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## **New security challenges and EU responses**

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The Conference was the second event – after Prague last May – that the EUISS has organised in a new member State in collaboration with a local Institute. More will follow, possibly coupled with public events open to a wider audience.

The first and last parts of the Conference were mainly devoted to introducing the EU Security Strategy to the Baltic public and illustrating the kind of capabilities that would be necessary to live up to the challenges and ambitions enshrined in the Strategy. The general praise for Solana's paper was accompanied with invitations to the Union to implement it through more detailed action plans and a more coherent political behaviour.

The main focus of the Conference, however, was on I) whether the old distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' security challenges can still hold and, also, on II) the extent to which the 'global challenges' listed in the Security Strategy have a specifically European dimension and relevance.

### ***I. Beyond 'hard' and soft'***

On the first point, all the participants agreed that the distinction is outdated, misleading, even divisive: it is a cultural construction, it is often highly politicised, and it ends up splitting the West – sometimes involuntarily. Even in the case of Chechnya, it was noted, a trans-national war economy has taken root in which terrorism ('hard') generates and supports crime ('soft'), and vice-versa. In turn, the cooperation agreements that the EU now signs with third countries include clauses on terrorism and WMD as well as human rights and migration.

In many ways, the notion of security has moved from 'security for the State' to 'safety for the citizen': but, as a participant asked, should we 'negotiate' such security, as the EU tends to do most of the time, or should we 'win it, or win it back', as the US instead clings to doing? Also, there are different 'safety thresholds' across the West and across Europe itself: they are linked to varying geopolitical realities and perceptions as well as levels of acceptance/acceptability of *insecurity* - just another source of transatlantic mismatch, with the US keen on a search for invulnerability that is mostly foreign to Europeans.

The discussion also focussed on the capabilities that would strengthen the EU as a security actor, and tried i.a. to address the question of what could be a ‘post-modern’ army and approach to warfare. It was said, for instance, that it should be based on 1) optimisation rather than maximisation of targets, 2) cultivation rather than destruction of infrastructure, 3) decentralisation rather than (re-)centralisation of decisions and operations. Still, it must be kept in mind that (*Iraq docet*) tactical victories do not translate automatically into strategic and political ones. Hence the need for a more comprehensive approach.

With the old distinction between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ fading away, it was also argued that European security is now confronted with a broader set of threats: ‘actor-based’ ones, such as attack by another (State or else), and ‘structural’ threats, encompassing a) collapse of neighbouring systems (energy crises, pandemics, violent civil unrest), and b) severe domestic disturbances (accidents, riots, epidemics, loss of democratic values) – all with unpredictable potential cascading effects. Their ‘mediatisation’, in turn, contributes to trans-nationalising the overall impact and may have political side effects: Bush gained full endorsement as President of all Americans only after 9-11, whereas Aznar lost it in a sudden crisis. There is a new sphere between the primarily international and the essentially domestic dimensions of crisis management: and such an ‘inter-mestic’ sphere is particularly relevant to the European Union. Also, public perceptions of insecurity drive decisions in the short-term, and ‘policy-making in these fields is increasingly dominated by *pace* rather than *space*’. Yet we expect *more* effective governing with *less* government, and we also tend to out-source functions and services (vaccines, prisons, even warfare) that are crucial to that end.

## II. *The other ‘Ds’: depletion, disease, disasters and disruptions*

On the second point, it was agreed that security in this new millennium is about protection not only from aggression but also from economic shocks, environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and disease. But how exactly and to what extent do such ‘global challenges’ (as mentioned also in the European Security Strategy) affect the EU?

*Depletion*, for instance, is not a direct challenge for Europe, although it may generate disruption and turmoil in the developing world and trigger conflict – requiring intervention – and also migration. This being said, EU countries can significantly improve their performance concerning multilateral and bilateral aid: the ‘millennium goal’ of 0.7 % of GDP set by the UN, for instance, is currently met by only four member states (Denmark, Sweden, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) despite the relative wealth of the Union.

