

International Security Cooperation in an Age of Terrorism

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A week ago – last Wednesday - I happened to be in Sarajevo at the same time as NATO ended its mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina and handed over to the European Union.

It was not a particularly important event for Bosnia. Nine years after the end of the war, other issues are dominating the concerns of the citizens of its different parts. While neither the nationalist rhetoric nor the nationalist issues are gone – history is a slow-moving process – it is the economic and social issues that are increasingly seen as those critical for the future.

But if the event wasn't of great significance for Bosnia, it was of both symbolic and substantive importance for both NATO and the European Union. It was an important

waypoint in the on-going efforts to adjust our international and European instruments to the new challenges of a new international situation.

Nine years earlier in Bosnia, I was also around as the United Nations, which had been given the thankless task of doing everything with nothing in the middle of a cruel civil war, handed over to NATO, which had been given the task of doing rather little with far greater resources as the country was doing the transition from war to peace.

Then, it was the first ever mission of this sort for NATO. An organisation whose military arm had been built for war-fighting now had to restructure to do peace-keeping.

What was a novelty by then has since turned into something resembling routine. I could note that after the ceremony in Sarajevo, the Secretary-General of NATO flew directly to Baghdad. With demanding missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan, it's obvious that there are even greater challenges down the road.

If the Secretary-General of NATO flew from Sarajevo to Baghdad, I did also note that the High Representative of the European Union arrived in Sarajevo directly from crisis talks in the Ukraine. And between Kiev, Sarajevo and Baghdad we certainly see the changed nature of the different challenges we Europeans have to handle in the world of today.

Most of us grew up in a very different world. Security policy in Europe was essentially a question of how to handle the potential threat of the over-militarized and uncertain Soviet colossus that had extended its reach right into the hearth of Europe. In spite of not being member of NATO, my country not the least during the tense years of the early 1980's was constantly reminded of its position as a potential front-line state in that possible confrontation.

Then everything started to change very fast.

We were used to deal with linear and gradual change in the international system, but suddenly we were confronted with non-linear, dramatic and fundamental change.

And as we started to believe that we had grasped the magnitude of the revolutionary transformation of 1989, we had to comprehend and to take into account the equally revolutionary transformation of September 11 2001.

Rarely in history has the international systems been subject to two such cataclysmic changes within such a short space of time. That there has been, is and will remain for some time some confusion on how to react is hardly surprising.

One obvious effect of the twin transformations of 1989 and 2001 is that the relationship across the Atlantic today looks very different from what it did earlier. But what is often described as a crisis is in reality an unavoidable adjustment to a situation that is perhaps somewhat more normal.

Perceptions of security have rarely been identical on the two sides of the Atlantic.

It's enough to remind us of the time it took the United States to accept the reality of the challenge Europe was exposed to during the two major wars of the 20th century. And an American would certainly point out that Europe was of little relevance as America had to deal with what it considered security threats in Central and South America.

It took some time for America to realize the magnitude of the challenge that Winston Churchill called attention to in his controversial Fulton speech. But when it did, that come to signal the beginning of a unique period in the trans-Atlantic relationship. The true founder of that relationship was, of course, Joseph Stalin.

We were united by one global threat, and the most dangerous focus of that threat was right in the hearth of Europe. Tanks from far-away Russia and America faced each other in the divided capital of once so powerful Germany. We were all Berliners, and we were all Atlantisists.

As first the extended Soviet Empire, and then the Soviet Union itself collapsed, Europe was faced with very fundamental questions concerning its security and its future.

The stability of divided Europe was gone. There was no Concert of Europe to be revived. A fall-back to a multitude of independently manoeuvring nation states would bring us back to the danger of a new 1914.

There was, in reality, no realistic alternative to the gradual extension of the instruments of integration that had worked in the Western part of Europe to cover as large parts of our continent as possible, aiming at the gradual formation of a federation of nation states that could secure the peace, and thus promote the prosperity, of Europe more or less in its entirety.

