



Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

ESDC Alumni Reception

"Shaping European Union's Security and Defence Identity"

Brussels, 23 Feb 2017

Mr. Ambassador,

Dirk,

Antonio,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your invitation and for the opportunity you give me to address this excellent audience of yours! I had the honour to be invited at last year's event as well; some of you may have been present. At that occasion, I chose to talk about the EU Global Strategy, which was taking shape at the time. Tonight, I will talk about the steps that have already been taken in order to implement this Strategy, as things move forward with an unprecedented speed. I will also offer you some of my personal thoughts on the way forward.

Europe has found itself surrounded by an **arc of instability**. **Russia**, has adopted a revisionist policy. This policy is cleverly hidden behind catchy and politically correct phrases such as "*self-determination rights*", or "*protection of ethnic minorities*". No thrill here, these noble words did not quite entertain the fears of the nations in its western periphery. In the same time, **the unfinished or abruptly interrupted evolution of "Arab Spring"** in the Middle East–North Africa region, further fuelled the already existing migratory flows to Europe, exercising pressure of unimaginable proportions to the European Union frontier members, namely Greece and Italy. The unprecedented dimension of the combined refugee and migratory flows has put the cohesion of the European societies and the solidarity among the EU member-states under tremendous stress.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our response to these developments came in the form of the EU Global Strategy. Announced last June by HR/VP, it redefines the Union's role in the international system, under the light of the degraded security environment. It sets **three strategic priorities**, namely:

- to **respond to external crises**,
- to **build the capacities of partners affected by crises and fragility** and

➤ to **protect Europe**.

The first two priorities are something we have already been doing. The last one though, "**to protect Europe**", has fuelled a number of discussions. Mainly, I believe, because it is the first time that Europe publicly, openly, acknowledged the existence of a security problem and declared its commitment to addressing it.

This specific priority created an unnecessary and unjustified turmoil. Unnecessary and unjustified because the Global Strategy talks about the **protection** of Europe. It **does not** talk about its **defence**. The terms are not interchangeable. The latter has been guaranteed by **NATO** since its establishment and has not been questioned since. The difference between the tasks each organisation undertakes is indicative of the uniqueness of its character.

Considering the connection between security and defence, the reciprocal seek for **cooperation** between the two leading and **complementary** organisations, EU and NATO, comes as no surprise. The word "complementary" is key, as it clearly highlights the nature of their cooperation. Only by bringing to the table the best each of them can provide, will the European security architecture be preserved effectively. In this context, the **42 concrete action-oriented deliverables** in seven priority areas that have been endorsed in December 2016 by the respective Councils, pave the way for a deepened cooperation. I believe that implementing the cooperation between the two organisations, as envisaged in the **Joint Declaration**, will send a powerful deterrent message. At the same time it will put their relationship on a healthier and sounder basis. This is consistent with the **US interests** as well as with the European ones. One should not forget that, at least until now, the United States continuously support that "*A strong Europe is a strong NATO*". This very notion, of the interdependence between NATO and the European Union or, if you prefer, between the United States and the European Union was repeatedly and emphatically reiterated during last weekend's Munich Security Conference.

There is a multitude of ways the European Union interacts with its interlocutors. And this multilayer engagement, this **Comprehensive Approach** has become its trademark. In this comprehensive approach, the military instrument has been tasked with a rather modest contribution, keeping a small footprint and a low profile. For this contribution I, as the Chairman of the EU Military Committee and the representative of 28 Chiefs of Defence, **I am proud**. Because the effect it produces may be small but nonetheless **fundamental**.

Today, we run **six military Missions and Operations**, executive and non-executive, building the capacities of our partners, assisting them in addressing the security challenges they face and tackling piracy and the migratory crisis. We are present with training missions in Mali, Somalia and Central African Republic. Through operation ATALANTA we protect Sea Lines of Communications and the World Food Program shipping in Somalia. Through Operation Sophia we save lives at sea, disrupt the smugglers' business model and we build the Libyan capacities to take over the control of their coastline. Through EUFOR Althea we continue to provide a safe and secure environment for the people in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The **multidimensionality of its character** is what makes European Union an actor with unique characteristics. It also provides the most convincing answer to those who fear

