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**We have crossed the Rubicon – but where are we heading next?**

**Reflections on the European Security Strategy versus the US National Security Strategy**

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It was in September 2002 that the United States released the latest version of its National Security Strategy, initiating a heated debate on how the US had adopted its policies after the profound chock of September 11 the year before.

At that time, the thought of a corresponding European Security Strategy seemed rather farfetched, discussed only at meetings such as those of the Centre for European Reform.

As usual, it took a major crisis to move the governments of the European Union forward. It was the profound differences over the conflict in Iraq that convinced at least some governments that one should try to re-establish some sort of consensus in the Union through a more strategic document.

The Greek Presidency took the initiative in early May, and the High Representative was asked to produce a first draft to the Thessaloniki meeting of the European Council in late June.

There, heads of state and governments took note of the first draft, and it was decided that a final document should be presented prior to and be decided upon at the meeting of the European Council on December 13<sup>th</sup>.

Since then, three seminars have been held to reflect on different aspects of the draft paper, and a final proposal is now only days away.

Then, the final battle over the European Security Strategy (ESS) will begin. The outcome will be of great importance for the way in which the European Union moves forward with its common foreign and security policy, and for the way in which it is perceived in the outside world.

So far, many of the discussions on the common foreign and security policy have been focused on either institutional deficiencies or different hardware deficits, and improvements in these respects have been thought to produce, in themselves, a far better common foreign and security policy.

While certainly not irrelevant, I believe these discussions have not addressed the key issues when it comes to the development of CFSP. I remember writing after the Kosovo war that our number one capabilities gap was not in smart bombs, but rather in smart policies. If we can develop a strategic consensus around a security strategy between the now soon 25 member countries of the Union, I believe the other issues will be much easier to sort out.

We thus need to recognise, that our deficiency in the software of common policy is far greater than our deficiencies in institutions or instruments. And

it is this fundamental deficiency that the European Security Strategy seeks to start to address.

We are trying to create a common European strategic culture, as well as a common European assessment of the tasks and challenges ahead of us. And as part of that, we must seek a more common European approach to how to handle the relationship with the power across the Atlantic.

The ESS as it is now emerging can only be seen as the start of that process. Thus, comparisons with the US National Security Strategy (USNSS )are bound to be somewhat unfair. Nevertheless, some remarks can be made.

The two documents have different starting points, thus vividly illustrating how the dominating agendas differ on the two sides of the Atlantic.

The European dominating agenda is the one set in 1989.

*“Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history.”*

The US dominating agenda is the one set in 2001.

*“Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed fundamentally. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it takes to purchase a single tank.”*

Thus, the dominating thought of the ESS is how to extend the structures of peace and stability throughout Europe and its “near abroad”, while the dominating thought of the USNSS is to seek security on a global basis against the new and menacing threats so vividly demonstrated in 2001.

The USNSS is a document that is both more reactive and proactive than the ESS. It is obviously also a document that is more global in its scope and more comprehensive in its approach.

It is more reactive in its much-discussed approach to how the threat of the proliferation of WMD should be handled, in particular if there is a risk of WMD falling into the hands of terrorist networks or hostile states.

*“The United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction – and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively.”*

Although seen as very new at the time, this doctrine had in fact been there for some time. I remember that there were vivid discussions in Washington in the early 1990’s on the feasibility of an attack against the then identified North Korean nuclear facilities. Eventually, the option was abandoned, not the least because it was found to be unfeasible, and the option of the Framework Agreement was chosen. In the light of September 11, the doctrine acquired a new relevance across the US political spectrum.

The ESS was conceived not the least to show that there was a European awareness of the same new threats that had come to dominate US thinking. And it identifies three key threats. First, international terrorism. Second, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. And third, failed states and organized crime.

And it correctly notes, that *“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.”*

Thus, the two documents don't fundamentally differ on the threat assessment in these regards. Where they do differ is on the policies to be pursued in countering the new threats that have emerged.

The USNSS is often seen as a document of unilateralism. It is not. But neither is it a statement of a policy of multilateralism. The United States seek friends, encourages allies and tries to build coalitions, but where the difference is, is in its reluctance to agree to having its own freedom of action inhibited by these different arrangements.

If the USNSS isn't a pure document of unilateralism, neither is the ESS a document of pure multilateralism. Its stress is instead on something called "effective multilateralism", thus conceding the point that there is a multilateralism that is ineffective, and that action of an unspecified nature might also be necessary when the rules of international organisations, regimes or treaties are not respected.

In practical policy, the difference between the approaches of the two documents might not be as large as it is often seen. The case of Iraq might be the exception rather than the rule in light of the deep divisions over policy towards the regime of Saddam Hussein that had been there in the UN Security Council since 1991.

In the cases of Iran and North Korea, the differences are substantially less, and whatever happens, the Iraqi model for action will not apply. In many respects, Iran will be the true test case of both how the Europeans react, and how the United States shapes its policy.

Thus, on the issue that is dominating the US 2001-inspired agenda, the two documents tend to agree on the nature and the importance of the threat, while their different approaches on how it should be handled are not necessarily as dissimilar as they are often portrayed.

The issue of WMD isn't new on the international agenda. If we are speaking in numbers, we faced a much more serious threat in these respects during the decades of confrontation with the Soviet Union. Models suggest that the first 24 hours of fighting only along the central front through Germany would have brought more than 180 million dead, not to mention all the follow-on effects. We now know that the Soviet chemical, and even more biological, weapons programs were of much bigger dimensions than we were aware of at the time.