We changed from trying to prevent war through a policy of military deterrence to trying to preserve peace through a policy of economic and political integration.

This has been the core of the politics of Europe in the nearly decade and a half since the Treaty of Maastricht.

Looking back, it has been far more of a success than is generally recognized. Just one illustration.

It wasn't long ago that Estonia was a country very few were even aware of. Contacts were nearly impossible. There were only eight telephone lines between Sweden and all of the Soviet Union. You could wait for days for a call, and the only thing that was dead certain was that there were more listeners on the line than you had asked for. Over Tallinn lay the greyness of the GULAG.

Today, everything is different.

Estonia is a member of both the European Union and NATO. There is a helicopter shuttle every 20 minutes between the colourful and bustling city centres of Tallinn and Helsinki – there is already talk of a dynamic integrated future region of “Talsinki”.

Estonia is the vanguard of the Baltic tiger economies, and is already ahead of most of the older members of the European Union in the e-revolution that is transforming our economies.

What has happened in these short years is nothing less than a wonder. It was one thing to bring down the old dictatorships. Many shared in that accomplishment.

But it was another to build the new modern states we are now starting to see from the Baltic to the Black Sea. That was made possible by the magnetism of European integration and the model that it provided. The soft power of Europe has produced the most successful example of true regime change that modern history knows.

That success is obvious. But looking ahead, we know that the most difficult challenges are still ahead of us.

At the upcoming meeting of the European Council, decisions are likely on the eventual opening of accession negotiations with both Croatia and Turkey. As the diplomatic manoeuvring prior to the meeting is vividly demonstrating, we are entering into areas of entirely new challenges that are likely to put new strains on our existing policies and principles.

And we will also have the answer the new orange challenge coming out of wide lands on either side of the Dnepr.

There is an urgent need for a new Grand Strategy of enlargement that gives coherence and clarity to our long-term ambitions for integration and membership not least to the entire region of South-eastern Europe.

But as these issues - the building of peace by the sharing of sovereignty on a regional basis – continues to dominate Europe, the dominating political agenda on the other side of the Atlantic is a distinctly different one.

In much the same way as 1989 changed the fundamentals of security in and for Europe, 2001 changed the fundamentals of security in and for America. But while our

regional response was the sharing of sovereignty to build peace, their global approach was one of exercising what they considered their sovereign rights in order to seek security.

The basic thrust of our European efforts retain basic American support, and the basic thrust of the American efforts retain basic European support, but this can not disguise the fact that the dominating agendas on the different sides of the Atlantic have now diverged in a way that no high-flying declarations can fundamentally alter.

Seen in a longer perspective, we might be back to a somewhat more normal state of affairs in the trans-Atlantic relationship.

Provided we understand this, there is no reason why we should not be able to build something mutually as well as globally beneficial from this new basis.

While in the past it might well have been the near-identity in perspective across the Atlantic that was the key to success, in this new period it might be that it is rather the divergence of perspective, and the interaction between them, that holds the key to the mastering of the difficult challenges ahead.

In his most recent book "Free World", Timothy Garton Ash argues with usual eloquence that Europe and America has a window of opportunity of a couple of decades in trying to shape the world until the rise of the giants of Asia shifts the baton of leadership to them and their often different values.

Perhaps. I wouldn't discount the dangers that are there in different parts of Asia – think only of the Korean peninsula and the issues across the Straits of Taiwan - and that might well change the direction of change in that part of the world as well.

But I do believe that the way in which we master the key challenges ahead in our region and its near abroad during the coming years might well determine our possibilities of shaping the wider world in the decades ahead.

How to do that is obviously the key question.

Much attention is rightly given to military power. Here, America spends roughly as much as everyone else of relevance taken together. Increasingly, it has capabilities that borders on the realms of science fiction in our countries.

