CEUMC Speech at the European Demos Event

"EU Global Strategy: Shaping a European Security Identity"

Brussels, 29 May 2017

Your excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends

I am honoured to be present in this event. An event that is part of the initiative of "European Demos" to raise awareness on issues of importance that are related to the European future. Since the foundation of western-type democracies is transparency and people's participation in the shaping of their future, it is of paramount importance that they are well informed. Only this way they can understand contemporary issues and challenges, compare different options, distinguish true from fake news and finally reach well-educated decisions that will be expressed in elections, in referendums or just by influencing their representatives in the Parliament. For this I want to thank "European Demos" and personally Mrs Afentouli for providing me with the opportunity to inform you on the work that is going on in the domain of my expertise, the European security and defence.

Security and defence are two fundamental social goods that are usually taken for granted. It is their absence, always announced through tragic and violent events that remind us of their importance and of their fragile nature. These events remind us as well of the cost associated to them, not only for their establishment but also for their sustainment. This harsh reminder hit twice this peaceful city as well as Paris, Nice, Berlin, London, Manchester just last week, to name only the recent ones...

In this continent that had been a huge bloody battlefield twice during the last century, which witnessed the results of the last war as late as in the 1990's,
we shouldn't easily forget the importance of security and defence, nor the value of investing in them. And yet, it was only in 2003 when we happily declared in our European Security Strategy that "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free." I don’t know whether it was the expression of pure optimism deriving from the successes of the European Union at that time, or just a refusal to acknowledge that human nature remains unchanged by the evolution and the progress of our societies. Today, unfortunately, things have changed. The statement of the 2003 Security Strategy is no longer valid. I regret to say that Thucydides' words are today as valid as they were 2,500 years ago: "The strong will (still) do what they can, and the weak will (still) suffer what they must".

The obvious question comes to mind: "Which one are we, the strong or the weak?" Well, since my answer might be perceived as biased, I will refer to an outsider, a non-European. Andrew Moravcsik, professor of Politics and director of the European Union Program at Princeton University, wrote an article for the "Foreign Policy" magazine. Its title is revealing: "Europe Is Still a Superpower - And it's going to remain one for decades to come." I can only subscribe to his analysis, adding my personal experience from the numerous official visits to foreign countries and the discussions I had with top level officials. This is how we are perceived. A strong global player. A superpower.

The good Professor provides a number of arguments to support his main statement. He refers to our share of the global trade, to our culture, to our education system, to our languages. He offers a very good case when he refers to our Soft power. And he is right, as the European Union is the biggest market in the world, it is the first humanitarian donor worldwide offering close to 1 billion euros annually, it is the first provider of development assistance with an annual budget of almost 140 billion euros up to 2020, it is the first trade partner for most of the countries and regions in the world; it is the second world economy! The Professor does not stay short of referring to our Hard power as well. He uses the impressive figures of the main military equipment that European Union Member States have in total, to arrive at the conclusion that the Union lists as the second biggest military power of the world!

So, problem solved! We are the second biggest power and the one that ranks first, the United States of America, is a strategic partner and ally of ours!
We can return back home and to our High Definition flat screens, to enjoy the latest episode of Game of Thrones or whatever TV-series each of us prefer to watch. But, wait a minute. Zaventem and Maelbeek, Paris and Manchester attacks, did happen while we were a superpower, didn’t they? Don’t terrorists know that we are a superpower?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As much as I agree in general with the Princeton professor I mentioned earlier, I have also to admit that things are not exactly as described. From an academic point of view, it is true that the European Union does have the potential and the specifications that describe a superpower. One thing though that is essential for the specifications to translate into actual performance is the presence of the political will to fully exploit the potential that exists. It is not enough to have the specifications of a superpower to register as one. It also requires that the leadership believes in this and acts accordingly. Let me elaborate on this.

Until recently, the European Union was well aware of its might in the diplomatic and economic fields. It used this Soft power to tackle challenges. It was the era during which every problem was translated into an amount of money allocated to humanitarian aid, development package or donation. The European Union was generous and used its surplus funds for good reason. Do not get me wrong here, I am not judging neither the intentions nor the actions of the leaders of that time. In retrospect though, and with the wisdom of today, I argue that the only thing that was achieved in a number of occasions was just to hide the problem under the carpet, to postpone its re-emergence for a future that has now come.

Now, things have changed. Not everybody is willing to receive a cheque and abide with our advice. Not everybody plays by our rules, not everybody respects the existing rules-based order. Today, Europe faces two major threats, one from the East and the other from the South. They are totally different in nature. To the East, a revisionist Russia with renowned confidence strives to expand its sphere of influence. We have a state which masters the game of hybrid warfare and which, displaying an opportunistic attitude, is always ready to exploit possible mistakes of its adversaries.
To the South, we have an organisation, ISIS, which could be listed not only as a terrorist one but also as a criminal one. This organisation took advantage of the state collapse in Syria and Iraq to spread its influence to people in despair, to people marginalised in other parts of the world and to mercenaries. And, let's not forget, to some ill-informed, confused, vulnerable youngsters from all over the world but mainly from Europe. This threat comes from a non-state actor, with no postal address, no contact number and no representative to discuss with. These people do not want cheques, they want heads. Ours heads.

