which equates to 1 million more people in uniform than the total of the American armed forces.⁴

Table 2. The defence expenditures of the US and European NATO member states, in billion of constant \$US in 1999

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
European NATO member states ^a					
Defence expenditures	154.4	156.7	148.3	135.6	126.0
R&D expenditures	10.5	9.9	9.2	9.2	9.2
Procurement	29.7	31.1	29.6	29.3	29.6
United States					
Defence expenditures	281.2 ^b	276.6	278.4	281.6	284.5
R&D expenditures	37.9	37.8	38.3	37.9	39.3
Procurement	46.6	47.2	52.2	55.2	61.2

Notes: ^a includes Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic;

^b the budget of the US Department of Defence;

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies (2001), *The Military Balance 2001-2002*, p. 35, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Meanwhile, in 1997-2001 the gap in total defence expenditures between the US and Europe increased from about \$127 billion up to almost \$159 billion. The gap in funding military research and development is of special importance. It predetermines the lag in creating key high-technology weapon systems, including high-precision targeting and delivery means, and C4IR systems (mostly space-based). For instance, during the last 10-15 years, the US has spent about \$11 billion per year on space military programmes. Europe's expenditures, in comparison, are unlikely to reach \$1 billion in the near future.⁵ The current American plans

⁴The International Institute for Strategic Studies (2002), *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, p. 332, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁵ The International Institute for Strategic Studies (2000), "European military satellites", IISS Strategic Comments, Vol. 6, Issue 10, p. 2, December.

presume that by 2007, US defence expenditures will reach \$450 billion; while military research and development expenditures will reach \$58 billion.⁶

The gap in military capabilities between Europe and the US has two consequences. First, the accent on using political means of conflict prevention and settling may maintain Europe's international influence, while the priority placed on its military force will lead to the growth of the American influence as the only power able to implement military operations all over the globe. Second, given that they are inferior to the US in terms of military power, most European countries are interested in maintaining their military cooperation with the US in order to save their own resources.

Thus, there is a strong body of evidence that the rise of controversies in Euro-Atlantic relations, fuelled by the Iraqi war, was in fact a manifestation of serious contradictions in security concepts, interests and strategies among advanced democratic nations. This makes a restoration of transatlantic solidarity in defence and security areas highly unlikely in the foreseeable future. At the same time, European elites realise quite well that the demise of NATO would be very painful for Europe. Washington would also like to keep the North Atlantic alliance, although not as the central element of the US national security strategy.

The split in Europe, together with the failure of French and German attempts to form an effective opposition to US policy, make the formation of an efficient European independent defence and security policy rather doubtful. In this light, current transatlantic security institutions will remain and European security institutions will continue to develop, but the role of these institutions will be uncertain and perhaps decline until the advanced democratic nations of the North Atlantic area develop common strategic attitudes either within transatlantic or European frameworks. Bilateral security institutions between the US and Europe will develop, however these will not be an effective substitute for multilateral structures.

The 'split' in Europe: what does it mean for Russia?

For Russia, the 'split' in Europe poses a number of challenges, both conceptual and political. Conceptually, before the Iraqi war Europe was basically seen in Russia as an integrating unit. Many believe that economic integration is followed inevitably by an integration of foreign, security and defence policies. In this general framework, two opposing concepts have developed.

The first concept views the integration in Europe as an essential part of the integration of an overall community of advanced democratic nations, which also the US and Japan. Russia, as adherents of this vision believe, should cooperate with the nations of the North Atlantic area if it wants to remain an influential international actor.

The second concept presumes that since the end of the Cold War, Europe has been turning into an integrated locus of power, which is independent of the US, and furthermore, even opposes it. This was one of the fundamental elements of the so-called 'multipolar' concept developed in Russia by former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Eugeny Primakov, and his confederates from bureaucracy and academia. They insisted that Russia can and should play on potential, deepening controversies between the US and Europe in order to maintain its international profile, despite Russia's degrading economic and military capacities.

⁶ The International Institute for Strategic Studies (2002), *The Military Balance 2002-2003*, p. 241, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

While these two concepts are contradictory, both concepts presume that economic integration is followed by political and military integration. Nevertheless, the emergence of 'old' and 'new' Europe has called this basic thesis into question.

Politically, Russian foreign policy has been challenged by a problem of choice: whether to support the US and the UK or to try to use the differences between 'old' Europe and the US to improve Russia's international position. The Primakovian intellectual and political heritage, coloured by strong anti-American attitudes, has spurred Russia towards supporting the French/German opposition to the American-led intervention in Iraq. The split between the US and 'old' Europe has been perceived as the first practical evidence of the emerging 'multipolar' world. In February 2003, Russia's Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said quite clearly that,

Russia, France and Germany recently presented a common approach to the settlement of the situation in Iraq. Many observers view this initiative as a new phenomenon in world politics, the significance of which goes beyond the Iraqi crisis...These developments reflect an emerging multipolar order.⁷

The combination of the failure of Russian-French-German attempts to stop American and British intervention in Iraq, the quick victory of anti-Saddam coalition and the strategic uncertainty of European defence and security policy have demonstrated the futility of the multipolar strategy. After the intense yet rather short crisis in Russian-American relations in the spring 2003, Russia's foreign policy has once again acquired a visible tendency towards closer cooperation with America. Russia's support of UN Security Council Resolution 1483 was a clear indication of this trend. As for Europe, Russia's approach to relations with the key European actors in the security domain will most probably depend on the ability of Europe to establish a coherent strategy for European security.

