

OF CHAOS AND POWER : WILL EUROPE BECOME A STRATEGIC COMMUNITY ?

The debate on European security entered a new stage with the strategy paper entitled “A secure Europe in a better world” submitted by the High Representative Javier Solana and adopted by the Brussels Summit in December 2003. The objective of this paper is to conceptualize the Union’s strategic posture. As such it is really the first step towards a strategic community, a dimension which had been lacking in the EU. The paper sets out a number of proposals for enabling the Union to play a more effective role on the international stage and contribute more actively to global security and stability. The emergence of a EU security posture however presents Turkey with a real dilemma. That can be a useful development for Turkey as long as it enhances the country’s prospects for accession on the basis of its role as a pivotal country. Yet it can also give rise to concern by undermining NATO, a traditional anchor for Turkish security and foreign policy. The best outcome for Turkey under these circumstances will require the setting of concrete and achievable foreign policy objectives based on a comprehensive and regularly updated analysis of the new environment; and a flexible diplomacy that has learned to adapt to and to take advantage of this constantly evolving environment.

Sinan Ülgen*

* Member of the Board, Economics and Foreign Policy Forum - Istanbul

“Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary”

These words describing the state of mind of Edgar Allan Poe’s character just before his encounter with the raven that gives the title to the author’s most famous poem can also be used to illustrate the state of the European Union’s common foreign and security policy (CFSP) during the crisis of Iraq and the ensuing rift in transatlantic relations. The question of Iraq showcased the fragility of the transatlantic relationship in this new era characterized by a unipolar world. It put to the fore the difficulties of achieving consensus within the EU on certain foreign policy issues where national interests may be divergent. The whole episode also underlined the frailty of the current common foreign and security policy framework. Although it is still too early to assess the full impact that the Iraqi crisis will have on the future of the EU, it can be surmised that this crisis had a bearing on highly significant developments such as the publication of the strategy paper and the decision to give more substance to a common defence policy.

The debate on European security entered however a new stage with the strategy paper entitled “A secure Europe in a better world” submitted by the High Representative Javier Solana and adopted by the Thessaloniki Summit in June 2003. The objective of this paper is to conceptualize the Union’s strategic posture. As such it is really the first step towards a strategic community, a dimension which had arguably been lacking in the EU.

Before analysing the content of this document, it is worth recalling the international environment which led to the preparation of this strategic vision. The September 11 attacks against the Twin Towers are seen as a watershed event in this respect. They hastened a process which finds its roots in the end of the Cold War, namely the change and diversification of threats affecting the Western Alliance. They were the most egregious examples of the destructive ability of the new actors that replaced the more conventional players of the past. As a result, a change in the security postures of the traditional powers was inevitable. This change occurred most visibly and initially in the US with the new National Security Strategy of the Bush Administration announced in September 2002. This radical shift in strategic thinking and action as witnessed firstly in Afghanistan and then in Iraq rocked the foundations of the security partnership established between the US and Europe post World War II. The ensuing rift in transatlantic relations was compounded for the EU by a bitter internal division on the need to support the US. Finally, the slated enlargement of the EU for May 2004 which will bring the number of member countries from 15 to 25 also represents a significant institutional challenge for the EU and the mechanisms developed so far for conducting foreign and security policy. That is in essence why the new Convention on the future of Europe is to embody a number of new provisions, lacking from the previous “constitutional” texts, on foreign policy and security policy.

The Solana Paper: A Paper Tiger or a Solid Foundation?

The paper sets out a number of proposals for enabling the Union to play a more effective role on the international stage and contribute more actively to global security and stability. It starts with an analysis of the security environment then identifies strategic objectives and proposed policies for tackling present and future challenges. The introductory section depicts the EU as a global actor and calls for Europe to be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world. The first section deals with global challenges and key threats. According to the paper, the international environment is marked by a series of problems that are potentially dangerous for security : regional conflicts, poverty, hunger, epidemics, refugees and mass migration, corruption, climate change and energy dependence. Although a large-scale aggression against an EU country is improbable, Europe faces new threats which are more diverse, less visible and less predictable. These specific threats are identified as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure and organised crime.