that the European Union seeks to replace NATO, or to militarise Europe. Nothing could be further from the truth. The European Union draws its power as an international actor from its integrated character. Its **"Smart" power** is the sum of its Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic might. *(One could also add Cultural, Development, Humanitarian, so on so forth.)* The European Union understands that **internal and external security** are more intertwined than ever. Security at home entails a parallel interest in peace and stability in our neighbouring and surrounding regions. The Comprehensive Approach brings together all the instruments available in the European toolbox, diplomacy, development, financial aid, as well as military, to perform an in-depth work, to tackle the root causes of instability, to build local capacities and to reform institutions. Disturbing the fine balance would be equal to **shooting itself in the foot**. And we do not intend to.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our work at our Missions there aims at setting the ground for **sustainable, locally-owned security** which is a prerequisite for development efforts to flourish. And I put **emphasis** on the sustainability and the local ownership elements of this security. The troops participating in these EU missions and operations **do not provide security "per se"** to the respective host nations but they are rather "founding" security. They are there to train and assist local Armed Forces build their own capacity to provide security in a responsible and professional way, adhering to the rule of law and to international conventions. By this they set the foundations for the gradual building of a development-permitting environment. Doing this, they provide **"forward defence"** for the European peoples, some thousand kilometres away from the physical European borders, expanding the safe and secure environment we enjoy and becoming our first line of **"proactive defence"**, that will prevent the local population from leaving home. And this will be by their own will, not because of fences or walls that will stop them. It will be because they will have every good reason to stay in their country. As you understand, with our approach, our Comprehensive Approach which I mentioned before, we try to create conditions for growth, development and hope. We do not impose restrictive measures; we build a better future. This is why I am proud of this Comprehensive Approach.

Last year, I reminded to this audience some words of Sun Tzu. *"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory."* This, in other words means that having strategies does not equal to getting results. The EU Global Strategy is indeed **a keystone document** that will guide the shaping of the EU foreign and security policy for the years to come. **But any Strategy is as good as its implementation gets.**

Three specific priorities for the Implementation Plan are currently being put forward, directly or indirectly tied to the military domain. They are:

- the **Permanent Structured Cooperation**,
- the **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence** and
- the establishment of a **permanent planning and conduct capability** for military missions and operations.

The first two priorities will attempt to address the issues of cooperation in capability development, advancing cooperation among the Member-States. Ownership and Member-States buy-in are essential if these programmes are meant to produce any effects.

The third priority is obviously the most pressing one, as it is meant to remedy identified shortfalls that affect the performance of our deployed missions and operations. Last year, I voiced my expectations for, quote, *"the need for a better use of the military instrument to be clearly reflected"*, unquote, in the Global Strategy. I am glad that my expectations have been met. The Global Strategy acknowledges the need for a more balanced European Smart power, departing from the prevailing notion that our economic and diplomatic might, our Soft power, could buy solutions to all problems. The establishment of an EU military planning and conduct capability is exactly the instrument that will lead to *"the better use of the military"*. The establishment of this capability will necessitate the restructuring and rationalisation of the existing military structures and the followed procedures.

Does this better organising of the EU military structures constitute the creation of a European Army? Does it pose a threat or a challenge to NATO? Might it lead to the militarisation of the European Union and to the loss of its delicately balanced nature? Or to be straight: *"Will there be a European Army?"* The answer is a loud and clear **"NO"**. The reorganisation and restructuring of entities within the limits that their **existing** means impose, it does not qualify as any of the aforementioned radical changes. Especially so since this endeavour is **dictated** by the need to optimise their current performance and cover well-documented gaps. Let me be crystal clear on this: there will **not** be a European Army.

The so called **"European Army"** is nothing but the sum of the Member States' forces and capabilities that could be delegated to the European Union to staff its missions and operations and the Battlegroups, if needed and depending on political decision. I will repeat myself: this is not the case, the Global Strategy does not provide for this, we do not plan for this, this is not what we want. At the same time, the following **is** also true: today, we cannot use nor exploit the sum of the military capabilities, because we do not have the proper Command and Control structure in place. The implementation of the Global Strategy presents us with a unique opportunity to improve the performance of the EU military instrument, as a whole. The present military-related contribution to the whole European Union effort does not exceed a 10%. What we need, what we want and ultimately, what we are trying to achieve is not a European Army but to grab the opportunity and organise in a better and military-relevant way this 10% of the European Union external activity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My final key take-aways are the following:

- Protecting Europe is a strategic priority for the Union. The defence of Europe is not us. It is NATO responsibility.
- European Union's trademark is the Comprehensive Approach, a unique and balanced usage of all tools available in the European Union's toolbox. This includes the military, the Hard power element. Together with the Soft power one, they give flesh to the

Comprehensive Approach. They constitute the European Union's Smart power, of which I am proud.

- We expand our Safe and Secure Environment some thousands of miles deeper in Africa and Asia providing "*forward defence*". We create proper living conditions for the local population to stay home and a security belt for the region and beyond.

- There will be no duplication with NATO. Only complementarity.

- There will be no duplication with SHAPE either. We only seek to establish a military-relevant Command and Control structure to effectively and professionally run the military part of the European Union.

- European Army has never been an objective.

I will conclude with an old Chinese saying. It says "*May you live in interesting times*". Despite the general belief, this was not meant to be a wish, but rather a curse. Today, **we do live in interesting times**. Our secure way of living is gone, together with the belief that everybody in the international arena adheres to **our** playbook. The world has entered a new phase where uncertainty and volatility prevail. The responsibility that is placed upon our shoulders is how to wisely navigate through these times, strengthening the **coherence of our societies**, restoring the security for the European citizen. It also includes standing up to our values and principles. Let's fulfil this responsibility **together**, making these times not only interesting, but also **constructive**, for a safer, more secure and more prosperous Europe!

Thank you.