Conclusion

A vague European security identity is counterproductive to establishing an effective European security policy. Growing globalisation includes the formation of global threats such as the rise of political and religious extremism, international terrorism, WMD and missile proliferation and other threats typical of the beginning of the 21st century. To fight these threats, a closer cooperation among advanced democratic nations is needed, which combines all responsible forces and states, including Russia.

⁷Ivanov, Igor (2003), "America must not return to cold war attitudes", *The Financial Times*, 13 February.

EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY – IS IT FOR REAL?

ROBERTO MENOTTI

This paper starts by offering a short answer to the direct question in the title that has been given for this series of ESF papers: it may be a qualified ‘yes’, since the document presented by High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana, last June constitutes a real effort and indeed a real step forward – but the security strategy is still, at best, on paper. The Solana document marks important progress mainly because it is probably setting in motion a dynamic that is badly needed if the EU is to become a more effective security provider. This dynamic features a ‘top-down’ approach to security requirements: i.e. proceeding from a definition of basic interests and goals, to the identification of threats and risks, to the formulation of a set of coordinated policies and thus a security strategy for the EU.

What we can call the ‘bottom-up’ approach is equally necessary, but not sufficient. As we have seen since late 1998 (St. Malo), and even after the acceleration of 1999 (post-Kosovo), an EU focus on ‘capabilities first’ is *not* leading to rapid increases in usable military (or military-civilian) instruments. We are not looking at a total failure, but what has been achieved is clearly not enough, and the persistent deficiencies are hampering the goals officially stated in key CFSP and European Security Defence Policy (ESDP) documents.

Having already identified common shortfalls, working to develop certain common or collective capabilities may be a good way to force more discipline on individual EU members in order to rationalise the use of scarce resources and gradually elaborate a unified doctrine on how these resources will be employed. Yet this incremental approach should not continue indefinitely, as ultimately, military planners require political guidance, just as public opinion demands to know where the taxpayer’s money is going. In other words, the critical questions that must be answered are: the EU is seeking to develop such military capabilities to do what? Why? Where? Such capabilities would be employed on whose behalf and under whose political control?

Of course, there were from the beginning – and there still are – very good political reasons to concentrate on capabilities and leave aside the thorny questions of EU ‘autonomy’ vis-à-vis NATO. But there is an equally strong argument to be made that the EU needs to get its act together (in a literal sense) by agreeing on two related commitments: first, the political will to move forward in a collective framework on security and defence; and second, a steadfast solidarity among EU members under pressure, i.e. in crisis conditions.

The first commitment to adopt the collective framework is indispensable, with regard to arms procurement for example, and more generally in the planning for likely contingencies. Progress will come only if the expectation is that, unless otherwise decided, Europeans will act together on major security issues.

As for the second commitment, the lack of solidarity was made most painfully evident by the open and acrimonious divisions on the Iraqi crisis in the latter part of 2002 and the first three months of 2003. Any semblance of a common EU foreign and security policy on the central issue at hand was totally eclipsed in the months preceding the British-American operation against Saddam Hussein.

One essential task that the Solana paper can accomplish is to prompt the EU to take the initiative and re-launch a transatlantic dialogue based on European goals and priorities (which

are not necessarily divergent from established NATO policies but are not necessarily identical either). American goals are pretty well known – there is an argument to be made that these are not always as coherent and consistently pursued as many believe – while the ‘aggregate’ European attitude is mostly reactive. Thus, the US administration sets the tone and the framework; individual European governments position themselves as they see fit; and finally, at some point, a residual EU position emerges, essentially as a minimum common denominator. Such an arrangement is not sustainable or rational, to the extent that we are serious about making the EU into a true strategic partner of NATO, or even more importantly, of the US.

It is difficult to believe that an official document, per se, is enough to radically change the course of or to overcome the complex structural factors behind current transatlantic frictions. Yet, adopting an official security strategy raises the stakes and, potentially, builds a consensus around a new transatlantic deal – less automatic than in the past but equally fundamental for our security. And one of the main purposes of the whole exercise is precisely to ease the transition from the old Atlanticism to a vastly updated transatlantic framework in which the EU takes a higher profile.

The good things

First of all, in its current form, the Solana document offers a useful and accurate (albeit brief) description of how we got here. This is essential in order to discuss where to go from here and what to do next.

