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The EU Internal-External Security Nexus: Terrorism as an example of the necessary link between different dimensions of action

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The times we live in call for unity, and for rationality. The events in Paris have shocked not just a country, the people living in Paris, but the whole continent. The hatred we are facing – in Paris as well as in Bamako, in the skies of Egypt as well as in Beirut, let alone in Iraq and in Syria on a daily basis – such hatred has shocked not just our continent, but the whole world.

Military experts will tell you: try to understand what your adversary wants you to do, and do the opposite. We know the objectives of Dae'sh. They are trying to divide us. Division is what makes them strong. So they try to divide us inside our own societies, first of all. The diversity of our societies has made Europe's strength. It is integral part of our identity as Europeans. They want to turn it into a liability. They want our citizens to look at each other with fear and distrust.

The terrorists also want to divide us from our Arab and Muslim friends, here and in our region. Dae'sh is using the narrative of religion to expand their own influence, and to spread an ideology that feeds on fear. Their un-holy war has nothing to do with faith. It is a struggle for power, dressed up in the narrative of an apocalyptic clash between a self-branded Caliphate and the rest of the world. Let us move beyond this narrative, and think with our own minds. Muslim countries are on the frontline

of the fight against Dae'sh. Muslims are the first victims of Dae'sh. As a friend told me a few days ago, a minister of a country that knows terrorism well: they attack mosques, how can they claim to be fighting for religion? It's a pure, traditional, old, and dirty fight for power. Nothing exciting, nothing new. Nothing special.

Thirdly, the terrorists want to divide the international community. They want our reaction to be disordered. They hope we will act irrationally. We know what the way forward is: only a pacified Syria – heading towards national reconciliation – can lay the ground for a long lasting defeat of Dae'sh. And a pacified Syria calls for a united international community. An international community that joins forces, to bring all the relevant actors to the table, and to bridge their differences.

What happened on the Turkish-Syrian border two days ago is serious. But, as I told to both the Turkish and the Russian foreign ministers, we cannot throw to the wind months of common work. We need unity more than ever. If we gave up our efforts to start off a political transition, we would only be playing Dae'sh game.

There is one mistake we must not make, one mistake we cannot afford today. We cannot act impulsively. We cannot act without a strategy, a vision on what we want to achieve, and how we want to get there. This is exactly what we are trying to do drafting a new European Global Strategy. The Strategy will not address each and every conflict in today's world – this is not the point and it would make it quite long, I'm afraid. The new Global Strategy will describe the priorities and the principles of

our external action, knowing that internal and external actions have many points in common.

A starting point for our work is the close link between our internal and external policies and the effect this has on our security. In a country like Spain, you have witnessed to the evolution of terrorism – from a mostly internal issue to a new situation, when the international dimension of terror is much more evident. The first European capital to be targeted was Madrid. Today, foreign policy is no longer what happens in a far-away place. It affects our own life every day. This means that foreign policy can no longer be the exclusive domain of diplomats and policy makers: foreign policy concerns us all.

Dealing with this brave new world is no easy task. Opposite attitudes have shaped our European debate. We have experienced the temptation, in the last years, to behave like a "regional policeman", taking the whole weight of our region on our shoulders. And not always with the right answers. On the opposite side of the debate, many have suggested that we try to lock ourselves inside our borders, hiding behind walls or fences. In times of crisis, it is tempting to turn inwards. To stick our heads in the sand and hope problems will pass. None of these attitudes work.

The Global Strategy is also about finding the right way between these two poles. So let me try to sketch out a few ideas which might help us find our way. I will focus on two main principles. One is consistency, the other is responsible engagement.

Consistency means that our external and our internal action must be guided by the same interests and the same values. Take the refugee crisis. The image of a frightened Europe has only weakened our international standing. The refusal by someone to welcome a relatively small number of refugees has hurt our international credibility. There are much more refugees in Africa than there are in Europe: seven hundred thousand in Ethiopia, half a million in Kenya, and these countries' GDP is obviously not comparable with ours. How can we tell them to take care of their own refugee crisis, if we don't manage to address our own crisis properly? I would like to thank Spain for its balanced approach.

We are working to make sure the internal and external side of our policies are consistent. My own job combines internal and external responsibilities, as it brings together the role of High Representative with that of Vice President of the Commission. Since taking office I have convened a monthly meeting of all the Commissioners in charge of a portfolio with an external dimension – which is now almost everybody, from transport to health, from climate and energy to development. We have to put all of this together. And I can tell you the entire EU leadership has placed great emphasis on combining forces and working as a team, which is a challenge in itself.

