A New Strategy – Implications for CSDP

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Clingendael Report

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Introduction

The new Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy will have implications for many areas of EU responsibility, including for the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). To operationalise the Global Strategy an implementation document will have to be developed, often referred to as a CSDP White Book. It will complement the Defence Action Plan of the European Commission. The White Book has to address many issues, ranging from the ambition level and capabilities to institutional, legal and financial topics. While noting that all of these elements have to be dealt with together and that the CSDP consists of military and civilian aspects, this Clingendael Report primarily focusses on the military aspects. 'A New Strategy – Implications for CSDP' was the theme of the Netherlands EU Presidency Seminar, which took place on 10 June 2016 in Amsterdam. The seminar aimed to deliver a clearer picture of what consequences the Global Strategy will have for CSDP in terms of its tasks, operations and capabilities. It also provided a venue for discussing the desired focus, structure and content of the White Book, including ideas on how to move from voluntarism to a real commitment to capability improvement and other ways for deepening European defence cooperation. The 10 June seminar completed a series of three Netherlands EU Presidency seminars on CSDP aiming to stimulate policy discussions and generate proposals for a follow-up.

This Clingendael Report reflects the main topics of discussion at the seminar, but it is neither a verbatim record nor a summary of the debate. It does not reflect a common understanding or agreement on the topics discussed. Rather it lists key issues discussed at the seminar, based on a Clingendael Food-for-Thought Paper which was sent to all participants. Most of the issues raised in the Food-for-Thought Paper are reflected in this report, even those not discussed at the seminar. The report is divided into three sections. The first part focuses on the implications of the Global Strategy for the future CSDP. The second section looks at the consequences for capabilities while the third part addresses the issue of tools and instruments needed to improve capability development and for deepening defence cooperation. The report closes with two short sections on the conclusions and the way ahead.[1]

The future CSDP

The existing level of ambition – the Headline Goals – and the Petersberg tasks were agreed in another era. The White Book will have to define a new level of ambition and revised CSDP tasks based on the Global Strategy. Naturally, the EU's response to security challenges needs to be cross-sectoral and comprehensive. This wider response goes beyond the scope of this report, but it is essential to note that all EU instruments from trade to development aid and from the CSDP's civilian missions to military operations will have to be aligned in the EU's approach.

There is no shortage of crises but there is a lack of political will to launch CSDP operations. For example, calls from the United Nations to carry out bridging operations have often not been answered by the EU. What is needed above all is a change in the mind-set. The political level has to show more awareness, support and commitment to European defence cooperation. Political leaders have to push this cooperation forward. Increasing the visibility of CSDP and other European defence activities towards the broader public and promoting successful cases has to be part of this effort.

The new level of ambition should not be expressed in numbers of the military to be deployed, but rather in the sorts and types of operations the EU has to be able to conduct. The original function of CSDP – external crisis management – will remain and its geographical scope might even have to be expanded taking into account the new Global Strategy. However, the external-internal security nexus also argues for a widening of the role of CSDP. The EU has to play a role 'in the defence of Europe', both in response to hybrid threats from the East as well as to the spill-over effects of the conflicts to the South. In the East NATO will have the lead when it comes to deterrence and territorial

> The EU has to play a role 'in the defence of Europe'

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1   The Clingendael Institute bears sole responsibility for the content of this report.

defence, but CSDP can have a role in providing military assistance to non-NATO countries like Finland and Sweden, if needed and requested, and with civilian-military capacities to NATO members such as the Baltic States. Article 42.7, invoked by France in November 2015, has already raised the question of a possible CSDP role within the Treaty area. While noting that under the existing Treaty provisions this is perhaps legally not possible, there is a clear need to investigate its potential, including the role of the EU in facilitating and coordinating the responses of member states. With regard to the challenges stemming from the South, the CSDP has to support actors in charge of border security, counter-terrorism and the fight against large criminal networks. Practice has already shown that military assistance is needed, not only at the national level but also internationally such as in support of the activities of the EU's border agency Frontex. The experience from the existing cooperation should be used in defining a structural role for CSDP in border security.