The climate in which the paper was produced is actually described with precision, including: the post-Cold War opportunities coupled with new dangers of local conflicts; actual violence in the Balkans (i.e. on European soil); an increasing need for troop (and police) deployments in sometimes distant places; and the realisation of a potential combination of ‘new threats’ (international and catastrophic terrorism), WMD proliferation, failed states and organised crime. The transatlantic context is also described, citing not only US preponderance in most dimensions of power and influence, but also American (as well as European) vulnerability and the consequent requirement of sustained multilateral cooperation in order to achieve more effective international governance.

Along with all of the dimensions of risk and threat, the paper is in practice a ‘wake-up call’ designed to counter a sense of complacency among Europeans. Indeed, complacency and introversion seem to be the underlying concerns – and rightly so. But this has the interesting effect of bringing the stated EU approach much closer to that of official US policy than it has appeared so far.

Undoubtedly, as has been widely noted, there are elements of convergence in the Solana document with recent US policy statements, as well as with established NATO policies (about which Lord Robertson has been quick to remark in recent speeches).

The three main points in the document are:

- that international terrorism is recognised as a strategic threat to Europe (as well as to the US and others);
- that a broader European contribution to global security and stability is called for and more specifically there is a “need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention”;
- that the worst-case scenario is identified as consisting of a combination or linkage of the three main ‘new threats’ discussed in the paper: “Taking these different elements

together – terrorism committed to maximum violence, the availability of weapons of mass destruction and the failure of state systems – we could be confronted with a very radical threat indeed”; this statement is remarkably similar to the expressions adopted in the US National Security Strategy of September 2002 and several other US administration statements.

Beyond the specific wording, the points above are not particularly surprising or even contested in policy circles, but if fully adopted by the European Council they may contribute to a smoother transatlantic discussion on issues that are by their very nature controversial, such as counterterrorism operations, counter-proliferation policies and particularly ‘pre-emptive strikes’ on potential sources of threat, which are discussed later.

Indeed, since the American security role is inevitably a point of reference for the evolving European security strategy, it is instructive to read the whole Solana draft in parallel with the US National Security Strategy. Nevertheless, we should not exaggerate the similarities; unlike the US Security Strategy, the Solana document is not intended primarily as the endpoint of a policy review process, but instead as the starting point of a relatively slow policy production process. In other words, there is not much in terms of existing or past security policies on which Solana’s team can build. There are disparate, though sometimes overlapping, national policies and traditions, as well as a precious but limited EU experience in peacekeeping missions, but no common strategic culture. In fact, the development of a shared strategic culture is precisely one of the central functions that the document and its future versions can perform. If it does, it will have been ‘for real’ so to speak.

It is fitting that the European Security Forum has chosen to discuss the merits of the EU strategy paper almost exactly two years after the terrorist attacks that significantly accelerated a shift in US foreign policy, but which certainly have not changed everything, as some were led to believe in the heat of events. The Solana document explicitly takes on board some of the lessons of 11 September. It reflects many of the concerns raised by the collective shock of the terrorist attacks, by depicting a world of potentially radical threats that, frankly, most Europeans and many Americans did not perceive, or did not take very seriously, before 11 September 2001.

Stating that international terrorism is a ‘strategic threat’ means recognising that this phenomenon has been underestimated in security planning, while the focus so far has been on (mostly domestic) law enforcement, intelligence efforts (often uncoordinated even among close allies). We could add that the risks of transnational terrorist networks have been raised in the context of specific regional conflicts that have a potential to produce a terrorist ‘spin-off’, including the volatile situation of the Western Balkans. But the notion that there is such a thing as ‘international terrorism’ as a distinctive threat is a new construct for Europeans.

Therefore, Solana’s draft document amounts to a deliberate effort to raise the level of alert to a newly discovered threat, whose magnitude may still be insufficiently appreciated not only at the common EU level but also at the public level of individual countries – especially when it comes to actually committing additional resources.

This state of affairs can be termed a ‘Venus paradox’ – to borrow the black and white distinction proposed by Robert Kagan; Venus (Europe) feels secure, but is in fact not secure. At best, it is less secure than most people believe. At worst, it suffers from a dangerous misperception, the illusion of security under a rather outdated transatlantic umbrella. The picture drawn by Mr Solana is truly one of a complacent and introverted Europe that needs to overcome its Venus syndrome and fully take on a global role.

It is important to note that, in identifying potential threats, the document actively contributes to the development of a ‘European narrative’ on security affairs. The emphasis placed on the Balkan crises of the early 1990s is telling in this respect: this experience has been formative for the EU and most of the concepts adopted in the Solana document are drawn from there. These concepts include the spill-over potential of local crises; the overlap of humanitarian and broader political concerns in a given violent crisis; the various options in the field of crisis management and international intervention; and the central role of prevention and early engagement (now merged in the somewhat odd concept of ‘pre-emptive engagement’).