In the second section, the paper underlines the need to think globally and act locally and announces three strategic objectives for the Union : addressing the threats, making a particular contribution to stability and good governance in Europe's immediate neighbourhood and building an international order based on effective multilateralism. Concerning the first objective it is underlined that the traditional concept of self defense was based on the threat of invasion. According to the paper, since new threats are dynamic and can easily proliferate, the first line of defense should be abroad. This thinking heralds a new pro-active defense posture based on a similar reasoning that underpins the new US National Security Strategy. Although in its original version the EU strategy paper shied away from adopting the more aggressive "preventive" approach adopted by the US but instead talked of "pre-emptive" engagement¹; the final version reverted to the terminology of "preventive engagement". The document points out that "in contrast to the massive visible threat in the Cold War, none of the new threats are purely military; nor can they be tackled by purely military means. Each requires a mixture of instruments... The European Union is particularly well equipped to respond to such multi faceted situations".

In explaining the rationale of the second objective the document, drawing on the experience of the recent conflicts in former Yugoslavia, recalls that it is in the European interest that countries on its borders are well governed. The task therefore should be to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the EU and on the borders of the Mediterranean. Accordingly, enlargement should not create new dividing lines in Europe and the resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict remains a strategic priority for Europe.

The final objective is based on the finding that "in a world of global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity depend on an effective multilateral system. The development of a stronger international society, well functioning

¹ For an interesting discussion about the differences between "prevention" and "pre-emption" in international relations, the reader may refer to the working document prepared by Aspen Institute Italia for the Rome international workshop on the EU's Security Strategy. <http://www.iss-eu.org/solana/docrom.pdf>.

international institutions and a rule-based international order should be our objective". This argument echoes Kagan's² explanation about the EU's preference of a multilateral framework as opposed to the US' tendency for unilateralism. At the same time, this multilateral commitment by the EU can be seen as a reflection of the desire to overcome the consequences on the UN, the EU and transatlantic relations of the unilateral action taken by the US against Iraq. Not surprisingly therefore, the UN system remains the reference for this document which underlines that "the fundamental framework for international relations is the United Nations Charter".

The document then prescribes a set of policy options for Europe. It firstly calls for a more active policy in pursuing the strategic objectives. The emphasis is on active policies needed to counter the new dynamic threats and the need to develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid and when necessary robust intervention. Secondly it reiterates the need for a more capable policy and underlines the need for transforming the military into more flexible and mobile forces, increasing civilian capabilities for dealing with post-conflict situations and intelligence sharing between Member States and partners. Thirdly it calls for a more coherent policy given the multiplicity of security and defence initiatives at both multilateral and bilateral level among EU states. Coherence is to be achieved by the pooling of military and civil capabilities as well as political, diplomatic and economic instruments. Finally the Solana paper stresses the importance of partnerships with key actors. The transatlantic relationship is considered to be "irreplaceable" in this respect. The web of partnership should however be extended to include such countries as Russia, Japan, China, Canada and India amongst others.

This strategy paper has by and large been welcomed by all parties including the European public opinion and the US. In fact, this time around Solana and his team made a conscious effort to enter into a constructive dialogue with the European public opinion by organizing 3 sets of brainstorming sessions in Rome, Paris and Stockholm where the document was discussed by a wide range of strategy experts. The outcome of these discussions were to be used to amend the original version of the document and indeed Solana came up with a second and final version which has been submitted to and adopted by the Brussels Summit in December 2003. The adoption of this strategy paper by the EU therefore heralds a new era for the Union. The EU now has, much like the US, a strategic doctrine. What does this mean therefore for a country like Turkey that sees its geostrategic importance as a vital asset on the global scene?

The Emergence of an EU Strategic Posture: Consequences for Turkey

The genesis of a real strategic posture for the EU is not devoid of consequences for Turkey. In fact, it is rather the opposite. The consequences for Turkey of such a development are quite significant. There are both negative and positive factors that should be taken into account. On the negative side, Turkey would have two major

² Kagan, P. "Paradise and Power : America and Europe in the new world order"; Atlantic Books, London, 2003.

potential concerns with regard to the development of an EU Security Policy. The first one can best be described somewhat allegorically as the “clash of cultures” in security policy.

