

## Defence and Diplomacy: What Next for Europe?

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There is, ladies and gentlemen, a great advantage in being the last speaker on a panel like this because most of what needs to be said has been said already and there is no need for repeating it. So in fact it is a pleasure simply to confirm my agreement with a lot of the points that have been made.

It is quite obvious that the EU has achieved a vast amount. We all know that from the history of the last fifty years but it is also clear that it is a flawed achievement. It is not as complete as some would have liked, possibly on occasion slightly more than others would want, but nonetheless we have heard tonight about its future vision in the areas of security and diplomacy - or defence and diplomacy as it is called in our title - and we have also heard quite a lot about the constraints of what holds it up at the moment from going very much further. It is pointless for me to enumerate more of these.

What I would like to do is not to stop there but to talk a little bit more about the motivation perhaps, and to try to reframe some of the arguments, to try to find a way out of this, rather than looking at the glass half full or the glass half empty, rather than either complaining or encouraging. I do think that the EU needs to act more coherently here; indeed very few people are saying that it does not need to act more coherently in these areas.

It is quite clear that the EU is a rich and open market. It is strong, but it is quite clearly vulnerable as well. Hence the desire of some countries to keep it divided rather than to see it coalesce.

The story of the EU has been in fact for most of those fifty years, a growing awareness among its members that acting together can bring greater rewards than acting separately. But that awareness has often been very reluctantly acknowledged. In particular, reluctantly acknowledged by the large states. The small states have much greater enthusiasm and reach this awareness, for obvious reason, much more quickly.

As the main speaker put it, size does matter. But size matters in two respects: it matters in the total size of what the Union can represent in the world, part of that vision. And it also matters as a constraint; the big states are slow to make the EU work coherently.

The common title that we chose for this evening is defence and diplomacy and we've heard that in these two specific areas the EU is certainly starting to get its act together.

Members states have realised that there maybe more to gain by join action now, but quite clearly this is largely in response to external pressure rather than part of a shared vision internally, something generated spontaneously within the group.

So far so good, and I trust we can all welcome the development of the joint diplomatic service – although that isn't the formal name that is given to it in the United Kingdom. The difficulty is that it may pose problems in particular for the major member states when it comes to representing their traditional interests abroad.

The EU now maintains well over a hundred - I don't have the exact figure but it is maybe in the region of a hundred and twenty or so - quasi diplomatic

missions in third countries. Initially they are there for trade promotion and information work; and this joint service does offer some economies as it rationalises the overlapping functions of national missions with those of the European Commission. But clearly these developments will not - it is unthinkable that it would - impinge on the representation of major European states in major centres of world power.

This coming together of the Union is only going to be partial, and no one, I think, in their right mind would imagine that in the foreseeable future - and that's a long time - the United States will not have embassies from all the members states present in Washington. That will similarly be the case in China, and in Russia, and in Japan, India and in Brazil, and in many other big states: perhaps all the G20 countries, expanded to however many it is that actually want to attend these meetings now, and that number is certainly more than twenty.

Speaking last is also an opportunity slightly to reframe this debate, as I said I would like to do. I do it I think at least in two respects.

Firstly I would question this distinction between defence and security. In part this is a translation issue but nonetheless meaningful.

The second point I would like to make is to enlarge the framework and look outside the EU to allied views. Some of the major threats or challenges that we face are not essentially those to which a military response is required: international crime and drug trafficking, for instance. These two strike me as issues to which there are intelligence, police and judicial solutions, primarily. The prospect of nuclear proliferation even, requires major diplomatic work. Critical issues such as demographics, environmental and ecological risks and the shifting balance of economic power even are not well addressed by military might.

Only in the case of failed states - the breakdown of law and order in Afghanistan and the horn of Africa, for instance, are the obvious current examples - do we approach the need for resources traditionally associated with defence.

Defence, it seems to me, is an aspect in some search for a more comprehensive security. And in some respects it is an instrument rather than a goal.

It certainly needs resources. Currently the UK is overstretched. This may be one of the reasons why in the last months, one of our commentators, John I believe, said the UK seems to be dragging its feet in this sphere. But I think the UK military have got a great deal more on their plate than they ever bargained for at this stage. And when we look at the urge for comprehensive security. It is clear that it is not only the European Union that is looking for it. All our immediate neighbours are engaged in exactly the same search, both large European states that want to play a fuller role as members of the EU - Turkey and Ukraine, for instance - and small states that seek the shelter and security already offered by what is an obviously a successful regional grouping.

Even those that know that they are not likely to become full members of the EU still want the security benefits enjoyed by states within the EU, and - I will come to that in just a moment - within NATO as well. These benefits are freedom from external aggression, stable democratic governance, respects for human rights and the rule of law.

These are the essential aims not only at the EU but also the Council of Europe and of Nato. Both of these organisations are little older than the EU and both have undergone radical changes since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Those two organisations both stretch wider than the EU, and they both have much to bring to the current debate about comprehensive security.

It actually reminds us that the EU is not synonymous with Europe; this is a very simple illusion that we should be very careful of.

In terms of comprehensive security the debate is both continental – encompassing the whole continent, arguably including Russia - and transatlantic, certainly including the United States. All this is obvious to the EU member states as well and together they have engaged with the EU heavily with its near abroad as well as in vital the transatlantic dialogue.

And it strikes me that in those two areas there were already serious successes which we can credit to the account of the EU.

The recent enlargement of the EU is the main one. Ten new states recently joined, and ongoing negotiations with Croatia and Turkey, problem though that it is for some member states. Even the acceptance of Macedonia, a minor state but nonetheless a token candidate, if you like, standing for the assumption that all the western Balkan will be at some stage within the Union.

And on the transatlantic front, the Transatlantic Economic Council, which is a forum where the EU and the USA come together, has tended to lend attention to some of the issues where coordinated action could head off threats to the overall security, for both America and Europe. They have discussed currency management, trade and investment, foreign aid, research and development, just to list for you five or six of the big headings.

In the throws of the current financial crisis, keeping open this wider perspective and using this forum may bring yet more positive results. It might also obviate the need for the Dutch or the Poles wishing to be present in other fora, for instance, knocking at the doors at the G20.

The long term goal of a customs union across the Atlantic is also something to bear in mind here. It is an echo - although not so bold of Clarence Streit's call, back in 1939, for "Union Now!" We do not know how deep the crisis will be yet, but I think we shall hear a great deal more of that if people try to rise about the crisis rather than fall back protectionist views.

In the two big blocks, certainly there are plenty of challenges both Americans and Europeans in this newly globalised world. It is sensible that we try to solve these issues from a position of strength. A more integrated Union gives us that, both on the diplomatic and on the defence front.

We shall doubtless fumble our way forward, as one of our speakers put it, making mistakes as well as scoring successes. But as we fumble our way forward, we shall do it a little a more coherently than we have so far. All these problems are better analysed on a wider framework, with our neighbours and our friends, with those who share our values and can help support our interests.

Greater interest in coordination and even integration in EU defence and diplomacy are steps in the right direction, however long they make take, but they should not obscure the vision of the bigger picture that requires I think larger cooperation as well.

**Martyn Bond**