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The future of the European Security and Defence Policy Contribution for the Berlin Security Conference 2014

Events in the Ukraine have changed the strategic environment of the European Union. When we discussed the European Security Strategy in 2003 we could say that Europe had never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free and that the violence of the first half of the 20th Century had given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history. Concerning our eastern neighbourhood the document shortly said that large-scale aggression against any Member State is now improbable and then went on to the other threats with which we are confronted.

The European Security Strategy 2003 remains a remarkable document since it formulates the basic endeavours of our foreign and security policy. But the events in Ukraine have demonstrated that the security situation of the European Union has profoundly changed. Therefore, this conference is a useful opportunity to analyze the situation of unrest and insecurity in our neighbourhood.

Due to these events, Nato has gained a renewed importance for the European security system. Recent information shows that some member states as for example Germany are not able to deliver the capabilities agreed upon. But the instruments we need to respond to the old and new threat from Russia are not necessarily the same as those from the past. Cyber warfare and activities of special forces have added new elements to the threats we have to face.

Unfortunately it is clear that in the present situation we have to spend more on defence. But it is also evident that we have to spend better. Russia spends more on defence than any individual member state of the European Union, but if you add the defence budgets of the Member Countries of the European Union you will find that the member states together spend more than double the expense of Russia. However, we have seen that even minor military operations of European States are not possible without the assistance of the United States.

In the present situation of international insecurity and turmoil Europe cannot escape the responsibility to carry a larger part of the burden. With the External Action Service it has given itself a valuable instrument for a common Security and Defence Policy. This instrument has not really been used in the last legislative period. The new High Representative, Federica Mogherini, has now the chance to build a comprehensive security and defence policy combining the means of diplomacy, development, neighbourhood policy and armed forces in the service of peacekeeping.



We often have to decide whether missions have to be run by Nato or the European Union. It is difficult to elaborate abstract criteria for this choice. In principle, the field of the Security and Defence policy of the European Union should be missions in the European geographic environment where diplomacy, development initiatives and the rebuilding of failed states are necessary. I therefore regret that the means of the European Union were not used in Libya since the problems in this country need a combination of civilian and military capabilities where the political element is more important.

On the other hand, the aggression in Ukraine unfortunately goes far beyond the present military capabilities of the European Union and makes the intervention of the Atlantic Alliance absolutely necessary.

Our American allies are right if they ask for a stronger contribution of Europe for the preservation of peace. The European Union has more citizens than the United States, and the GDP is about the same. We therefore will have to improve our capabilities for the preservation of peace.

Looking at the present situation, we have to admit that the experiment of the so called battle groups has been a failure. They have never been used, although this could have been useful. The main reason for this failure are the financial arrangements where the cost for sending a battle group in an operation is too heavy for many member states. It will be necessary to improve the conception of this instrument or to develop an alternative. We often see that the capabilities which are needed for the stabilization of failed states are mainly of a policing nature. We therefore have to see that more troops of a gendarmerie type are available.

Talking about better spending, the rules of the internal market should further be applied for defence and security matters. The European legislation concerning defence procurement and intracommunity transfer is a useful step in this direction and the application of these rules should be closely monitored. Important savings are possible if these rules are really applied.

Independent access to space has become one of the elements of sovereignty. Our modern infrastructure of telecommunication, information, transport, energy, observation and navigation depends more and more from this condition. No single European State is able to afford the expense to sustain this effort. We therefore have to consolidate demand in this field, and more space related projects should be financed from the budget of the European Union. The financing of the Galileo and Copernicus projects by the European budget have been first steps in this direction. The next step should be a common project for improving our awareness of dangers originating from space.

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