What these challenges have in common is that they have a fixed ideology and that they do not accept cheques. Our text books are useless, we have to find new ways of action if we want to be serious about tackling these new challenges. This is what they are: challenges of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century which need to be addressed with 21\textsuperscript{st} century tools.

The European response to this new geostrategic environment came in the form of the EU Global Strategy, presented last June by the High Representative, Madam Mogherini. Its title is revealing: "\textit{Shared Vision, Common Action, A Stronger Europe}". This high-level document maps the contemporary geostrategic environment and offers a vision of Europe’s position in the future global arena. One might comment here that there are tons of strategies and policies and similar documents in the EU libraries, but to what end? This one is different. What took place after the presentation of the Global Strategy I believe is unprecedented. Hard, tenuous work has been done, work that led to the November's 2016 Council Conclusions, setting a Level of Ambition and the priorities of the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence! This is a clear display of the commitment and the determination of the European leaders to go full-speed from describing a vision to the Implementation of the Global Strategy, recovering lost ground.

This is the European Union at its best, listening and responding to the concerns of its citizens, as they are illustrated in polls and elections. You sent the message that you want to feel secure again, and your governments, working together in the European Institutions, they try to find the best way to make this happen. Skipping steps of questionable added value, such as producing additional White, or Green papers, working tirelessly towards finding
common ground among 28 and identifying short-term solutions that will produce effects today, instead of waiting for full responses that would take time to materialise.

At this point I will return to the "Superpower" issue and especially to the perceived military power the European Union has. To start with, the European Union as such, does have neither a single soldier nor a single rifle. It is the Member-States that have their national armies, elements of which they allocate to the Union to staff its missions and operations. From a total of 1.4 million military personnel, a mere 3.5 thousand are deployed as we speak in EU-led military missions and operations. The same holds truth about defence budget: all 200 billion euros spent annually for defence purposes, they all come from national budgets. Figures in spreadsheets however, do not always tell the truth. No European Army exists. What is missing is the backbone of every single Armed Force, a unique, robust, clean, lean and effective Command and Control structure that would assume control of each and every EU military activity. This is what NATO has, in the form of SHAPE: a dedicated structure that, if and when needed, will assume control of operations to defend European territorial integrity. This is what the European Union does not have and does not plan to establish. And, I repeat: we don’t have and we don’t need a European Army.

This is exactly the point of confusion for people that are concerned, or afraid, of an alleged militarisation of the European Union. At the same time, this is the fundamental difference between the European Union and NATO. I will not grow tiresome of explaining that this is an ungrounded fear. European defence remains a NATO responsibility, period. European Union does not want to replace, substitute or become NATO. What the European Union seeks is to become a more effective and efficient security provider, a more credible one. Effective in the sense of better organising its extensive toolbox, efficient in getting the maximum out of every instrument it applies to produce the desired effects. And it is a shared understanding, at both sides of the Atlantic that to strengthen European-owned capabilities will only strengthen NATO itself, as every nation possess a single set of forces which are used or allocated according to national priorities.
I believe that this has been as clear as it can possibly get, so let me now elaborate a little, in my field of responsibility and expertise. As I mentioned before, about 3,500 men and women are currently deployed in the six ongoing EU military missions and operations. This is something that largely goes unnoticed, with the exemption of EUNAVFOR Operation Sophia in the Southern Central Mediterranean. Yet, the European Union has a military presence in three African countries, Mali, the Central African Republic and Somalia with four missions and operations. At the same time, we are also present in Bosnia-Herzegovina, here in Europe, for more than 12 years now. How come European public is not aware of this military engagement? The answer is simple: because we do not do a lot of noise about them. Our task there is a little different than what would be expected from the military. The land missions in Africa are of a training nature, designed to help local Armed Forces and the relevant Institutions build their own capacities. Our aim is to strengthen them and make them a capable and responsible force that will restore security for their own people. This is also our transition and exit strategy in the Horn of Africa. On the other hand, EUNAVFOR Atalanta is an executive maritime operation with a mandate to deter, prevent and repress acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast and to protect vessels of the World Food Programme and other vulnerable shipping. What we witness here is the adaptability and flexibility of the military instrument, two virtues that combined with its deployability and availability make it a Swiss tool in the toolbox of the political leadership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a term that has been frequently used to describe the geostrategic environment around Europe: "arc of instability". European Union is trying to twist this term around, creating through its engagement in Africa, a "security belt". Today, with interconnection and interdependence among nations being the norm, we cannot remain idle and passive watching states failing. The repercussions will finally reach our borders in the form of exhausted migrants, desperate refugees or former combatants of various extremist organisations. What happens around the world, even more in our near neighbourhood matters to us. It is therefore better to timely engage and shape things towards the desired way, instead of standing guard at our physical
external borders waiting for the tsunami to come. This simple logic brought nations as neutral as Switzerland and as distant as Chile or South Korea to join forces with us and contribute to our military engagements. The general idea is to disrupt the continuity of this “arc of instability”, creating islands of security that will, eventually expand and connect with each other in a “security belt”. This is what we are trying to achieve through our engagement some thousand kilometres away from our soil: to establish a forward line of defence, operating right in the heart of the problem and fighting the real, underlying causes that fuel instability. We do this the European way, sharing our experience and helping local authorities to become self-efficient, accountable and responsible.

