



Chairman of the European Union Military Committee

Lecture at the Romanian National Defence University

"European Defence: Adapting for the Future"

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General

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here today, at the place where the future Romanian military leaders are developed. Thank you for the opportunity you provide me to address this audience.

I will begin my presentation with a **non-politically correct** phrase, which nonetheless laid the foundations of geopolitics. This phrase summons the true and eternal nature of geopolitics, unaffected by the passage of time and equally valid today, as it was in the fifth century B.C. Even today, despite the progress our societies have made and the importance we place on universal values,

*"The strong **(still)** do what they can
and the weak **(still)** suffer what they must."*

I would characterise the times we live in as "historic", not only for the European Union, but for the entire world. In Europe, the existing security architecture, as shaped after the end of the Cold War is being challenged. In a wider context, the rise of new regional or bigger-than-regional powers, calls for a review of the current distribution of power as we are going through the development of a multi-polar world. Powerful non-state actors and influential non-governmental organizations, they also demand a seat at the table of this redistribution.

To better grasp the importance of the times we are going through, one needs to remember the **opening statement of 2003's European Security Strategy**. It began with the statement: *"Europe has never been so prosperous,*

so secure nor so free. The violence of the first half of the 20th Century has given way to a period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history." It is obvious that this is not the case anymore.

Three very important things took place, among others, in 2016, things that have set the scene for the future development of the European Union as a security provider. In chronological order we had:

- The British Referendum and the decision of the British people to leave our joint endeavour;
- The presentation of the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy by the High Representative/Vice President;
- The signing of the EU-NATO Joint Declaration by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the Secretary General of NATO.

All three developments were influenced to a lesser or greater extent by the geopolitic developments and the deterioration of the security environment in various regions.

Europe has found itself surrounded by an **arc of instability**. **Russia**, driven by a renewed self-confidence, has adopted a revisionist policy towards its southern neighbours. This policy is cleverly hidden behind catchy and politically correct phrases such as "*self-determination rights*", or "*protection of ethnic minorities from state suppression*". Unsurprisingly so, the use of these noble words has little success in entertaining 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. With this small analysis we have set the international geopolitical scene. Now, it is time to talk business, clarify and explain some dangerous misunderstandings related to the situation in Europe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The EU Global Strategy announced last June as I mentioned before, set **three strategic priorities**, namely:

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

These priorities come in no hierarchical order and there are clearly interconnections among them. The last one though, **"to protect Europe"** has raised a number of discussions, mainly, I believe, because it was the first time that Europe publicly, openly, acknowledged the existence of a security problem and declared its commitment to addressing it. Let me elaborate a little bit.

It is necessary to pay close attention to the words used in the Global Strategy as to avoid any confusion. The first two priorities set, are well-known. Nothing new there, I have to admit. The third priority though, which created an unnecessary and unjustified turmoil, it was new. Unnecessary and unjustified because the Global Strategy talks about the **protection** of Europe. It **does not** talk about its **defence**. 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. **Protection is broader** and it involves multiple facets of activities, civilian and military, of security and defence nature. Defence is specific however, focused, and means exactly this.

And here is where we, the military come to play and become relevant. The European Union is widely regarded as an institution with, mainly, financial and diplomatic characteristics. Although this is in general terms true, it overlooks the fact that the European Union also has a military element. And as a matter of fact, it **DOES** place a great deal of value on developing its "Hard" power, as clearly portrayed in the Global Strategy. The **European Union Military Committee**, which I chair, is the highest military body set up within the Council. It is composed of the Chiefs of Defence of the Member States, who are on a daily basis represented by their permanent Military Representatives based in Brussels. The European Union Military Committee, exercises military direction

of all EU military activities and provides the Political and Security Committee with advice and recommendations on military matters. As Chairman, I have been elected by the Chiefs of Defence of the Member-States and appointed by the Council for a three year term.

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 in its role, or to militarise Europe. Nothing could be further from the truth. The European Union draws its power as an international actor from its multidimensional 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. Disturbing the fine balance would be equal to **shooting itself in the foot**. And we do not intend to.

Considering the connection between security and defence, the reciprocal seek for **cooperation** between the two leading and **complementary** organisations, NATO and the European Union, comes as no surprise. The word "complementary" is key, as it depicts their distinctive nature and clearly highlights the nature of their cooperation. Only by bringing on 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 you may see on the slide and 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**, where the seven priority areas were agreed, will send a powerful deterrent message to all interested parties, while 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*".

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, land and maritime alike, building the capacities of our partners, assisting them in addressing the security challenges they face and tackling piracy and the migratory crisis. Romanian troops, colleagues of yours, participate in all six of them, an impressive display of commitment by your nation to the strengthening of the European Union security and defence. We thank you for this. Let me briefly introduce you these missions and operations, as well as the objectives we seek to accomplish:

➤ The **EU Naval Operation Atalanta** is tackling piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Indian Ocean since 2008. Although no successful attempts have been recorded, attempts **do** take place. This proves that the threat has not disappeared. Capability and intent are still present. The only thing missing is opportunity, because this is what we deny to the pirates.