What makes the WMD issue more difficult now is both the proliferation of WMD and the combination of these weapons with fragile, failing and failed states, thus making it difficult to depend solely on deterrence when handling this threat.

Both documents stress the new issues of fragile, failing and failed states. In my view, this is the most demanding and most important of the new challenges we are facing. If we can develop the concepts and the instruments with which this challenge can be handled, we also have a much better chance of handling the other challenges and threats.

Here, approaches in the two documents both differ and converge.

The EUSS sets as the first of its three strategic objectives the need to promote "*stability and good governance in our immediate neighbourhood*", and says that "*our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relationships.*"

This follows naturally from that evolution of the structures of integration that gradually has brought the rule of the law and representative governments to larger and larger parts of Europe. We often tend to forget the importance of the contribution of the structures of European integration to

the democratic stability that we now take for granted on the Iberian Peninsula and in Greece. And without both the magnetism and the model that the European Union represents, the true miracle of the orderly transition in the historically unstable regions of the Baltic countries and Central Europe would hardly have been possible, although the importance of NATO and the evolving US security guarantee should not be overlooked either.

It is by gradually, in different forms, geographically extending this model that the European Union hopes to be able to make a substantial contribution to stability and good governance in its part of the world.

Towards the East, the strategies of Wider Europe are now under discussion, as well as the further evolution of the partnership we seek with Russia. Not underestimating the difficulties we will face here, I remain convinced that it is in the Southeast, as we enter that vast post-Ottoman area from Bihac in the northwest to Basra in the southeast, that we encounter the real challenges in the decades ahead.

On how these challenges should be met, the EUSS is by necessity rather vague. The Western Balkans is mentioned in passing, and I expect the final document to put an even greater stress on the Middle East peace process. The process of further enlargement, including Turkey, is only vaguely referred to.

To develop the more comprehensive policies in this direction will be the key challenge in the years ahead. Our frequent claims that we have been successful in the Western Balkans are, in my opinion, much premature. And it is in this direction that we gradually also will meet the USNSS in all its different respects. The Greater Middle East will be the crucial meeting point and testing grounds for both the ESS and the USNSS in the decades ahead.

If the ESS stresses the need for stable and good governance, and certainly mentions democracy, the USNSS when addressing the same issues tend to lay less emphasis on stability and more emphasis on long-term change of the nature of regimes. While the word “freedom” occurs frequently in the USNSS, it does not appear at all in the ESS.

It has often been said that with the events of 1989 and 2001, we have left the Westphalian international order of orderly states and a balance of power behind us. We can no longer ignore the internal failings or orders of a state, both for humanitarian and security reasons, and we can no longer build a system of peace and security, particularly in our part of the world, based on a balance of powers.

The USNSS is explicit on the types of states it seeks to advance and promote. *“America must stand firmly for the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of the law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property.”*

The ESS is somewhat more vague on this subject, restricting itself to saying that *“spreading good governance, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order.”*

The more operational version of the USNSS was delivered by President Bush in his address to the National Endowment for Democracy on November 6. Far too neglected on this side of the Atlantic, I believe the speech expresses a shift in US policy towards the entire region of the Greater Middle East that will remain over the course of the next few administrations.

Metternich has been abandoned, and Wilson has been resurrected, in a long-term approach to the region that is of the greatest significance for the

security of both the European Union and the United States in the decades ahead. The consequences will be profound.

Thus, while the USNSS applies to the more global policies pursued by the global superpower, and the ESS is bound to have its greatest relevance when it comes to consolidating and building peace in Europe and its more or less immediate neighbourhood, it is in the Greater Middle East that we will come together; either to succeed, or to fail.

Much needs to be done in order to develop the appropriate policies. I always stress the similarities of the challenges we are faced with across the post-Ottoman area. Iraq is the potential Yugoslavia of the Middle East. The issues of Kosovo and Kurdistan are not too dissimilar, and in between them we have the urgent but difficult issue of Cyprus.

Throughout this region, we are not primarily dealing with the issues of the new threats of terrorism or WMD, but primarily with the old issues of state building in areas of national, cultural and religious diversity. And these issues are much neglected in both of these documents.

The evolution of the ESS is a development of profound significance. We should be aware of the fact that previous attempts in this direction have either been blocked or, as when the Western European Union made an attempt in 1995, turned out to be too feeble to be taken seriously. It took the collective European failure of Iraq, and the ensuing crisis of confidence in our attempt to build a true CFSP, to produce this attempt at a leap forward.

Much certainly remains to be done. I hope that the final draft of the ESS will repeat the need to “*develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and, when necessary, robust intervention*”, and that it will not shy away from saying that more defence resources, as well as transformation of our armed forces are absolutely necessary.

And clearly, we also need to develop both institutions and instruments in order to be seen as credible either in Washington or Moscow or – as important – in the eyes of our own electorates when they expect Europe to be able to stand up for its values and its interests.

But key is to lift the taboo on strategic thinking, dialogue and planning that has hitherto existed in the institutions of the European Union. With 25 members, all being willing to make their contributions, the importance of trying to develop a comprehensive and credible strategic framework becomes even more acute.

The European Security Strategy is a most significant first step. It is as such it must be welcomed and endorsed. The process of European integration has entered into new territory.

We have crossed a Rubicon. The question is where to go from here.