But military power in itself is of little use. Power in relation to others powers isn't necessarily that useful either. It's power in relation to the tasks to be tackled that is the true measure of relevance.

And here the situation is a very different one. You might have supremacy in outer space, but if you still can't secure the road from the airport to the Green Zone in Baghdad that isn't necessarily of much use.

And the truth is that while the United States is a superpower in relation to all other powers, it is distinctly not one in relation to the challenges it and the rest of the world faces – be that in Mesopotamia, in Palestine, in Iran, in Pakistan, in Congo, in the Sudan or on the Korean peninsula.

While in the past we were threatened by the strong states and the strong armies, we are now far more endangered by the weak states and the shadowy structures that seek their home in them. It's also here that the threats of a global terrorism find its most dangerous and most potent homes.

Our security in the decades to come – on both sides of the Atlantic – will be determined less by our ability to use military means to destroy strong states and strong armies than by our ability to use a wide array of instruments and institutions to repair weak states and, in extreme cases, even build new ones.

State destruction is a relatively straightforward exercise. Some states even do it to themselves. Bombing is an easy business.

But state building – often in complex multi-ethnic areas – requires an abundance of policy, purse and patience – often a far bit more than our sometimes very impatient democracies can muster.

I believe that in much the same way as nuclear deterrence was the core competence needed to master the old international order, state building in difficult and demanding areas is the core competence that must be mastered in the era we have now entered.

Our instruments for this are hardly as developed as they ought to be. We have every reason to try to learn from the mistakes we have made during the past decades in order to prevent them being repeated in the future.

Much too often, issues like these are seen primarily in military terms. We think in terms of quick interventions and believe there will be a quick exit. Much too seldom is it understood that a military intervention – for the one reason or the other – is only the very first phase of a prolonged, multi-faceted and very expensive engagement that is essential if the initial intervention should not be seen as a failure.

If you win the war, but fail to win the peace, you have achieved little but paved the way for the next war.

The 1990's was indeed a time of great achievements for Europe. But it was also the decade of the tragedies of the different wars of Yugoslav succession. That we were unprepared for them is somewhat of an understatement, and international policy during the more than decade-long series of different wars was more often reactive and focused on the short-term necessities than proactive and focused on the long-term objectives.

There are important lessons for the future to draw from the very different situations of Bosnia and Kosovo.

In Bosnia, after a war that lasted longer than it should have done due to differences across the Atlantic, we finally secured a peace agreement based on a political

compromise between the different so-called constituent nationalities of the country, bringing in also the region in its entirety and based on a wide international consensus.

The Dayton peace agreement was the most ambitious document of its kind in modern history, seeking not only to end a war but also the setting up of a state on the basis of little more than the ruins and rivalries of a bitter war.

As we started to assist in its implementation, the official belief was that this would be a short and military-dominated affair. The strict time limit given to the NATO stabilization force was one year, and far more authority was given to the international military presence than to its weak political counterpart.

A decade down the road very much looks different.

NATO stayed for nine years, and as it hands over to the European Union it hands over to a mission without any end date. And while the small international civilian and political presence in the beginning was only advisory, it has since develop into a vice regal function of such powers as to make observers question whether Bosnia can really be seen as a truly sovereign country.

But it's still been a success. War will not come back. There is a slow process towards a slightly more relaxed living together. Many refugees have returned. Nine years is just a short moment in a long healing process.

Kosovo was and is very different. Here we stumbled into a war as we failed in our search for a peace, and ended that war with the necessary peace even more elusive, distant and difficult. In the absence of any alternatives, the United Nations was asked to undertake an open-ended but essentially holding operation in the belief that time would heal the wounds and the problems would go away.

But in regions like these, open wounds seldom heal by themselves. Instead, they have a tendency of getting worse and spreading the infection even wider. And it's more this that we have seen in Kosovo during the last years. There is no peace

between the different communities – at the best an enforced absence of open war. There is no doubt that a withdrawal of the NATO force from Kosovo would lead to a savage return of ethnic fighting.