The EU is in the process of delineating its priorities in this area. This necessitates, as illustrated by the Solana paper, a multi dimensional approach which takes into account the main parameters of a security policy. On each of these parameters though, the Union needs to achieve consensus among its Members in order to formulate its specific posture. This is where the structure of the EU as a supranational entity as opposed to a nation state comes into play. Achieving consensus at the supranational level more often than not requires a delicate game of balancing the interests of each and every party. As a result, the policy outcome at this supranational level can sometimes be rather different than the policy outcome at a purely national level. The adopted policy at the EU level is determined by the lowest common denominator among the Member States. A corollary of this statement is that in areas where divisions remain among Member States, a common EU policy will be required to fudge or gloss over these differences by the use of ambiguous diplomatic language, which does not contribute to optimal policy outcomes. Therefore the development of a “strong” security culture for the EU is likely to be more difficult than a nation state. This discrepancy may then lead to a “culture clash” at the global level – US vs. EU – or the regional level – EU vs. Turkey - between the protagonists of a more pro-active, assertive security policy and the EU’s policy circles.

To give a more concrete example, the case of pre-emptive military action and the legitimate use of force can be considered. There is at present a debate about the legitimacy of pre-emptive military action triggered by the new National Security Strategy of the US which stipulates that “*the United States will do what we must to defend our vital interests including, when necessary and appropriate, using our military unilaterally and decisively*” and fuelled by the discussion concerning the legitimacy of the military intervention in Iraq. This is an area where this “cultural clash” is quite apparent. Europe is seen as a staunch defender of the multilateral approach whereas the US has a proclivity to take the unilateralist path. According to Carl Bildt, “European inclination to support an approach through multilateral institutions like the UN is based on the recognition that neither the European Union nor any other international actor, has the broad-based power or the strategic patience to sort out major and difficult international issues all by itself. Thus, an amount of coalition building is always called for, and the broader the international consensus that can be established, the greater are the possibilities of bringing the endeavor in question to a successful conclusion”³. Whereas for the US and for Turkey the analytical framework is different. The US views multilateralism as fettering the power of the US in chains and preventing it from taking the action needed. In Turkey as well, multilateralism is sometimes seen as an ineffective alternative to unilateralism; a perspective stemming from Turkey’s lack of direct influence, unlike the EU member states and the US, on multilateral institutions.

To conclude this section, it is therefore worth underlining that the development of a common EU security policy can be problematic for Turkey as long as the EU’s adopted

³ Bildt, C. “Pre-Emptive military action and the legitimate use of force : a European perspective”. European Security Forum Working Paper No 11, February 2003, CEPS-IISS publications, Brussels

policy stance on specific issues such as pre-emptive military action are not in conformity with Turkey's national interests, objectives and policies. Ironically, it is the creation of a common policy that creates the potential of conflict between the partners. Where there is no policy there is no risk of conflict. It is with the onset of a different policy framework that the potential for conflict arises.

The second and more important caveat concerns Europe's fledgling security architecture. Efforts to create an independent security entity under the EU umbrella are viewed with suspicion by Turkey. The concern originates essentially from the risk that Turkey will be left out of the decision making mechanisms of this new security institution. Indeed short of full membership, it is conceptually quite difficult to devise a formula that would address Turkey's concerns and yet remain compatible with the Community solidarity principle. A related issue is the future of the EU-NATO relationship. Turkey is conscious of the risks inherent in developing the EU's security pillar as an alternative to NATO. For Turkey, a country for which full membership to the EU remains a long term objective, the future of NATO is of paramount importance. Therefore Turkey would resist any initiative that would weaken NATO. The dilemma is that moves purported to strengthen Europe's common security and defense capability such as the soon to be established EU military operational planning cell can at the same time undermine NATO; in which case Turkey's knee jerk reaction would be to view these developments with deep suspicion. Yet, as illustrated in more detail in the following section, the creation of a stronger European security and defense policy may also be of value to Turkey. The challenge therefore for Turkey will be to conduct a resourceful diplomacy that would, to the extent possible, influence the development of ESDP towards a complementary and not alternative path to NATO.