The limitations and possible improvements

Since the EU Security Strategy is a work in progress, discussing the Solana draft is an integral part of the dynamic that this paper alluded to at the beginning. An official document concentrates the mind, and details can obviously be extremely important to the overall message that is sent and the policy direction that is delineated.

Before commenting on the drafting process, the sequence of items and in one area, the precise wording, it should be noted that the document is being evaluated on the assumption that one of its tasks should be to present, in a relatively reader-friendly fashion, the rationale and motivations for a common EU security policy and to offer a ‘vision’, both to European citizens and to the rest of the world. In summary, this is not only a technical product, but also a public statement that should reach a wide audience and provide a framework for future debates.

One general comment is that the threat assessment sounds a bit vague at times, possibly because the definition of what the EU wants in the world, and what it is ready to stand for, is not spelled out – beyond stating a commitment to cooperation, openness, legitimacy and legality. For instance, when assessing the impact of ‘regional conflicts’, the first two cases cited are Kashmir and the Korean Peninsula. The document asserts that these conflicts “impact on European interests directly and indirectly, as do conflicts nearer to home, above all in the Middle East”. The potential implications of this statement should deserve more careful consideration, since it is *not* immediately evident that Kashmir or Korea are – or should be – perceived as directly affecting any major EU interest. Even the Middle East, taken as a whole, is a somewhat vague reference.

The strategy could benefit from a more detailed geopolitical vision, i.e. a willingness to fully adopt a regional perspective to differentiate among levels of threat. This is especially clear in the case of what is usually called the ‘arc of instability’ stretching from the Balkans to the eastern Mediterranean, and from the Persian Gulf to Central Asia. The reference to this vast region in the paper is concentrated in the section on “Extending the Zone of Security around Europe”, where it is specified that “our task is to promote a ring of well-governed countries to the east of the EU and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations”.

Here is where geography becomes a key point: a major nuclear crisis in Korea may pose less immediate risk to the EU than a political assassination in the Western Balkans, a contested election in North Africa or a relatively minor border dispute in the Caucasus. It would also be useful to distinguish between major confrontations (India-Pakistan being one case in point), prolonged violent clashes on a local level (such as Chechnya) and military-diplomatic standoffs that nonetheless carry great risks of escalation (such as Korea or Taiwan). Such distinctions could be introduced without falling into the trap of writing down a long laundry list.

In making such critical remarks, we should not lose sight, however, of the central aim of the document: to raise the awareness of the interconnection of rather disparate phenomena, often generating far away from the physical territory of the EU. In many ways, the greatest danger against which Mr Solana is guarding is neglect, since neglecting a local or nascent source of instability leads to deterioration or even contagion – particularly in the cases of state failures and organised crime.

The focus of the Solana paper is therefore a triad of new threats, defined as “more diverse, less visible and less predictable” than large-scale aggression, such as international terrorism, WMD proliferation, failed states and organised crime.

There is a missing link with regard to the sponsors of terrorist activities, most notably state sponsors – in other words, rogue states. As will be seen, the same can be said of WMD, as in both cases Mr Solana does not make the connection between specific types of regimes and specifically threatening international behaviours (either directly or pursued by offering assistance and support to non-state actors). More generally, international terrorism is by definition a phenomenon that involves a wide web of complicity, including those at the political level. The Afghan regime was not removed in the aftermath of 11 September because it was a failed state, but because it came to be recognised as a key seedbed of international terrorism.

The proliferation of WMD is indicated as “the single most important threat to peace and security among nations”, with the specific risk of a WMD arms race in the Middle East and the spread of missile technology cited as immediate European problems. In practice, three distinct kinds of threats are conflated here: the first is the effect of the use of WMDs that are *not* aimed at an EU country (either accidental or deliberate); the second is a direct attack by a state against an EU country; the third kind of threat is an attack carried out by a terrorist group (a non-state actor). The latter is described as the most worrisome scenario because “in such cases, deterrence would fail” which seems to imply that in the previous two cases deterrence would work.

The issue of deterrence is important per se, as well as in the context of the strengthening of treaty regimes; if enhanced or new regimes are needed, it is important to know whether deterrence should be an integral part of them and what role it could play. In addition, if deterrence is not viewed as reliable, probably more emphasis should be placed on defensive measures, including missile defence systems.

More generally, it may be good to keep the distinctions between the various aspects of the WMD threat, since these probably require different policies. Some issues could be tackled through a package approach, but others could require specific measures, ranging from technical assistance to maintain or dismantle weapon systems, to legally binding rules on inspections and transparency, and from tighter export control regimes to intelligence capabilities and (offensive) military instruments.

There is also a practical need to manage the proliferation of WMD once it has already taken place to a significant degree – as witnessed in the recent cases of India, Pakistan and North Korea or the older problem of Israel. This reality calls for a strategy of proliferation-management beyond counter-proliferation.