At least two lessons can be drawn from this.

The first is that an implementation of a peace agreement – in effect a state-building exercise – requires not only a prolonged military presence but an even more determined long-term political and economic effort.

The second is that an intervention that does not secure an immediate political agreement by building as wide a local, regional and international consensus as possible, or is even uncertain of the its long-term political objectives in terms of state building, is more than likely to lead to serious problems further down the road.

As we look ahead, we know that we will be faced with numerous challenges in which we will have reason to ponder these lessons.

For us Europeans, it is natural to pay particular attention to all the challenges coming out of the post-Ottoman area that stretches from Bihac in Bosnia in the northwest to Basra by the Gulf in the southeast. But in a way, this post-Ottoman area is just part of that large arc of instability – Zbigniew Brzezinski recently referred to it as the Grand Balkans – that stretches from Agadir to Amritsar and from Astrakhan to Aden.

For thousands of years this wide region has been the birth- and the meeting place of civilizations, religions and cultures. And the centuries have left behind a mosaic that does not easily fit into the more recent models of nation states.

Yugoslavia and Iraq were created at the same time out of the debris of the same Empire. The issues of Kosovo and Kurdistan share at least some obvious characteristics. Halfway between them we find the beautiful island of Cyprus, where a most ambitious attempt at solution was only recently destroyed by the forces of nationalist intransigence. Towards the north, we find the mosaic created as peoples moving across the steppes had to make halt by the mountains of the Caucasus. And

I need to remind no one about the challenges we are facing in the ancient lands between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

All through this area the task is seldom to build nation states of the model that has dominated Europe during the recent centuries, but rather to seek to build or to strengthen state structures that can command the allegiance of peoples of different beliefs and orientation.

This is the task we have been struggling with for close than a decade in Bosnia, that we so far have failed with in Kosovo, which has proved so difficult in Cyprus, that has contributed to a series of conflicts in the Caucasus and that is now preoccupying us in the twin state-building efforts in Mesopotamia and in Palestine.

It's here – in the Fertile Crescent of the age of Abraham – that we are now facing the mother of all state building tasks.

The liberation of Iraq from its past and the liberation of Palestine from its present, thus giving security also to Israel, are tasks that go hand in hand. The success of the one will further the success of the other – the failure of the one will pave the way for the failure of the other.

The coming years will be of critical importance. And in few areas is it of such importance both to formulate a coherent European policy and to seek a clear understanding across the Atlantic.

It's high time to break up from the debates about the recent past, and to focus on the obvious tasks of the immediate future.

The stakes here are high.

A decade from now that entire crescent will be fertile either with democracy and reform – or with despair and with rage.

Whichever of those alternatives will be the outcome, it will have profound consequences not only for those countries, but for that entire region and for us Europeans who happen to be the immediate neighbors. The consequences will be felt right into our own societies..

There will be the need for a far more multinational presence and effort for these two state building efforts to have a chance of success. A stronger role for the United Nations is obvious, but I can see important roles for both NATO and the European Union in both of these tasks in the years ahead.

It would not be surprising if the new authorities emerging out of the imminent elections in both Palestine and Iraq will ask for such a broader international presence both in terms of its composition and in terms of its different efforts.

We - not least the European Union – must stand ready. Few issues should be higher up on the list of priorities in Brussels.

We need to develop our institutions.

The recently published report by the High-Level Panel appointed by the UN Secretary-General makes some recommendations for changes within the United Nations in this regard. But the panel does not seem to have taken these issues as seriously as they should have. Its recommendations in this area are too limited in their ambitious at best, and likely to result in a bureaucratic muddle at worst.

In Washington, an entirely new and ambitious office has recently been created in the administration for these issues. A similar effort is underway in London. Across the Atlantic, an entire cottage industry of think-thanks is writing papers on the subject.

But the European scene on these issues is remarkably quiet.

