



## **Chairman of the European Union Military Committee**

### **ESDC Orientation Course**

**Round table discussion: *"The EU approach regarding the emerging challenges and opportunities"***

**Thessaloniki, 09 October 2017**

### **Introductory Remarks**

Thank you Professor Kouskouvelis, dear Ilias, for your kind introduction.

I want to thank the organisers of this event for giving me the opportunity to engage with you. You represent the young generation of Europe. It is obvious that you have a deep interest in the European Union and the security of Europe and its citizens, that is, **your security!** In the ancient times, in this country, a citizen, a *"politis"* as he was called then, he had not only the right but also the obligation to be engaged in the politics of his city. Today, our *"city"*, in a broader context, is the European Union, and yourselves, you are concerned and active European citizens, today's *"polites"*.

For the economy of time, I will skip the geopolitical analyses and the clichés about how more insecure, complex and contested our world has become. The headlines of any decent newspaper on any given day will convince even the most optimist. The EU Global Strategy, presented in June 2016 was to a certain degree dictated by the fact that the European Union lacked an overarching Strategy that would be relevant and that would steer the Union's course in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Global Strategy introduced a new priority and a new concept. Both created a wave of discussions, some more heated than the others. The new priority was the protection of Europe and the new concept was the *"Integrated Approach"* that replaced the *"Comprehensive Approach"* that we were all familiar with. It actually signalled a further expansion of what has so far been the European Union's trademark.

There is more to it than the change in name suggests. We all agree that the European Union is by design a multidimensional entity. It gathers great financial, diplomatic, cultural and other forms of "Soft" power, complimented by a small component of "Hard" power. The Comprehensive Approach was about making sure that all these components would be used to address crises and conflicts. It was an approach that was directed solely to the European Union itself and more specifically, it was addressed as guidance to the European External Action Service (EEAS).

The Integrated Approach takes us to the next level, working in three concentric circles. **First**, within the EEAS. I suppose that we can all agree that the European Union lacked "muscles", to put it plainly. Undoubtedly, an economic and a diplomatic giant, but with a very limited will for decisive action. Spreadsheets may show that EU Member-States can put together an army of 1.5 million soldiers, equipped with state-of-the-art equipment. What they fail to reveal is that the political will for their use as well as the absolutely essential command and control system that would make it possible, are missing.

In addition, the multiplicity of main defence platforms result in a logistic and maintenance nightmare for the troops deployed and is a proof of indifference and of unjustified, illogical and uncontrollable defence spending.

As the Integrated Approach begins to unfold, a number of concrete results have already been or are about to be produced. Internally, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) are going to be the tools that will strengthen European Defence. The Military planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) is already up and running. These are things that would be unthinkable ten years ago, but here they are now and they are communicated as success-stories. Evidence of a European Union becoming more mature and committed to playing its role in making the world a more secure place.

The **second** circle gets us out of EEAS but still, inside the European Union. The evolution of the challenges and threats highlighted the internal-external security nexus. As a result a number of EU entities (and JHA – Justice and Home Affairs comes to mind) have become increasingly relevant. They had to get on board, in a more cross-sectoral, inclusive and effective response to the challenges

we face. Commission also gets more actively engaged, not only by stimulating the discussion about the future of European defence but also through tools that will actually put flesh on it, such as the European Defence Fund (EDF).

That is the internal aspect of the new approach. But there is also an **external** one. The **third and wider circle** we are talking about. Acknowledging the fact that the European Union is a global actor with global interests, it has to work together and interact with other multinational or international entities, such as the United Nations, NATO or the African Union. In this case as well, we have witnessed a fast pace. It took only a month from the presentation of the EU Global Strategy to the signing of the Joint EU-NATO declaration. It took only another five months for the identification and endorsement of 42 concrete actionable cooperation items by both Organisations. This strengthened cooperation will bring the two organisations closer, in a complimentary fashion. So the Integrated Approach adds an external dimension to the European Union overall effort, while the Comprehensive Approach was only looking inside the European Union.

60 years after from the Rome Treaty, we have in our hands a unique opportunity: An opportunity to better organise the way we perform within the European Union and as a European UNION. This is an opportunity to forge better cooperation, coordination and possibly, integration in the sensitive domain of security and defence. An opportunity to emerge as a complete and reliable global actor.

To this end, the European Union must have a stronger military element and must set the necessary provisions to allow for its use in case the Member-States decide to do so.

It is a matter of credibility as it is a matter of window of opportunity. We have this very discussion right here right now because external factors, violent ones, created the conditions for it to happen. Let us not wait any further.

I shall stop here and I am ready to take your questions at the Q&A session.

Thank you.