Under the heading “failed states and organised crime”, the paper makes a connection between “bad governance, civil conflict and the easy availability of small arms”, on one hand, and a weakening of state institutions on the other. The latter in turn leads to the rise of criminal elements with a transnational/international projection. With respect to other risks and threats, it may be necessary to distinguish between levels of danger: Montenegro or Albania may be

more of a ‘threat’ in terms of criminal activities than Somalia, Liberia or Afghanistan; weak states closer to home are probably a more immediate concern for public opinion (as well as for parliaments and important pressure groups), than more distant failing or failed states where brutal conflicts are underway. Again, geographical differentiation may deserve more consistent attention.

A central issue definitely requiring more clarity is the use of expression ‘pre-emptive engagement’. Given the frequent usage of the term ‘pre-emption’ in the media (especially after the publication of the US National Security Strategy in September 2002), often interchangeably with ‘prevention’, an excessive focus on a single word may be beyond the point. Yet, the concept of pre-emptive action (including, of course, coercive action) is just too relevant and too controversial to be left hanging. In any case, the EU strategy *should not* try to paper over the issue by introducing even more confusion than already exists in this field.

Preventing a threat or an event from materialising practically means that the threat does not come into existence, precisely because it is ‘stopped’ or eliminated before it reaches a certain threshold. In other words, it is kept at the level of risk or potential threat. Pre-empting a threat, however, means (at least according to most American English and British English dictionaries) something different: it refers to a particular action or intervention that eradicates a threat; even more specifically (according to the Oxford English Reference Dictionary), to pre-empt means to “prevent (an attack) by disabling an enemy”. The noun pre-emption is accordingly defined (at least in the military sphere) as “the action or strategy of making a pre-emptive attack”.

This basic distinction should form the basis for a clarification in the strategy paper. In particular, it seems inappropriate to logically argue for a policy of “pre-emptive engagement” (itself an interesting neologism) starting with the premise that “...trade and development policies can be powerful tools for promoting reform...contributing to better governance through assistance programmes, conditionality and targeted trade measures should be an important element in a European Union security strategy”, that surprisingly is then immediately followed by the statement that “pre-emptive engagement can avoid serious problems in the future”.

Why not use the well-tested word ‘*prevention*’, with its soft power connotation? Why not confine ‘pre-emption’ to the exercise of hard, coercive power?

Instead, the confusion is compounded by the subsequent paragraph, which calls for a toughening of EU conditional policy by referring to “a number of countries [that] have placed themselves outside the bounds of international society”; in the event that these countries continue their behaviour, “they should understand that there is a price to be paid, including in their relationship with the European Union”. Although there is no mention of coercive measures here, the tone suggests a very assertive approach. And the countries that inevitably come to mind are those otherwise indicated as ‘rogue states’ – precisely the natural target of (real) *pre-emptive* action, particularly with regard to WMD proliferation and terrorist activities.

In summary, various interpretations are possible and are all perfectly legitimate, but these issues are just too serious and complex to allow confusion on terminology. A solid consensus on fundamentals cannot be constructed when times get tough, so it will have to be achieved in advance of the next crisis.

The larger challenges ahead

At a different level, one has to recognise that there is a daunting security agenda for the 21st century, characterised by risks and threats that can ‘mutate’ unexpectedly, as well as move geographically. Technological, socio-demographic and environmental trends may converge to produce crucial changes in the strategic landscape, in ways that no security strategy can fully anticipate.

Unfortunately, the EU countries have missed an opportunity that presented itself around the period 1999-2000, to accelerate the development of a coherent, albeit fairly limited, security strategy. The security agenda of that period was pretty well-defined and, just as important, there was a broad agreement among the key governments on the most pressing priorities: enhanced crisis management and robust peacekeeping/peace-making capabilities to be applied in Europe’s immediate periphery (with the logical corollary of effective political decision-making and unity of operational command). It would have been natural to start from there and then perhaps aim higher as capabilities would develop over time – in parallel with a political/strategic vision for ‘greater Europe’. In the immediate aftermath of NATO’s Operation Allied Force in Kosovo and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the momentum existed for taking the ESDP concept a step further: from a wish list of assets to a transformational instrument benefiting all EU members without detriment to NATO’s role (as the latter remained centered on collective defence against higher-level threats).

Instead, what happened was a slow start, characterised by uneven progress, with the ready-made Petersberg Tasks adopted as benchmarks but little ability to fully implement both NATO’s Defence Capability Initiative (DCI) and the EU’s own Headline Goal, while the Berlin Plus agreement was finalised only in late 2002. As we know all too well, this phase was followed by the shock of the events of 11 September and in turn by the badly divisive debate over Iraq and the transatlantic relationship. Throughout all of this, an EU foreign and security policy seemed to recede into the background, reduced to just another double acronym – CFSP/ESDP – which to this day remains obscure and irrelevant to the vast majority of European citizens. Even worse, the lack of mutual trust on security issues that permeated the intra-EU discussion ‘contaminated’ NATO, while the uncertainty on the alliance’s future (and on US foreign policy under the new administration) contributed to slowing down the crucial decisions to be made at the EU level. A vicious circle was almost created instead of the often-invoked synergy.