We need a focus for attention to these issues, a centre for excellence that can learn from the mistakes of the past, a partner for the international dialogue on these

complex issues that is slowly starting. We need what we might refer to as a European Institute of Peace.

This should be even more obvious we look beyond also the more immediate challenges in the post-Ottoman areas.

We see how the virus of disintegration risks tearing the one state of West Africa after the other apart with horrible human and devastating economic consequences. We can not restrict ourselves to just watching on television.

And as we struggle through the United Nations and in support of the African Union with the challenges of Africa's second largest country – Congo – we must actively prepare for what lies ahead in its biggest country – the Sudan.

Here we are on the brink of a peace agreement that calls for a six-year interim period before a referendum will decide whether Sudan will stay as one country or whether it will break up in what first will be two states, but further down the road very possible more than that.

Sudan borders on no less than ten other countries, and most of them are likely to be seriously affected in the one way or the other by a break-up of this giant but fragile state. The future of large parts of Africa is at stake.

Our ability to handle these state-building tasks is of crucial importance not only in order to prevent humanitarian catastrophe, perhaps even genocide, as disintegration tears existing structures apart, but also in deciding whether we will prevail in the present struggle against the new global terrorism that we have been confronted with in recent years.

In a struggle against terrorism, long-term success comes less from eliminating the present terrorists – critical as that is - than from preventing new ones from emerging.

It's not primarily the number of bodies we can make cold with our weapons, but the number of hearths and minds that we can make warm with our values that will determine the long-term outcome.

By now we know a fair amount about how those that end up in terrorist organizations and networks are recruited. It's often a long process with several different steps. Striking is that what often causes a person to take the step from just being a strong believer in the justness of a cause to being ready even to sacrifice his or her life is the wish to go and fight in a specific conflict – often a conflict of essentially national nature.

Mohammed Ata – to take the most well-known – wanted to go and fight in Chechnya. It was only when that critical decision had been taken that he was diverted to Afghanistan, and only when he had been there for a while that he was diverted to the mega-strike against the United States.

We see this pattern repeated time after time. In the past it was often Bosnia or Afghanistan. In Asia it could be Kashmir or Mindanao. Now it's often Chechnya or Iraq. And very often the issue of Palestine is there - at least in the background.

We live in the age of television and the internet. The suffering in far-away national conflicts is beamed to each and everyone that wants to see and listen. And the subtle messages of recruiting are often to be found somewhere out there in cyberspace for the soul that starts the search. A preacher could be somewhere in between.

Thus, the link between the state building tasks necessary to overcome these different national conflicts and the struggle to contain and defeat the forces of terrorism is obvious. It's not only a question of preventing the emergence of law- and stateless areas that can provide the base- and training areas for terrorist networks, but also a question of trying to take away one of the real root causes of the terrorism that we see.

The al-Qaeda network that still dominates the attention given to these issues across the world is in essence a product of the conflicts in Afghanistan during the 1980's.

But if we were to fail in Iraq, and new groups will be able to operate recruiting and training facilities of different sorts there, it will not be long before we will be confronted with new battle-hardened generations of terrorists coming out of this new conflict.

The challenges in the former Fertile Crescent has of course a wider importance as well – one that you are all too familiar with after recent tragic events in your country.

For more than a generation, we Europeans were threatened by the strength of Soviet power coming out of Russia.

But for the generation to come, our most difficult challenge will be to handle the consequences of the convulsions of the wider Muslim world.

These convulsions have different roots.

The misery and failure of large parts of the Arab world has as much to do with the failure of Arab socialism as it has to do with religion. But the end result is a region where demographic and social strains are building up in such a way as to make explosions as well as implosions more than likely in the years ahead.

And whatever the roots of the problems, it is a fact that this is the region at the hearth of the religion of Islam and the culture it represents. What we are witnessing is a great clash within a civilisation.

We see fundamentalists, traditionalists, reformers and secularists each providing their answers to the questions their faith and their peoples are facing.