Infectious *diseases* are on the rise again outside of Europe (especially AIDS and drug-resistant tuberculosis), but migrations and the sheer mobility of people are bringing them ever closer. The number of cases of HIV-infection is running out of control in Russia (due also to administrative chaos and lack of recognition of the problem) and spreading over into the Baltic States. DR-TB cases are on the increase in the Baltic States, again, but also in Denmark and Germany. Also, the SARS scare of last year – and possibly Avian Influenza (bird flu) this year – have shown how quickly new and unknown viruses can spread worldwide, with huge potential implications, practical and psychological, including public attitudes vis-à-vis migrants. It may even prove difficult to assess whether a given outbreak is natural or deliberate, although the effects – and the immediate response – would inevitably be the same. Finally, even though malaria is endemic to the poorest countries and virtually absent in the Northern hemisphere, global warming may change that picture, particularly in Southern Europe.

As for *climate change* proper, it was noted that human activity is definitely pushing up temperatures across the world – and especially in the industrialised world through greenhouse gas emissions – but that it remains extremely difficult to assess exactly how much and how fast the Earth is getting warmer, and what impact this will have both globally and locally. This major destabilisation of the geopolitical environment may also lead to new conflicts: a paper prepared for the Pentagon a few months ago hinted at a possible ‘ice age’ in the North Atlantic area caused by a shut-down of the Gulf Stream as a consequence of global warming and the melting of the Arctic ice pack. In the short term, however, the only certainty is that climate instability will impact on agriculture, especially in the developing world, and generate *disruptions* that will require ever more humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

On the policy side, the discussion dwelt upon the broader topic of *environmental governance*, an area dominated by a large set of specific conventions (up to 40 multilateral agreements) but all mostly based on ‘soft law’ and very different rules and obligations, financial and implementation mechanisms, and participating states. There was some debate over whether to aim primarily at universal adherence, for reasons of effectiveness and consistency alike (the French proposal of a World Environmental Organisation was mentioned), or to try and keep some flexibility in order to entice some critical countries into compliance.

The *Kyoto Protocol* is a case in point, of course, and in particular *Russia’s* position: it was noted that the underlying mechanism is such that Russia may even make significant profits from adhering to the Protocol (thus allowing it to enter into force) since its 1990 emissions levels were so high that cutting them down to Kyoto benchmarks would not only cost Moscow nothing – they already lie well below the Protocol targets - but even allow it to sell emission quotas to rich polluters. Also, Russia could trade its adhesion to Kyoto for its WTO entry, a step to which notably the European Union is crucial, given its objections to Russian domestic gas prices: a possible mutually beneficial deal - it was noted - could be struck here [and recent developments have confirmed this scenario, with the Russian government sending to the Duma for approval the papers required for adhering to the Protocol].

For their part, the *EU member states* should definitely improve on their current record on cutting down emissions: so far, only Germany has done so to a significant extent. It may become difficult to advocate multilateralism and compliance (Kyoto) when unilateral implementation leaves so much to be desired, although this is an area in which – as social scientists underline – there is no ‘first-mover advantage’. Yet if the EU can demonstrate that it can live within the Kyoto limits, this may have some impact on other high-emission countries (US and Australia, perhaps also China and India).

Regarding the *United States*, it was argued that it is unlikely that Washington will join the Protocol in its current form and possibly denomination: even presidential candidate John F. Kerry has hinted at a possible adhesion only after a renegotiation. The problem is that powerful corporate interests (e.g. Exxon and Chevron, although not – ironically – Enron) have opposed the Protocol, making it necessary to build ‘counter-coalitions’. To be influential, these should include at least some other US corporate interests, e.g. insurance companies, chemical industries (Dupont backed the Montreal Protocol on the ozone layer because it had developed CFCs substitutes), and possibly some US States (California, New England).

Yet it was also noted that:

- a) most multilateral conventions in this arena, including Kyoto, were originally devised by American experts and activists and backed by the Clinton administration, while they were initially met with scepticism on the EU side;
- b) Kyoto is only a small piece in a much broader context: its impact on global warming is short-term and very limited after all; and
- c) issues related to climate change – including the environment-security ‘nexus’ – are dealt with also in other arenas (e.g. ozone layer, toxic waste, disaster relief).



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