The EU has to set new levels of ambition – in plural – in response to the changed security environment. Consequently, the White Book should define a revised set of tasks for CSDP. These include tasks already defined by the Petersberg declaration and Article 43 of the Treaty on external crisis management, but should also reflect new tasks at the nexus of external and internal security. Five tasks should be considered:

1. In light of Washington's shifting focus Europe needs to take responsibility for security in its neighbourhood. This implies that CSDP can no longer be limited to operations at the low and medium end of the spectrum. If needed, the EU should be able to conduct interventions at the high end of the spectrum, which will be in addition to the lower level crisis management operations which the EU is conducting today. So far, such high intensity military operations – like the French operations Serval and Barkhane – have been conducted by a single nation. The Lisbon Treaty's Article 44 provides a possibility to delegate a group of willing and able member states to conduct such operations in the CSDP context. This could be an option for EU intervention-type operations. For the near term the EU must become capable of conducting a high intensity military operation at the brigade level autonomously, with adequate air and sea capabilities as required. For the longer term a formation level higher than a brigade-size operation could be set as a target.

2. At home, the CSDP has a role in increasing the security of the EU and its member states. In light of increasing migratory pressures, the CSDP should support national and EU (Frontex) activities for addressing border security crises, in particular in the maritime domain – building on the experience of already existing activities such as Operation Sophia. Given the external nature of the origin of the threats, CSDP actors should be involved in the development of the new European Border and Coast Guard Agency (the successor to Frontex). An active use of Article 222 on solidarity should be considered.

3. In addressing hybrid threats the CSDP role could consist of assisting in monitoring and early warning, in information gathering to counter propaganda and in supporting strategic communication, in securing critical infrastructure and in supporting member states in countering coercive and subversive methods – as a contribution to the implementation of the EU Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats. Cyber security will become even more important and it requires the involvement of all relevant actors in the EU. The use of Article 42.7 on mutual assistance should be considered in relevant cases.

4. In the European neighbourhood and in the wider 'arc of instability' from West Africa to the Sahel and the Horn of Africa up via the Middle East to the Caucasus, it will be essential to work with partners and to increase their own capacities in order to prevent crises or to rebuild fully functioning states. The CSDP will have to contribute with capacity building, both to strengthen the civilian and military capacities of the local actors – through training their armed forces but also in wider security sector reform – as well as to assist them in addressing terrorism, criminal activity and improving resilience to hybrid threats.

5. In the maritime domain the CSDP is already playing a major role in anti-piracy operations and in supporting border security activities led by civil authorities. The need for such operations is likely to remain. In addition, the EU should consider how CSDP can contribute to increasing maritime security in the wider sense. The EU needs secure sea lines of communication, in particular as its trade is highly dependent (about 80%) on free access to the seas. If required and in close coordination with NATO and local partners, the CSDP could contribute to the protection of vulnerable sea trade choke points.

The new security environment also calls for a renewed EU-NATO relationship as cooperation is no longer limited to external crisis management. Both organisations have to play their part in responding to hybrid threats. NATO's focus lies on military defence and deterrence, whereas the EU focuses on security and the resilience of society as a whole. These comparative advantages make the two organisations acting closely together stronger than when acting individually. To reflect this, the EU-NATO relationship needs to be converted from complementarity to a full partnership. In particular, EU-NATO cooperation in the areas of cyber, hybrid responses, training and exercises should be stepped up.

> The EU–NATO relationship needs to be converted from complementarity to a full partnership

A Petersberg-like agreement on the range of tasks for CSDP should be included in the White Book. The tasks could then be elaborated in illustrative scenarios to be used for defining capability requirements and defence planning with a reviewed Capability Development Plan (CDP) as the basis. Preferably, the White Book would list the capability priorities in general terms to provide timely input for the European Commission's activities on the basis of its Defence Action Plan and the Preparatory Action on defence research.

Impact on capabilities

The broader level of ambition for CSDP has implications for the capabilities the EU needs to fulfil them. The dire security situation demands that existing shortfalls are met with greater speed. However, it will not suffice to only address these well-known shortfalls. The new levels of ambition and revised tasks should be mirrored by the CSDP's capability requirements. 'Use what we already have' asks for a fresh look at existing capacities such as the EU Battlegroups. They can be great assets in the current volatile security situation. Next to their use for external crisis management – also in a combined sense to raise the capacity to brigade-level – the deployment of EU Battlegroups inside EU territory should also be considered, possibly in a case of invoking Article 42.7 by Finland and/or Sweden.