Of course, the events of 11 September would have occurred with or without an effective ESDP, and probably the Iraqi crisis would have produced a serious rift under any circumstance. Yet, the habit of close cooperation and solidarity that the post-Kosovo climate might have produced within the EU had the potential to break new ground (and positively affect the debate on the future of transatlantic relations towards a more balanced and mature Euro-American link).

One may well conclude that it was simply impossible for things to happen more rapidly than they have in the field of European security and defence. After all, CFSP itself is a very young creature and the EU as a living experiment in hyper-integration is very recent by any historical standard. The fact remains that, in retrospect, the period from mid-1999 to September 2001 strikes one as having been a window of opportunity, almost the proverbial quiet before the storm.

The end result is that today’s world looks populated by shadowy threats, often de-territorialized and against which any society must feel somewhat vulnerable and at times even powerless. At the same time, Europe’s key ally – the US – has developed a world view that is

not, at least in the short term, conducive to the nuanced arrangements and the gradual, steady advances required by the maturation of an EU security strategy. On the contrary, American policies tend (sometimes deliberately, sometimes accidentally) to fragment the EU front and force the toughest decisions on individual European governments. Difficult missions have come to determine uneasy coalitions just when the EU needs some time to become an effective coalition itself and define its own long-term missions.

The very simplified picture drawn in this paper is not intended to look at an idealised past (a ‘missed window of opportunity’) with longing and regret, but rather to sketch some key problems we will continue to face in the future: how to consolidate the role of the EU as the main stabiliser of the area of the long ‘arc of instability’ that lies to the immediate southeast of its current frontier, while simultaneously tackling a whole set of global phenomena that are now – rightly – high on the agenda.

From both a functional and a regional perspective, it would have been more effective for the EU to take over from NATO the tasks of military-civilian crisis management, especially in greater Europe, while gradually upgrading European capabilities to project military-civilian forces anywhere they may be needed. This is happening in any case, but is perceived to be much less relevant than it was just three years ago, because the mutation of threats has dramatically accelerated. The progressive accumulation of experience, self-confidence and credibility that comes with carrying out successful, limited missions close to home is now almost dwarfed by the colossal task of fighting a global terrorist network potentially armed with WMDs, which acts in collusion with rogue states and takes advantage of failed states and criminal connections. A global horizon requires a new mindset and this is especially demanding for a group that has grown accustomed to working in either regional or sectoral frameworks and is having to painfully improve its collective decision-making mechanisms.

These growing pressures worsen the already serious resource crunch (elite and special forces are especially overstretched, as are peacekeepers and policemen, as it remains difficult to carry them to their destination, support them while in place, keep them safe and bring them back). Each national government tends to work in a protracted ‘emergency mode’ instead of favouring long-term planning and close coordination. If the genuinely global nature of various emerging threats is putting a great strain on the operational capabilities and the prevailing mindset of the US military apparatus (including its intelligence component and the links with domestic law enforcement agencies), it is self-evident that the EU will have a very long way to go. The challenges are certainly ‘for real’.

AMERICA: NO TIME FOR STRATEGIC THINKING

DANA H. ALLIN

Security strategy should be about underlying principles and the long term, but there are times when the contingencies of the historical moment crowd out the possibility. This is what the debacle of post-war Iraq has done to any immediate hope of reconciling transatlantic differences over security strategy. It has done so in two ways. First, the stunning mystery of Iraq's undiscovered weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has cast a fundamental – even epistemological – cloud over the intelligence problem that is at the heart of any workable strategy of pre-emption. Second, the security quagmire that post-war Iraq looks like becoming is likely for the foreseeable future to restrain America's appetite for large-scale military action against 'rogue' WMD threats. This is not necessarily a happy development – there are such threats of a magnitude that require action and against which military intervention could be the only effective action. But it looks like the reality at present.

This context makes it difficult to judge whether the evolution of European thinking on security strategy – as reflected in 'A Secure Europe in a Better World', by High Representative for the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana – will go far enough to meet American concerns at least halfway. What we can say is that for the better part of a decade, the major European powers and the European Union as a whole have been developing a more robust concept of the role of military force in an overall grand strategy.⁸ Yet a transatlantic consensus remains elusive. Things could change with another major terrorist attack, a ripening of nuclear crises in Iran or North Korea or even a dramatic improvement in Iraq's security and governance. But for the time being, American concerns will be singularly driven by its current difficulties.

