

Exchanging Ideas on Europe

UACES Lecture on the Future of Europe

France and ESDP: St Malo 10 Years On

by Gérard Errera*

European defence is more topical than ever. The world is even more uncertain and out-of-control than 10 years ago, Europe bears a greater responsibility and the justification for building European defence is even stronger. Because we need to be ambitious in our vision here, realistic about resources and aware of the time factor, we must look back at history and demonstrate both pragmatism and political will.

A Bit of History - Some Key Dates

1949: Washington Treaty

The Atlantic Alliance was created with the aim of defending Europe against the Soviet threat. Europe insisted on obtaining a commitment to a permanent physical United States presence in Europe. So the Alliance and NATO did not reflect some kind of US imperialism but a response to two things:

- a de facto situation (the military imbalance between a ruined Europe and a powerful America);
- an explicit request from the Europeans (moreover, there were difficulties in getting Article V of the Treaty approved by the US Senate).

1954: Rejection of the European Defence Community

Was this a lost opportunity or simply the fact that the Cold War made defending Europe necessary but European defence impossible?

1991: Collapse of the Soviet empire along with the beginnings of the breakup of Yugoslavia

Bosnia showed Europeans that, with the Soviet threat out of the way, the Americans were looking at the world and Europe in a new way and Europeans had to take on new responsibilities. They had a duty to get involved in the field but realized that they lacked the means to act on their own.

This discovery and realization led to two other vital events:

1996: Berlin Declaration

Within NATO, the allies accepted for the first time the principle of operations jointly agreed by Europe (Western European Union) using NATO resources.

1998: St-Malo

France and the United Kingdom agreed on one vital point: the European Union was not just a large market, but also an important partner in managing international affairs in terms of trade, economics and industry. That ought to apply to foreign policy



Gérard Errera delivering the UACES-EPC Lecture

as well, which meant acquiring military means. Let us remember the words of the *St-Malo Declaration*: 'The Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises'. Importantly, this declaration meant:

- An end to the British veto on any genuine development of a common foreign policy, not to mention a common defence policy.
- The introduction of the concept of 'independent' means.

This is why the agreement was very favourably received in Europe and not seen as coming from some kind of new 'directoire' but, on the contrary, as progress for the good of Europe. It also explains why this bilateral agreement quickly became a European agreement. That countries with such different histories, constitutions and capacities could reach agreement on one of the most sensitive aspects in terms of sovereignty was a major step forward.

* Gérard Errera, formerly France's Ambassador in London (2002-2007) and now Secretary General at the Quai d'Orsay, was one of the main authors and negotiators of the St Malo Agreement. On the eve of the French Presidency of the EU, Ambassador Errera poses the question: *Is Europe's will and capacity for action equal to the challenge and the tasks which confront us?*

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In fact, the European Union quite quickly came up with the main components of European defence:

- A doctrine (security strategy) that we need to flesh out.
- Civilian and military institutions, because there had to be decision-making bodies: COPS, European Union Military Staff, Military Committee, Situation Centre and planning cell.
- Operational capacity targets, including tactical groupings.

Above all, the last five years have seen an impressive number of operations of all kinds: civilian, military, in Europe and outside Europe with independent or NATO means. Some 15 operations have been undertaken since 2003, in the Balkans, Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan and Indonesia.

a) Military Operations

- With NATO resources: in the Balkans: Aryn in 2003, Bosnia (relieving NATO) in 2004
- Nationally led planning: DRC (Artemis) in 2003; DRC, supporting the United Nations during the 2006 election campaign; and Chad: EUFOR in 2008.

That there should be an operation in Chad under Irish command, with Polish second-in-command and 14 countries, including neutral countries, taking part in the field, is no small achievement.

b) Civilian operations

- Darfur – Kosovo in the near future + Aceh, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia and the Palestinian territories.
- Extension of remit: the whole range of operations, from reforming the security sector and training judges and police forces through to sending military forces to restore peace and security.

We need to move forward and, to do so, we need pragmatism and political will.

Pragmatism

Theological and institutional debates are a thing of the past. For a long time, they concealed divisions or lack of will but now we have to look at the realities:

a) Competition between NATO and the EU no longer exists:

- 21 of the 26 NATO allies are members of the Union; 21 of the 27 partners of the EU are members of NATO.
- It is governments that decide, in each case, depending on their national assessment and the political context in the field, on the most appropriate framework for making their forces available. It is still governments that contribute troops and equipment. There is no more a European army than there is a NATO army.

The EU and NATO face the same problems and two in particular: *1st problem:* the problem of capacity, such as the helicopters needed by the EU in Chad and NATO in Afghanistan. In the case of the EU, we have to go further: pooling our capacities particularly in terms of arms but also co-operating in respect of training and exercises.

2nd problem: the civilian-military approach in the field. From this perspective, the Lisbon Treaty is a major step forward: the High Representative will have political authority, Community means and military backing.

b) We must also be realistic in recognizing today's European security interests (not just defence): terrorism, non-proliferation, energy security, global warming and natural disasters.

This Is Where Political Vision and Will Must Come In

a) Vision is needed in each of our countries, e.g. the defence and security White Paper in France. The review of the EU's security strategy follows the same lines. Agreement must be reached on the basics: what are the threats to Europe, what are its aims and interests? Because there can be no Europe if there is no agreement on the definition and defence of common European interests. This applies in most fields and even more so to security.

b) Obviously this raises the issue of defence budgets; financial efforts are uneven, with military expenditure increasing in most countries but not in Europe.

c) Vision means that Europeans must realize how dangerous the world is: some US commentators have spoken of the clash between Mars and Venus. European defence is the best response to people who would like to see Europe remain weak for ever.

d) Some people have thought or said that European defence is a threat to NATO. This is not true:

- it is not true historically: for more than 10 years, every move towards European defence has been followed by revitalization of the Atlantic Alliance.
- it is not true politically: think about the position of the French President who has committed to unrestricted restoration of France's relationship with NATO, in parallel with a firm will to move forward in developing European defence.

The greatest threat to NATO does not come from progress in European defence or from a strong, united Europe. The greatest threat to the future of the Alliance would be a weak and divided Europe abdicating its responsibilities because it did not have the means to shoulder them.

Conclusion

Optimism and realism. As President Sarkozy has said, we must 'move forward with pragmatism, ambition and no ideological preconceptions'. Do not underestimate the progress made or the road we still have to travel. It is not ideology that will move us forward, but necessity.

- The Americans need to realize that 'hard power' is not everything and that 'soft power' is just as important in resolving and even more in preventing conflict.
- The Europeans need to accept that, while military force cannot resolve problems on its own, there can be no credible diplomacy without possession of military means and readiness to use them if necessary.

Ambassador Errera delivered the lecture on 21 February 2008. This UACES Event was jointly organised with the European Policy Centre (EPC) and was held at the Résidence Palace, Brussels.

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