An initial assessment of the positive externalities related to the creation of a strategic EU posture should probably start by underlining the fact that in the past, from Ankara's perspective the most vivid difference between Brussels and Washington was the difference in the strategic culture of these two entities. In fact, Brussels was often criticized on account of, and its actions were ascribed to its lack of, a strategic culture. Whereas US policy was believed to be more in tune with the strategic needs of Turkey. As a result, the development of this strategic dimension within the EU should, in principle, be welcomed by Ankara. To the extent that the EU acquires a strategic posture, this may lead to a more convergent analysis of world and regional events between Ankara and Brussels, akin to what had been the case between Ankara and Washington. A case in point is the fight against terrorism. Member States will be more inclined to cooperate with Turkey on this issue to the extent that there is a common policy which underpins their approach. Whereas before Turkey had to deal with the countries in question sometimes on a bilateral basis, the "communautairization" of the security policy including the fight against terrorism would help Ankara to get the support it needs from the EU as a block.

This growing convergence may then not only help Ankara in dealing with its foreign policy concerns but more importantly it adds value to Turkey's potential contribution to the EU as a significant military and political force in the region. In other words, the

development of a strategic vision within the EU is likely to enhance Turkey's chances for accession to the EU. It shifts the balance between Turkey's pros and cons. The strategic card that Ankara had been so happy to use in the past in connection with its relations with the US is acquiring a new and improved relevance for the EU as well. This should not be taken as a statement to mean that Turkey can become a full member without fully complying with the Copenhagen criteria due to its now more easily perceived strategic value. Turkey will still need to fulfill the necessary conditions. But the emergence of this strategic posture may possibly help some European governments to convince other reticent Member States and the section of the European public opinion that do not look favorably upon the inclusion of Turkey within the EU.

Finally, it should be underlined that this analysis was undertaken without the knowledge of Turkey's official security strategy. Turkey has an official security strategy embedded in a national security strategy document. But unlike the US and the EU where there was a conscious effort to publicize the security strategy and to engage the public in the discussions related to national security issues, Turkey's national security strategy document remains confidential. In terms of public diplomacy, these are arguably very different approaches. The time has perhaps come to challenge the adequacy of this timidity. Why in a society that claims to be democratic, the official security strategy should remain confidential? How will the government go about obtaining the support of the people in times of crisis if the society is not prepared well in advance for the hard choices that they will be asked to make? Can this stance be construed as a vestige of the jacobinist tradition in Turkey where the "State" acts on behalf of the people without consulting the people?

In conclusion, it is worth stating that the Solana strategy paper ushered in a new era of strategic thinking in Europe. It was essentially the first time over the fifty years of European construction that a policy paper with the specific task of outlining the strategic vision of the Community had been adopted. Although a milestone in itself, this step signals just the beginning of a long and arduous journey. The strategy now needs to be detailed and complemented with specific actions, plans which will rekindle the debate on Europe's security strategy. Divisions still exist among the Member States and these differences are bound to re-surface as preparations move from the normative plane towards the practical aspects of implementing the strategic vision. The failure of the Brussels Summit and the ensuing debate on a "multi speed" Europe is set to compound this picture. In short, the security paradigm of Europe will remain in a flux and will be affected on the one hand by the dynamics of European integration and on the other by the shape of global events.

This analysis has important ramifications for a country like Turkey. The emergence of a EU security posture presents Turkey with a real dilemma that can be a useful development for Turkey as long as it enhances the country's prospects for accession on the basis of its role as a pivotal country. Yet it can also give rise to concern by undermining NATO, a traditional anchor for Turkish security and foreign policy. The best outcome for Turkey under these circumstances will require the setting of concrete and achievable foreign policy objectives based on a comprehensive and regularly updated

analysis of the new environment; and a flexible diplomacy that has learned to adapt to and to take advantage of this constantly evolving environment. This will be the challenge facing Turkey's foreign and security policy establishment in the foreseeable future.