

Enhancing security in Europe's Neighbourhood

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1. Introduction

While still presenting a number of opportunities, the EU's neighbourhood in the East as well as in the South has become an enormous source of threats and risks in recent years. The new EU Global Security Strategy confirms this explicitly. Threats and risks range from failing states, civil wars and instability to jihadist terrorism and hardly controllable migration flows from or through the Middle East, as well as an aggressive Russia using hybrid warfare.

In an era of hybrid wars, of European-born terrorists killing on behalf of foreign jihadist organisations and of migration flows from outside Europe affecting our societies, the classical divisions between domestic and foreign policy and between military and civilian challenges should be rethought. This concerns the EU and its Member States as much as NATO. Moreover, we are all confronted with an extraordinary number of crises occurring in parallel. Besides long-term economic and security challenges and the rise of populism and nationalism, there is, more specifically, the need to reconfirm the transatlantic alliance and to make sure that Turkey remains a reliable partner for Europe and member of the West.

2. Challenges and Responses in Europe's Southern Neighbourhood

Concerning the Southern Neighbourhood, the EU will have to reconcile long-term consistency and increased credibility with short-term flexibility and smart tactics. The ultimate goal of a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Middle East and North Africa should not be given up. This includes a renewed effort for enhanced regional cooperation among the willing. Adherence to the principles of good governance and market economy, human and civil rights, as well as a cooperative foreign policy, should be rewarded in a «more for more» approach. Our cooperation should be tailored to the individual countries' willingness and ability to reform while more and better cooperation among them should be promoted. We could make use of the model of the 'Marshall Plan', which provided substantial aid to European nations following World War II. By means of this US-sponsored program, our European continent was able to revitalize its post-war economy.

This entails the development of economic opportunities and free trade agreements, support for democratic consolidation and good governance, consolidating and extending the EPP's political network in the region, adopting a joint approach to energy challenges as well as promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts and reinforcing the Union for the Mediterranean.

A joint approach to fighting jihadist terrorism, which is the result of a violent ideology built on a particular interpretation of Islam, should be at the centre of our cooperation with the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. The challenge is therefore not only military but also political.

3. Rethinking Intervention

Recent experience with Western intervention in the region has not been positive. Massive intervention for regime change, followed by nation-building efforts, in Afghanistan and Iraq has led to precarious results. Limited intervention without nation-building in Libya has led to chaos. In Syria, Western policy has focused on air raids against ISIS/Daesh while remaining passive towards the Assad regime and providing only humanitarian assistance. This policy has not prevented a humanitarian disaster of unprecedented dimensions.

The spread of jihadist terrorism both in Libya and in Syria, mainly from ISIS/Daesh, as well as uncontrolled migration flows towards neighbouring countries and towards Europe will require an answer different from the ones thus far provided. NATO, EU Member States and other willing countries should consider options to create safe zones in Libya, Syria and Iraq. This will require a combination of political, economic, diplomatic and military instruments. We should build an infrastructure to provide displaced people with a livelihood and future prospects.

The current setup of institutions in Europe is incapable of providing solutions to these challenges. There are three main obstacles:

1. NATO and the EU will be less and less capable of tackling new challenges on their own. This is because crises in our neighbourhood are hybrid in nature, and because despite progress on Cyprus, Turkey's tendency to blackmail its partners bodes ill for NATO's ability to respond. The EU, on the other hand, so far lacks not only military instruments but also the political will to develop them.
2. Military intervention alone cannot be the solution to the crises of the 21st century because at times, this intervention causes more problems than it solves. Nonetheless, military elements should be considered as possible tools in a comprehensive framework. In this respect, Europe has traditionally been weak, hesitant and inefficient. When it comes to defence expenditure as well as public opinion — which is highly negative with regard to military intervention — the EPP political family will have to show political leadership. The extraordinary instability in Europe's neighbourhood will require extraordinary answers.

3. We need to continue to work on strengthening transatlantic cooperation, especially in an era of waning American desire to help European allies that are unwilling to help themselves. Ultimately, only a united West can effectively respond to the challenges, create stability and defend our universal values.