It's a struggle of scholars, of statesmen, of soldiers and - sometimes - of suicide bombers.

Our task is twofold.

First to prevent this clash within a civilisation to develop into a clash between civilisations.

Then to seek to try help those arguing for open societies and an open world to prevail in this clash.

The importance of this can hardly be exaggerated.

Were we to fail, the consequences would be grave. The Muslim world is our neighbour – on the map, but increasingly also across the street.

I lived for a couple of years in a predominantly Muslim city in Europe. I had a small mosque as my nearest neighbour.

For me, it is self-evident that the Bosnians of Muslim faith are as European as the Bosnians of Catholic or Orthodox or Jewish faith.

Relations between the faiths have certainly not been harmonious in the past – in Bosnia as well as in Europe at large.

This year, it's 800 years since the shameful Fourth Crusade and its sack of Constantinople. The wounds aren't fully healed yet. It's little more than 500 years since the Turkish Muslim conquest of that same city. It's no more than 400 years ago that Catholics were burning Protestants in Magdeburg, and Protestants were burning Catholics elsewhere.

And it's unfortunately not that long since being Jewish meant risk of sudden death in large parts of Europe.

Today, Catholics and Protestants and Calvinists can work together, Jews are coming back even to Berlin, there is the beginning of a difficult rapprochement between the Eastern and the Western branches of Christianity, and we have to encourage the development of a Muslim faith that sees secular and democratic European states as their natural home.

Europe is changing by the day.

We often forget that for more than a century Europe was a place from which tens and tens of millions of people emigrated. Famine, oppression or war drove the millions – often the best of Europe - away.

But since a couple of decades, it's the other way around. The price of success is attractiveness, and the price of attractiveness is that the poor, the oppressed or those seeking a better life would like to go there.

It has its problems. But we need to remind ourselves that it is better than the alternative.

It dramatically increases our interaction with the Muslim world.

Berlin is partly a Turkish city – one of the largest. In Malmö in Sweden – our third largest town – Ali and Mohammed are the most common names of newborn boys. Any given week, there are more people in the mosques than in the churches of the United Kingdom.

But let's be clear on one thing – it's never going to be the islamisation of Europe.

It will simply not happen. Even if you tomorrow were to move the entire population of every Arab country in one go to the European Union they would still be a clear minority. And not only history, but modern times as well, bears amply testimony to the superior attractiveness of our European and Western values and ideals for the vast majority of peoples that the one way or the other becomes exposed to them.

It's no coincidence that they want to go from there to here. Values are an important part of that story.

It's not about the islamisation of Europe – over time, it far more about the europisation of Islam.

But that will unavoidable takes it time, and will not be a straight-forward and simple process. Both Turkey and Bosnia shows that it can be done, but they both demonstrate the tensions and troubles inherent in any major transformation of this sort.

If we try to look ahead towards the decades ahead of us, it's difficult to avoid the conclusion that it's the success or the failure of the ideals of integration of Europe – of the soft power of success from Eastern and Central Europe – that will be crucial to stability and peace in many of the conflict-prone parts of the world, and not the least in our neighbourhood of the Grand Balkans and Africa.

It's by improving our abilities for state building and conflict resolution in the areas of mosaic where civilisations are meeting that we can meet most of the challenges we now see as threatening to our societies.

This will certainly require military power when all other avenues have been exhausted. Also our countries must have the capabilities to strike hard and fast when there simply is no other way.

But never should this be done without a keen sense of responsibility for what follows thereafter.

Destruction is easier than construction, and the message of Europe is that peace comes with the construction of the structures of integration that allows peoples of different believes, nationalities or cultures to live peacefully together or at the least side by side.

This is what we have done between our states in large parts of Europe. This is what we are struggling with also within our societies in a time of rapidly increasing pluralism.

This is what we must seek to contribute to the search for peace and stability, and the countering of the evils of disintegration and terrorism, in the outside world.