In terms of steering capability development, the latest version of the CDP (November 2014) lists priorities in the areas of information superiority, enabling expeditionary operations, the protection of forces in theatre and securing sea lines of communication. These are all very relevant, but require a shift in priority and new efforts for a raised level of ambition in three areas in particular: (1) addressing hybrid threats, (2) the ability for an autonomous high intensity military operation and for (3) the CSDP to play a role in 'the defence of Europe' in the broad sense.

Hybrid threats demand hybrid responses and capabilities. Because of the nature of these threats, this is not the responsibility of civil actors alone. Resilience has to be built on many fronts, but the resilience of cyber systems in the EU is crucial for our IT-dependent societies. The EU, in concert with member states, should be able to deter and defend itself against cyber-attacks on both military as well as critical civil infrastructure. Monitoring on a 24/7 basis and early warning capabilities for detecting 'hybrid threatening activities' are required, as well as the ability to understand and analyse the incoming data.

Hybrid threats also demand clear military responses. As stated before, the option of the deployment of EU Battlegroups to Finland or Sweden should not be excluded, but perhaps there are other ways in which the EU could assist, for example by providing additional technical support or manpower at their borders. A maritime contribution could also be considered, for example in the form of stepping up patrols in the Baltic Sea. It is also feasible that assistance by NATO forces in the Eastern member states could have an escalatory effect in certain scenarios. EU troops, possibly gendarmerie, could be the wiser choice, in particular to assist the Baltic States in dealing with covert paramilitary hybrid threats. For example, EU gendarmerie could help with riot control or to counter other law and order destabilising events which might occur as a result of hybrid activities from outside.

To be able to perform a major high intensity military operation autonomously, it is clear that EU member states need to invest more in strategic capacities. First and foremost, European countries need better intelligence and strategic reconnaissance assets (satellite systems, remotely piloted aircraft systems, target acquisition), improved command & control and information systems, attack and transport helicopters, precision munitions and deployment capabilities such as air-to-air refuelling assets – all of which are existing European shortfalls. What is acutely lacking are scenarios in which state and non-state adversaries have capabilities that can deny access to the area of operation. Therefore, increased 'anti-access' and 'area denial' (A2/AD) threats also necessitate a reconsideration of what type of military capabilities Europe needs. Suppression of the air defence of the enemy and airborne electronic jamming capabilities are high-tech capabilities which would require considerable investment. This illustrates that a CSDP that can act autonomously at the highest level of the spectrum is an ambitious endeavour. Despite the urgency of creating credible forces, not all can be realised

simultaneously. Nevertheless, particularly since many capabilities need extensive advance planning, the related capability goals should be set as soon as possible. Clearly, such European capabilities would also be to the benefit of NATO.

Furthermore, special forces have to be expanded and full-scale training and exercises should also be conducted in a European context. EU Battlegroups could be used either as an initial entry force at battalion level or as building blocks for a larger brigade-size intervention force. However, this would require solving a number of shortcomings of these

EU Battlegroups could be used for a larger brigade-size intervention force

Battlegroups (e.g. more common funding, more modular approaches). In order to ensure escalation dominance more firepower and larger quantities of troops and equipment on the ground will be needed. A Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) has to be established to prepare and lead EU military operations in addition to the already existing Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) for civilian missions.

The security challenges to Europe's southern borders (in particular the terrorist threat but also migration and transnational crime) set a high priority for capacities 'in the defence of Europe' in the broad sense. More than ever before, the CSDP has to be connected to the area of Freedom, Security and Justice (FSJ) and to assist in managing the security of Europe's borders. For capability assets more priority should be given to smaller patrol vessels, surveillance equipment (again, satellite systems and RPAS), border guards, border management capacity building (both for third countries and EU member states), maritime patrol aircraft, and search and rescue equipment. Connectivity between all relevant data exchange systems – national and international, military and civilian – remains a key factor for realising more effective and timely responses to border security challenges.

Tools and instruments

Europe lags behind in solving existing capability shortfalls, in particular in the area of enablers. In order to increase capacities at the high end of the spectrum more investment in high technology will be needed. All of this underlines the need for a further pooling and sharing of scarce resources. However, reality shows that member states have decreased their European collaborative spending over the years, away from benchmarks agreed in 2007. In that year EU Ministers of Defence approved a benchmark of 35 percent of all equipment expenditure to be spent on collaborative European programmes. The facts: the percentage dropped from 20.8 percent in 2006 to 19.9 percent in 2014. For research and technology it was agreed to aim for spending 20 percent of total R&T expenditure together. In reality the percentage went down from

13.1 percent in 2007 to 8.6 percent in 2014.[2] These figures clearly show that political decisions have not been followed up in practice. Although there are many reasons for this lack of progress, the main explanatory factor is that *generally intent is not sufficiently translated into commitment*. Voluntarism is the word that can be found in nearly every declaration on European capability development.