Intelligence and commitment

The obligatory opening to any discussion about the missing Iraqi biological, chemical and nuclear programmes is that it is still too early to tell: the evidence could yet be uncovered. And although it is indeed too early to tell, it is getting later and later. As Francis Fukuyama, no political foe of the administration of President George Bush, has observed:

After three months in which the US has had every conceivable opportunity to threaten, bribe and cajole Iraqi scientists involved in the WMD programme to reveal their whereabouts, not a single one has done so. On the contrary, they have all stuck to the official line from before the war, that these weapons once existed but were disposed of sometime after the first UN inspectors arrived back in 1991. We have to confront the possibility that they are telling the truth.⁹

Mr. Fukuyama goes on to say that accusations against the Bush administration are misguided, because it was not just the Bush administration that claimed Iraq was developing these weapons. The assessment was general: it included the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), the Clinton administration, independent experts and the intelligence communities of nations that had supported the war as well as those that had opposed it. The assessment was based on the fact that the Iraqis had ambitious chemical, biological and nuclear programmes before the first Gulf war, that they clearly made an effort to continue

⁸ The evolution of some countries, such as Germany, is obviously more dramatic than that of others – notably Britain and France – as they were not very timid about the use of force in the first place.

⁹ Fukuyama, Francis (2002), "The Real Intelligence Failure", *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 August.

them after the war and that they systematically lied about what was going on throughout the whole UNSCOM period. The assessment also relied to a greater or lesser extent on the reasonable proposition that if they were lying so systematically, they must have had something to lie about.

Mr. Fukuyama is too easy on a Bush administration that painted the threat in the direst terms to justify a war about which many friends of America had good reason to be wary. Even accepting what was then the consensus view on Iraqi programmes, it was reasonable to argue, as former UK Foreign Secretary Robin Cook did argue in his resignation speech before the House of Commons, that “Iraq probably has no weapons of mass destruction in the commonly understood sense of the term – namely a credible device capable of being delivered against a strategic city target.”¹⁰ Whatever the good reasons were for deposing Saddam Hussein – and they were many – the credibility of the administration’s case about the specific threat posed by Iraq’s programmes will affect the reception accorded to future American arguments for pre-emptive action.

This is worrying precisely because Mr. Fukuyama is correct in a larger sense: while the Bush administration should be held accountable for its hype and exaggerations, this should not divert us from the looming problem of a terrorist-WMD nexus or the difficulty of obtaining politically actionable intelligence. What we thought we knew about Iraq was ‘politically actionable’ in the US Congress and the UK House of Commons, but not in the UN Security Council, NATO or the court of world opinion. It is easy to imagine cases where the threat would be graver and more immediate, yet the intelligence would even less conclusive and less convincing.

And whatever the final judgment is about this particular case, the larger problem is undeniable. In the new strategic context of 11 September, the Bush administration (and the government of Prime Minister Tony Blair) did make a compelling argument that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among outlaw regimes such as Saddam Hussein’s was no longer tolerable. This was not because of any particular evidence of a substantial link between Iraq’s regime and al-Qaeda. Rather, it was because of the clearly documented determination of al-Qaeda to acquire WMD and the prospective logic of its eventually approaching other sworn enemies of America and the West for this purpose.¹¹

One could even take the view that the truth about Iraq didn’t matter, i.e. ‘if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck’, then the international community has no choice but to treat it like a ‘duck’. In the case of Iraq, for more than a decade the regime of Saddam Hussein flawlessly played the part of a serial and unreformable violator of UN demands that it dismantle its WMD programmes. If it turns out to have been, at least in the final years, just a bizarre bit of totalitarian play-acting – well, at least the example will have been set for other rogue regimes about the costs of failing to fulfil UN Chapter 7 demands on WMD fully, transparently and to the letter.

Sadly, perhaps, things can never be so simple, for the strategic demands of actually taking on these rogue regimes involve strategic (not just legal or moral) judgments about whether war is wise or necessary at a given point in time. Whether the problem is defined as the repeated violations of UN Chapter 7 demands, as an immediate strategic-level threat or, for that matter,

¹⁰ Robin Cook’s resignation speech, 18 March 2003.

¹¹ The objection that Islamic fundamentalists and secular Ba’thists were ideologically incompatible was really no more reassuring than the suggestion that Nazi Germany and Communist Russia could never have cooperated.

as a massive humanitarian outrage, the solution will often require a regime change.¹² (The assumption here is that coercive diplomacy has failed, as it often will.) And regime change carries the obvious obligation of follow-up state- or nation-building. Here is the second way in which Iraq has clouded the possibility for transatlantic consensus on security strategy. As Morton Abramowitz, a long-time advocate of sustained US engagement in nation-building has argued:

...Bush has probably achieved, inadvertently, what he campaigned for: getting the United States out of nation-building...He has done this by embarking on nation-building unprecedented since World War II and in a land that we do not know well and that does not play to our strengths. And it was done, it is now clear, with little effective planning and with largely unexamined notions of what can be accomplished.¹³

One may add to this point the real possibility that the invasion of Iraq will end up making the Islamist-terrorism problem less, not more, manageable (this opinion is not ventured from a position of having opposed the war – at least not as a matter of principle). And it is important to add that, since premature withdrawal from Iraq would be a disaster for the US, one has to believe that the alternative of staying can yield some measure of success. But it is also clear that the best of intentions can produce strategic blunders.