But this is not just about Brussels, and the European institutions. It is about Member States and citizens, and the whole of our societies. And it's not easy: think of the terrorists' strategy. They want our States to be more repressive, and our societies to break up. Will we fall into their trap, or will we stick

to our own values? Can we uphold a European identity that inspires people around the globe to join us, rather than fight us?

Our dream of open borders in our Union is one of Europe's great achievements, a great achievement we now see questioned. So we need to ask ourselves some serious questions. Can we have open borders without sharing intelligence that is crucial to our mutual security?

Last week's meeting of Justice and Home Affairs ministers decided to step up information sharing, to look into developing a European system of keeping track of passenger names, to keep even closer control of firearms that circulate in our union and tackle terrorist financing. From January 2016 we will have a European Counter Terrorism Centre run by Europol, working as a hub for the exchange of terrorism related information, including on foreign fighters. The centre will have also a specific unit dedicated to identify, track and tackle violent messages on the web.

Fighting Dae'sh and other extremists groups is about Syria and Iraq, it's about Libya and the Sahel, but it is also about what we do right here at home. And we see it very clearly in these difficult weeks. It is about helping young people find good jobs, and finding a place in our societies for those who feel alienated and left out. It's about sending a message of unity, of belonging, of inclusion. Defeating the terrorists' threat is our project, internally and externally.

We cannot shy away from our responsibility, that is consistency. On our external work, the second principle I'd like to talk about is engagement. In today's world there is no way we can isolate ourselves from the outer world. We cannot “fence out” our problems. Europe needs to engage, inside our region and beyond. Engagement is our key, our core interest.

But such engagement cannot be solitary. No power in the world can carry the whole world on its shoulders. Many have tried, and all have failed. So Europe must promote a new kind of engagement, a more responsible one – humble and proud at the same time. The two things can go together very well. Our culture tells us.

Responsible engagement goes together with partnership. As I said before, unity is crucial. It is crucial at the global level, where we need to invest all our resources in making multilateralism work. And this can never be taken for granted, it requires hard work. But it is crucial at the regional level, where medium-sized powers often hold the key to peace, and have to be recognized as powers. And it is crucial at the local level, on the ground, where we must find the right partners to promote democracy, stability, national reconciliation.

These are some of the ideas we are discussing as we work on our Global Strategy. But let me confess that the reason why I am here is not to update you on the work we are doing in Brussels. A strategy for Europe cannot be written only in the EU institutions. It must come from our European society: the process has to be as inclusive as we can, as open as our societies can be.

Today, wherever I go, I see that there is a greater demand for Europe. I know this sounds weird today. Still, I believe our citizens understand very well that Europe holds the key to solving many of our current problems. This means all of us, and I mean all of us, need to take on the responsibility to answer their calls. It's not only Brussels or capital cities. This includes Member States – that are sometimes all too quick to blame current problems on a lack of response from 'Brussels', as if Brussels and the European Union were not also the Member States. The time for the blame game is over. It is time we all take our own responsibilities and do what we can to make our Union more effective, and stronger.

This means also to change. The best way to make institutions stronger is to change them. We should not be afraid of change, on the contrary, we should be afraid of the lack of change. Our Union will change or will die.

That is why we want to carry our work on the Global Strategy forward and outward to Member States, to our partners around the globe and, crucially, to you – the policy experts and the wider public. We all have a role to play in it.

This strategy is not only about foreign policy; it can be and must be about us as Europeans. About who we are, how we work together and what we share as Europeans. It is about shaping a European public opinion, on how we see the world, and how we want the world to see us. It is about our common European interest. It is about our role in the world, but it is also about us. About shaping a common European sense of direction and

purpose. Not just for institutions in Brussels, but for us all, as Europeans.

This is a chance that we cannot miss.

It's time we hold this exercise, to make a sense of community emerge in our Union. This is why I am here. I'm aware of the difficulties of our times. Still I'm convinced we have a unique chance. Europe has always grown up in moments of crisis. Our Union started just after the II World War. Sometimes we need something big and dramatic to realize how important we are to each other. None of us can face the current challenges alone and expect to succeed. We need a strategy, we need a vision, we need a true Union, we need each other. And I believe we can get out of these difficult times much stronger and united than we've ever been. It's up to us. Thank you.