Intent is not sufficiently translated into commitment

A step-change is needed and it will require that member states move from the existing situation to a system of *more accountability* and *commitment*. Such a system can only work with the frequent involvement of the highest political leadership. But it also requires new tools and instruments in order to connect national defence and procurement planning to mid- to long-term capability development at the EU level. The first prerequisite is *transparency*. At bilateral and subregional cluster levels several member states are already sharing relevant information in order to seek potential for aligning their defence plans. It is important to note that such transparency is not the same as making all information public. Sharing mid- to long-term defence and procurement plans can be done in a classified manner. The key factor is that these plans are available to other member states to identify overlapping initiatives. The EDA's Collaborative Data Base (CoDaBa) has been designed for that purpose, but it seems that its full potential has not been used so far.

Sharing plans to seek more collaboration is just one step. The crucial aspect of strengthening tools and instruments is *accountability*. Member states have to be held more responsible for their efforts to address European shortfalls and improving capabilities. The White Book should state this clearly and define the broad outline of a method for implementation. Several models can be considered:

A. *Ministerial peer pressure*: a system whereby Ministers of Defence would explain their efforts to improve European capabilities in an annual meeting of the EDA Ministerial Steering Board. They could challenge each other based on the statements made and refer to the potential offered by cooperation projects already launched. The role of the EDA would be very limited and primarily of a supporting nature. In this model capitals would be fully in charge.

B. *Political assessment*: a mixed system in which Ministers of Defence would annually assess the results of the progress they have made in addressing European shortfalls and improving capabilities. The EDA would act as the custodian of the data without itself having an assessing role. But it would present the results in terms of collaborative projects and other efforts to deepen defence cooperation.

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2   EDA Defence Data 2014.

These results (with the date for all of them) would be presented to all member states. Ministers of Defence would then discuss these results and investigate the potential for more cooperation in an annual political assessment meeting of the EDA Steering Board.

C. *European Semester*: a system comparable to accountability applied for the Eurozone countries. Based on agreed criteria and benchmarks member states would be assessed on their performance on an annual basis. The EDA would act as the custodian of the data and assess member states' performance through annual 'European capability improvement reports'. These reports could be discussed during a dedicated EDA Ministerial Steering Board meeting. Clearly, in this model the EDA (Brussels) level would play a central role, not only as data custodian but also as the assessor.

Of these three models, the system of ministerial peer pressure (A) is probably the easiest to realise. In essence it only requires ministers to explain their efforts in European capability improvement to each other. On the other hand, such a system lacks data collection and permanent monitoring. It can result in a talking shop of the willing without resulting in an assessment of all. The system of political assessment (B) will solve these shortcomings by giving EDA the role of collecting the data and acting as the custodian of the facts, to be updated in an annual cycle. All member states have to participate and will be subject to political assessment in the EDA Ministerial Steering Board. Such a system will guarantee the inclusiveness of all member states, but political assessment by member states might fall short of real accountability. A European Semester-type system (C) in which both data collection and assessment will take place at the EU level is the best option. However, it is unlikely to get the political approval of the member states, at least in the foreseeable future. It should remain an option for the more distant future and perhaps some intermediate steps could be taken, based on the experience and lessons learned from a political assessment (type B) solution.

The aim of spending more together is not new, but other ways of financing – in addition to member states' expenditure – should be fully exploited. This applies in particular to R&T/D[3]. Firstly, investment in civilian technologies with defence application – *dual-use technologies* – should be further expanded, taking into account that civilian and military actors have overlapping needs in areas like communications and IT but also in unmanned aerial systems or personal protection. Secondly, the Preparatory Action of the European Commission should be the bridge to *sizeable defence research investment* as part of the EU's post-Horizon 2020 multi-annual research programme. This investment programme has to be capability-driven, based on military requirements agreed in the EDA context. But the involvement of EDA and member states is equally important

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3   Research & Technology/Development.

for applying research results further down the chain into the 'build and use' phase. Furthermore, industry has to be involved as early as possible. This cannot apply to only the large companies.[4] Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) have a key role to play in technology development, but they are still confronted with limited access to cross-border markets. Additional measures are required to take further steps in the direction of creating a true level playing field.