➤ In **Somalia**, the EU Training Mission is helping building up the new Somali Armed Forces. Over the past years, more than 5.000 Somali military personnel have been successfully trained and are now contributing to foster stability in their country alongside their African Union partners.

➤ At the beginning of April 2014 the EU launched its operation **EUFOR RCA** in the Central African Republic upon request from the United Nations. Today, EUTM RCA is a Training Mission that followed and succeeded a successful Advisory one.

➤ In **Mali**, the EU is assisting the Malian authorities in building up their own professional military capabilities. About 550 military personnel from 22 EU Member States are engaged in the professional training and the provision of advice to the Malian Ministry of Defence. As of today 8 Malian battalions have been trained.

➤ Since June 2015, a large maritime operation has been launched in the Southern Central Mediterranean, **Operation Sophia**. The aim of this military operation is to identify, capture and dispose of vessels as well as enabling assets used, or suspected of being used, by migrant smugglers or traffickers. Twenty four EU Member States contribute to this operation. Operationally, the EUNAVFOR MED assets conduct boarding, search, seizure and diversion, on the high seas, of vessels suspected of being used for human smuggling or trafficking. In 20 June 2016, the Council extended Operation

Sophia's mandate until 27 July 2017, reinforcing it by adding two supporting tasks:

- Training of the Libyan Coastguards and Navy;
- Contributing to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya.

➤ Last, but certainly not least, let me also mention the EU's military engagement in Europe, in the Balkans, in Bosnia-Herzegovina where the EU-led **Operation ALTHEA** has guaranteed a safe and secure environment for the population for more than 12 years now. In a place where a Romanian soldier died on duty in 1996.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the outstanding performance of the Romanian troops that participate in these missions and operations. A performance that pays tribute to the inscription on the statue at the entrance of this University:

*"Glory to the Romanian troops,
inheritors of ancient heroic traditions".*

The third priority set in the Global Strategy, **"to protect Europe"**, sounds as something new to many people. But for the military, it is not something we have not been doing already. The troops participating in the aforementioned missions and operations, together with their civilian counterparts, they provide something that is rarely outspoken or admitted; **"forward defence"**. And as this term may make some people uneasy or uncomfortable, I will elaborate on this right away, explaining myself.

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. As an actor with global interests, the EU has assumed its responsibilities, promoting state and societal resilience. Especially in the military domain, the three EU-led military training missions are an integral part of the European Union's Integrated Approach. An approach that 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.

Our work 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 external borders. They expand the safe and secure environment we enjoy and they become 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. Ultimately, they help build a **"security belt"** where the **"arc of instability"** is now. 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 the reason I am proud of this Comprehensive Approach. And you and your country, who contributes together with the all the other EU Member-States to this effort, should be equally proud. You should also take into account that this participation fulfils the mission of the Romanian Armed Forces, as stated in the Romanian 2016 Military Strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Undoubtedly, the EU Global Strategy is 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.** In this occasion, the Union showed its best, moving from the conceptual phase to the identification and proposal of concrete actions in a record time. In the same time, the Council underlines that the Implementation Plan together with the Council's **European Defence Action Plan** and the **Joint EU-NATO Declaration** form a **wider package of three important work strands** related to the security and defence.

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

- the **Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**,

- the **Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)** 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. And Romania is, as one might expect, very active and genuinely involved in this process, offering its views and wisdom. Without further elaborating, I would only say, "Thank you for that".

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. Additionally, it will optimise the all too important civ/mil synergies and maximise the output of the limited military contribution to the whole European effort. I argue that this is the most pressing of the priorities endorsed by the November's Council, as it refers to the efficient and prompt support of missions and operations **already deployed**. The European Union seeks the obvious: to maximise its efficacy and efficiency in the security and defence domain, introducing measures that will correct and remedy long identified shortfalls and gaps and facilitating its cooperation with NATO and other national and international organisations.

I suppose **that the importance I place** on the smooth running of the EU military missions and operations is apparent. At the same time I argue that it is quite justified, for the reasons I explained to you just before. Therefore, I strongly support that the EU military missions and operations **deserve all** the central support they can get. The establishment of a clear, sound and proven planning and conduct capability that will stand up to their expectations and needs will serve towards this objective.

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. Nowhere in the Global Strategy, in the Implementation Plan or in Council Conclusions does this term exist. It was used only in some politician's speeches for obvious reasons. So, this is not the case.

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 in the whole European Union effort (financial, political, comprehensive approach, etc) does not exceed a 10%. What we need, what we want and ultimately, what we are trying to achieve right now 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 activity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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. In this context, **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. They also include standing up to our values and principles. Let us fulfil this responsibility **together**, making these times not only interesting, but also **constructive**, for a safer, more secure and more prosperous Europe!

My 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.

Closing my remarks let me offer you as a bonus for your patience, a phrase that has been saved for future generations by an ancient Greek historian, Thucydides. This phrase describes the ancient Athenians, as they were perceived by their enemies. The phrase goes:

*"[They are] bold beyond their strength,
adventurous above their own reason,
and in danger [they] hope still the best."*

This phrase and the motto of this outstanding University, "LABOR IMPROBUS OMNIA VINCIT" ("Great labour overcomes everything") should serve as the guiding light through your entire career. I invite you to think this over.

Thank you.