Future interventions will have to include a long-term road map containing both civilian and military elements, and they will have to differ from all previous forms of intervention. Most notably, and from our experience with the interventions mentioned above, it must be acknowledged that the immediate implementation of the model of liberal democracy cannot be successful everywhere in the world, at least in the short term. In principle, democracy supported by a strong civil society is the best guarantor of peace as it offers the best future for its citizens. But in the period immediately following an intervention, a realistic approach, which balances democracy with the aim of stability and development, should be found.

We must also develop and set clear conditions for intervention:

-The rule will be a coalition of the willing: It is very unlikely that, either in NATO or in the EU, all Member States will contribute to an intervention. The structures in both organisations have already been adapted in this regard; we will have to continue to cooperate together on the basis of permanent structures with flexible compositions.

- There should be a mandate by the UN Security Council: Interventions without a UNSC mandate should be avoided because they will provide authoritarian countries with further pretext for unilateral aggression. There may be emergencies that require action without a UN mandate, but these should remain the absolute exception. We should also recognise that even with a UNSC mandate (as in the case of Libya in 2011), perceived 'mission creep' may turn UNSC members against us.

-Regime change as such is not a sufficient rationale for intervention: The emphasis must be on self-defence in cases of anti-terrorist operations and on the responsibility to protect when it comes to saving people and preventing or reducing the influx of migrants.

-The operation must have the support of at least some regional powers — for both political and logistical reasons. In Syria's case, this will mean the support of Turkey, whose cooperation is indispensable. The support of other neighbours, such as Iraq, Iran and the Gulf States would also be necessary. In Libya's case, Egyptian and Tunisian support would be needed.

- Close cooperation with the US: For the foreseeable future, and even if the EU develops more solid structures for intervention, Europe will have to rely on US resources in intelligence, transport and logistics. Therefore, a close and early coordination and cooperation with the US, preferably within the framework of NATO, should be envisaged.

-Solid planning is important, but an operation must not be made conditional upon a perfect plan: After the experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, much has been made of the necessity to have an 'exit strategy' for any kind of intervention: i.e. a pre-ordained catalogue of conditions for escalation, reinforcement, drawdown and withdrawal. But overly extensive planning may unduly slow down the operation itself. More importantly, no operational plan survives the first battle: Even comprehensive planning cannot cover every possible development.

4. Capacity Building

Despite the rising threats and increasing security challenges, defence spending in 2014 saw a further decrease of approximately 3%. This was particularly true in the area of Research and Development (R&D), with a reduction of almost 30% between 2006 and 2013 in EDA countries. This is a paradox constellation, and it has become essential to halt the decline in defence expenditure and to move to the 2%-of-GDP target agreed upon at the NATO Wales Summit of September 2014.

What is most needed now is strong and effective action on increased spending efficiency and enhanced cooperation. Europe has to avoid a duplication of efforts.

Beginning now, the EU should develop a set of capacity-building and security instruments. In times of unlimited mobility, terror and hybrid threats, the EU must find clear guidelines on how to ensure security, freedom, peace and stability for our European citizens. Our internal resilience must be enforced by means of policies ranging from energy to cybersecurity. The external dimension should be addressed by making use of the full range of operational means we have, such as development and crisis-management tools. Furthermore, Europe needs to strengthen its collective European defence. Our continent needs both more integrated armed forces and stronger defence industries in order to secure our strategic autonomy. One way to reach this aim is the instrument of permanent structured cooperation which should be used more intensively.

5. Conclusion

In an era of unprecedented challenges from its Neighbourhood, the EU has to rethink its efforts to enhance security at home and abroad. Our responses to these challenges have been insufficient. We need to think out of the box if we want to do better. Political, diplomatic, economic and military instruments have to be combined in a new joint approach. While military instruments alone will never deliver good results, we must make them part of our toolbox in a smarter way. This requires improved capacities, a better institutional framework, smarter development cooperation and a more determined political approach. The EPP will take the lead in this effort.

**If you have any question
you would like to ask
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