Conclusions

In a fundamentally changed security environment the European Union needs a new strategy. The Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy fulfils that aim. That policy has to be global in its reach, as the EU's political and economic interests are worldwide. At the same time the EU is most directly confronted with security challenges to its East and South. In particular for the EU's role in security and defence this implies *a near-term focus on the arc of instability* now surrounding three-quarters of Europe, while a global outreach should remain a longer-term goal.

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4   Known as the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs).

As a consequence the Common Security and Defence Policy has to change as the old Petersberg tasks no longer reflect the demands of the 21st century security environment. A *new level of ambition* will also have to encompass contributions 'in the defence of Europe' in areas like border security and responses to hybrid threats, including cyber. In external crisis management Europe will be called upon to take more responsibility, including high-intensity interventions autonomously, most likely at the request of the United Nations or in support of regional actors and individual countries.

A widened set of CSDP tasks will ask for military capacities across all levels of the spectrum. Civil-military connectivity will be key, not only externally but also for operations at the EU's borders or in support of other internal security actors. Solving key shortfalls in areas like intelligence and reconnaissance, air-to-air refuelling and precision munitions becomes even more urgent. New European capability programmes should be launched to solve the gaps, to direct capability-driven research and technology investment and to retain or acquire key industrial capacities within the EU. *Capability improvement targets should be realistic* in order to deliver in the near term. Available assets such as the Battlegroups should be used to a full extent, but the EU has to prepare itself now for a *brigade-size intervention force*, which can be deployed at short notice, is able to operate at the highest level of the spectrum and is supported by adequate sea and air capabilities when needed. For the longer term a higher ambition level has to be set for further stepping up the European capability target.

Political will is the key factor for stepping up the European defence effort. The White Book should be the start of a process leading to a real political commitment to the EU's role in defence. In other words, the beginning of a road map, gradually leading to a stronger European defence. In terms of member states' commitment to related capability development the available tools and instruments have to be brought into line with this aim. In essence, the EU member states have to replace voluntarism by real commitment in order to follow-up capability improvement declarations and statements by deeds to deepen European defence cooperation. All available funding, including from the EU budget through a sizeable capability-driven defence research investment programme, has to be used in close cooperation between the European Commission, EDA and the member states. But capitals will have to change their behaviour to replace the habit of national programmes in capability development by giving priority to multinational solutions. A gradual approach, *replacing voluntarism first by annual political assessment of the progress made by member states* – with EDA playing the role of data custodian – seems the best way forward. In due course more far-reaching systems of assessment and accountability in a European Semester-like approach should not be excluded. Lessons learned with intermediate solutions as well as the specificities of the defence sector should be taken into account in designing such a longer-term capability commitment system.

The way forward

The next step will be to 'translate' the new strategy into the consequences for the Common Security and Defence Policy in the form of a White Book-like document. It has to be developed in conjunction with the European Commission's Defence Action Plan – in particular to connect the agenda related to strengthening the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base to capability development requirements. Timelines for the delivery of both documents have to be synchronised, which implies that *the White Book has to be ready before the end of 2016*. Next to many other subjects related to CSDP, the White Book has to include the three areas of (i) a new ambition level, (ii) the impact on capabilities and (iii) the tools and instruments to deliver them. In comparison to the development of the Global Strategy key stakeholders – first and foremost the member states which own and deploy capabilities – will have to be involved more closely in the elaboration of the White Book. *Inclusiveness* will be key for the 'ownership' of the White Book in order to be fully reflected in national defence policies and plans. Therefore, the author of the White Book – to be appointed by High Representative Federica Mogherini – should preferably be a high-level personality with CSDP expertise. He or she needs to set up a sort of Personalities Group which includes all member states.

Time is a critical factor. Delivering the White Book before the end of 2016 requires a speedy process which has to be launched as soon as possible. It sets high demands, both for authorship and ownership. Flexibility will be needed, but also an approach to find the balance between a too generic and a too detailed White Book. For example, it should define ambition levels, related CSDP tasks and the implications for capabilities, but not go into the next steps of designing new illustrative scenarios, launching capability programmes and the procedures for political assessment for monitoring progress. It should steer and direct CSDP into a new direction which the EU institutions and member states consequently will have to execute.