One should not regard these missions and operations separately but in conjunction with the other civilian EU initiatives in the same region, as part of a wider, Comprehensive or Integrated Approach. This approach is the trademark and the unique characteristic of the European Union and it is also its strength. It is made possible due to its multidimensional character and results in a capability to apply different tools, civilian and military alike, to tackle crises and conflicts, and to protect its interests! The mix is different in every occasion, as no two crises are the same. The military contribution to the whole European Union effort is modest and it does not exceed a mere 10%. This is the military tool; this is the military contribution. Do not be deceived by this small figure; its importance is inversely proportional to the size of the contribution. The importance of the existence of a safe and secure environment cannot be underestimated, for it is a prerequisite for any development effort. The challenge is how to get the most out of this 10%, how to maximise its output and how to optimise interaction and cooperation with the EU civilian missions deployed in the same region, creating synergies and avoiding interference or duplication. This is what we are now trying to achieve. First we address identified shortfalls. In this context, the establishment of the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, or MPCC is the first step to the right direction. People usually ask me at this point: what percentage would I consider appropriate for the military contribution? My answer is always the same. It is not a matter of percentages, figures as I explained earlier may lead to false conclusions. So I will not throw figures on the table. What matters to me is fulfilling the objectives set by the political leadership.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

If after all I have said to you, I managed to convince you that the European Union is a superpower, then you have also to agree with me in that this is true only if we join forces, if we work together. Together means participating in a cooperative way in every domain that results in the increase of the cumulative power of our common project. Security and defence cannot be excluded. Together means multiplying shared capabilities instead of just adding figures in spreadsheets. In a world that is constantly evolving and moving forward, it means adapting to new realities and being creative and flexible. When talking about togetherness, no better example to demonstrate this than PESCO comes to mind. Permanent Structured Cooperation can become the vehicle that will make any individual Member State's efforts more efficient in any measurable context. With inclusiveness and transparency as governing principles at least to a certain extent, and a pragmatic yet challenging Level of Ambition this project, PESCO, if properly designed and rightly executed, will unleash the European Union's unexplored potential. Needless to speak of the second- or third-tier benefits that will arise from the cooperation schemes and the technology development. PESCO will provide the framework for synergetic schemes that will carry the EU security and defence projects to the next level.

The Coordinated Annual Review on Defence is the third deliverable of the European Union Global Strategy Implementation Plan, the other two being MPCC and PESCO. It is one more and possibly even more tangible example of a cooperative approach to addressing security and defence shortfalls in a financially constrained environment. Europe spends too much money on defence compared to what is actually delivered in terms of capabilities. This needs to change. We can get more for the money we invest in our defence. Or, we can pay less for what we already get, if this is adequate and put the surplus to good use elsewhere. In any case, the way we now operate is an unsustainable and totally flawed business model, if we examine it using purely techno-economic criteria.

There is also an additional parallel work-strand going on, in cooperation with our other half, NATO. In total accordance with the understanding and respect of the complementarity and the independence of these two leading
organisations, 42 concrete actions have been identified and mutually agreed. These actions will strengthen the cooperation between the European Union and NATO, preventing any duplication that might occur.

Within the same framework, the Implementation Plan remains well connected and coordinated with the Commission’s European Defence Action Plan which tries to better organise and coordinate the European Defence Industry.

Dear friends,

European Union decided to evolve, in a world that is constantly evolving. It is the only way to remain relevant and be in a position to navigate safely in the dark and uncharted waters of the future. The changes in the geostrategic environment influenced the prevailing way of thinking. We have to resort to pragmatism to protect and advance our idealism. The perceived dilemma, “interests” versus “values”, is a false one. We will protect our interests without compromising our values. We are mature and experienced enough to achieve this. In order to fulfil the expectations of our citizens, we need to take our role as a global security provider seriously. The role of a concerned, responsible, predictable and reliable superpower. We need to commit to our responsibilities and apply each and every instrument available to deliver on them. That also includes the military instrument. Here is my message relayed to all concerned parties, the European Union intends to assume its responsibilities in full. This will lead to the gradual development of a unique European security identity. An identity which will not threaten anyone. An identity which will not be founded on duplicated capabilities with NATO but which will significantly contribute, within means and capabilities, to the establishment of what our citizens want: a safe and secure environment.

Thank you.

Edited by Captain (GRC/N) Vasileios Loukovitis