Paper tiger?

America, in short, will be distracted. This reality overshadows the question of how the US may react to a more robust European security strategy. In any event, is such a strategy at hand? It certainly is on paper, and while paper products are easy to deride, it is important that the Solana document is well-written, straight-forward, clear and direct in dealing with the most compelling security threats of the early 21st century. These are all qualities that some Americans are quick to judge as alien to European strategic culture. Yet European strategic culture is evolving and it has done so since the early failures in the Balkans. Ideas matter, as do their expression and reception by EU ministers. This is not a document produced on Venus.

It sets clear benchmarks against which the European Union may soon be judged: “Those who are unwilling to follow the norms of international community should understand that there is a price to be paid, including their relationship with the European Union” (p. 10). Much favourable commentary has noted that the European Union appears to be taking this line seriously in its attitude towards Iran’s nuclear programme.¹⁴ American confidence in Europe as a security partner could be greatly affected by whether the EU carries this tougher Iran policy through to its logical conclusion. Likewise, where the Solana document says that “We need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention” (p. 13), there is every reason to expect that the conjunction of outlaw regimes, WMD and terrorism could soon put that strategic readiness to the test.

If the promise of this document is fulfilled, it would constitute a serious challenge to the United States, and may actually coax the Americans back into a strategic posture that emphasises global cooperation and a sensible mix of hard and soft power. But much will

¹² Walter Slocombe, in a paper delivered to the European Security Forum on the eve of the Iraq war, made a persuasive case why this must be so for the WMD threat. Here it is simply added that the major Western interventions of recent years, which were less controversial than Iraq, involved regime changes. This was absolutely the case for Afghanistan and the net effect in the Balkans. Nation-building responsibilities followed.

¹³ Abramowitz, Morton (2003), “After Iraq, Shrinking Horizons”, *The Washington Post*, 31 July.

¹⁴ See for example, Everts, Seven and Daniel Keohane (2003), “The European Convention and EU Foreign Policy: Learning from Failure”, *Survival*, 45, No. 3, pp. 179-180, Autumn.

depend, as suggested at the outset, on historical and political contingencies. If a Democratic administration is elected in 2004, it would probably be receptive to such a development in Europe. So too may a second-term Bush administration that is chastened by its difficulties in Iraq. It is also possible, however, that these difficulties will just embitter the American public and elites, and keep the administration on ideological overdrive.

Inflexible European attitudes could aggravate the problem. The Solana paper is perfectly reasonable in arguing that: “strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfil its responsibilities and to act effectively, must be a European priority” (p. 9). But Europeans also need to recognise the special challenge of hard cases. If France, for example, be guiled by its vision of a multipolar webbing to restrain American power, adopts a rigid formula towards force and legitimacy, one fears a vicious cycle of competing transatlantic ideologues. A view that only the UN Security Council can confer legitimacy on military action could be as counterproductive as the right-wing American aversion to all things UN – and just as unnecessary. France and Europe did not take a dogmatic attitude towards the UN-based legitimacy for the Kosovo war. A similar pragmatism is called for in addressing threats of a character unforeseen by the drafters of the UN Charter.

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The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) joined forces late in the year 2000, to launch a new forum on European security policy in Brussels. The objective of this *European Security Forum* is to bring together senior officials and experts from EU and Euro-Atlantic Partnership countries, including the United States and Russia, to discuss security issues of strategic importance to Europe. The Forum is jointly directed by CEPS and the IISS and is hosted by CEPS in Brussels.

The Forum brings together a select group of personalities from the Brussels institutions (EU, NATO and diplomatic missions), national governments, parliaments, business, media and independent experts. The informal and confidential character of the Forum enables participants to exchange ideas freely.

The aim of the initiative is to think ahead about the strategic security agenda for Europe, treating both its European and transatlantic implications. The topics to be addressed are selected from an open list that includes crisis management, defence capabilities, security concepts, defence industries and institutional developments (including enlargement) of the EU and NATO.

The Forum has about 60 members, who are invited to all meetings and receive current information on the activities of the Forum. This group meets every other month in a closed session to discuss a pre-arranged topic under Chatham House rules. The Forum meetings are presided over by François Heisbourg, Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. As a general rule, three short issue papers are commissioned from independent experts for each session presenting EU, US and Russian viewpoints on the topic.

The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) is an independent policy research institute founded in Brussels in 1983, with the aim of producing sound policy research leading to constructive solutions to the challenges facing Europe.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), founded in London in 1958, is the leading international and independent organisation for the study of military strategy, arms control, regional security and conflict resolution.



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