



Judy Batt

The EU's Security Agenda and the Western Balkans

7-8 April 2005, Belgrade

This seminar was the first of its kind in Belgrade, designed to introduce Serbian and Montenegrin policy makers, academic experts and journalists to the European Security and Defence Policy. The seminar originated with a request from the G17 Institute, the main independent policy think-tank in Belgrade, to the EU Institute for Security Studies for help. In keeping with its mission to promote the formation of a 'common European security culture', the EUISS sent several members of its research team and covered travel costs for other speakers. The EUISS also distributed to all participants copies of its publication, *EU Security and Defence Policy: the First Five Years*, and *A Secure Europe in a better World: European Security Strategy*. Additional financial support for the event was provided by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the British Council in Belgrade.

The event took place at the G17 Institute's premises, which offered excellent facilities and organisational back-up, attracting a high-level audience (see attached programme). The event took place at a very significant moment for Serbia-Montenegro, opening on the same day that EU High Representative Javier Solana secured a new agreement between Serbia and Montenegro to overcome the paralysis in the State Union, and just a few days before the European Commission delivered its positive Feasibility Report, recommending opening negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement.

The seminar opened with a dinner on 7 April, at which Judy Batt, an EUISS research fellow, delivered a message of welcome on behalf of High Representative for CFSP Javier Solana (attached). A keynote address on the future of the EU was made by Ambassador Istvan Gyarmati.

The seminar was organised in four sessions:

- *ESDP: What, Why and How?* (Jean-Yves Haine, IISS, London)
- *ESDP in the Balkans: Principles and Practice* (Ambassador Alexis Brouhns, Belgian MFA)
- *EU Enlargement and ESDP* (Marcin Zaborowski, new EUISS researcher, and Radek Khol, IIR, Prague)
- *The EU's Security Agenda: Wider Horizons* (Gustav Lindstrom and Dov Lynch, EUISS)

The speakers provided frank and critical overviews of the functioning of ESDP to date, which provoked lively question and answer sessions and debate. The EU's security and military dimensions were largely *terra incognita* for our Serbian audience, and there was

much confusion about how this related to PfP and NATO, which figure much more clearly on the Serbian political radar screen. Serbia-Montenegro hopes to join PfP this year, and there was some discussion about what more has to be done to join. There was also an exchange of views between the team of speakers and the audience about whether full NATO membership is also necessary. Serbian public opinion is very favourable toward PfP, but much more sceptical about joining NATO. Our Serbian and Montenegrin participants however seemed committed to NATO membership for their country (although spontaneous debate broke out about ‘which country?’ – Serbia-Montenegro jointly or as separate states). One participant asked for the visiting team’s assessment of the future of NATO. A certain wariness could be detected in the room about ESDP, almost as if participants were not sure whether this was something that they should welcome, or something that might be used against them one day.

The session on ESDP operations in the Western Balkans provoked surprisingly little discussion of the EU military and police missions in FYROM and Bosnia, although participants were interested in the problems of coordination between the various EU agencies involved on the ground. Once again, participants had heard much more about the NATO presence than about the EU’s. There was much more interest in the wider EU security agenda in the region, especially tackling organised crime. One participant expressed concern at the export of KLA violence from Kosovo to neighbouring regions in FYROM and southern Serbia, and asked how well prepared EU missions are to tackle the ‘new face of rebellion’ in the region – organised crime dressed up as ethnic insurgency. Discussion provided an opportunity to clarify what Serbia and Montenegro would have to do to align themselves with the EU’s Justice and Home Affairs policies. The issue of the EU’s visa regime and its impact on Serbia and Montenegro sparked off a huge amount of interest and extended debate. This was clearly a matter of major concern, because it is seen as perpetuating the isolation of the country, and especially of young people, only 2-3 per cent of whom have ever visited an EU country. One participant noted, and others clearly agreed, that the visa issue could be regarded as a ‘factor of instability’ in the region insofar as it undermined the credibility of the EU’s commitment to integrating the region. But as one participant observed, lifting the visa regime requires Serbia and Montenegro to establish the EU’s trust in their policing and border control capacities: ‘how can we expect the EU to trust institutions that our own citizens do not yet trust?’

In the session on EU enlargement, speakers from two new EU member-states presented their respective countries’ experiences. Participants found the comparisons and contrasts between the Polish and Czech cases useful, mainly in respect of military and security sector reform, force transformation and civil-military relations, rather than the two countries’ respective encounters with ESDP *per se*. The Czech experience of force specialisation attracted some interest. Two questions of immediate concern for Serbia-Montenegro were how, and how far, ‘lustration’ of officers of the former regime had been implemented; and how downsizing of the military had been effected in conditions of rising unemployment and general budgetary stringency.

In the final session, the presentation of the background and rationale of the EU’s Security Strategy was met with scepticism, and predictable reservations about whether this was too vague and ‘only fine words’ were expressed. The presentation of the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy apparently convinced the audience that Serbia-Montenegro was much better off pursuing its path towards EU membership, despite the challenges that involved. Participants also wanted to know about the prospects for ratification of the EU’s

Constitutional Treaty, and whether and how the failure of this would affect Serbia-Montenegro.

Conclusion

This was a worthwhile and interesting event at a critical moment in Belgrade, just as the first signs were appearing of a breakthrough in its long-stalled relationship with the EU. The question of Kosovo's 'final status' is now firmly at the forefront of concerns in Belgrade, and there is a new sense of readiness to engage constructively with the international community. Although Serbia-Montenegro's progress towards the EU is not directly and explicitly tied to any particular 'final status' option in Kosovo, the seminar did help to clarify the ways in which this unresolved question might impede Serbia-Montenegro on their way to the EU, and how the EU's role in Kosovo will expand considerably in future. It was thus a good moment to start promoting knowledge of the EU's developing operational capacities and to improve understanding of the EU's wider security agenda. The opportunity to build contacts between experts and policy-makers from the EU and Serbia-Montenegro was much appreciated by the audience, many of whom sent immediate positive feedback to the organisers.

Message of welcome from Javier Solana to participants at opening dinner of the G17 Institute/EU ISS seminar on 7-8 April 2005 'The EU's Security Agenda and the Western Balkans'

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to convey my words of welcome to you this evening.

This dinner celebrates tomorrow's seminar on 'The EU's Security Agenda and the Western Balkans', organised by the G17 Institute and the EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris, with financial support also provided by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the British Council. My thanks to all involved.

This seminar is the first of its kind to be held in Belgrade on the European Security and Defence Policy – ESDP - and a very welcome opportunity for leading experts and policy practitioners from the EU and Serbia-Montenegro to come together, exchange views, and learn about – and from - each other.

Just a few words about the EU ISS, many of whose researchers have come from Paris to address tomorrow's seminar. The Institute was founded as a joint action under the ESDP, and started work in January 2002. But please be clear on this point: although an Agency of the EU Council, the Institute is autonomous – it does not take orders either from me or from the EU member states.

So tomorrow you can expect not only information on the ESDP, but also frank criticism of its achievements to date, and fresh ideas about where it could and should go in future. And I invite the participants to respond in kind. The debate should be free, open and vigorous. The EU ISS mission is to help create a common European security culture, in which we want Serbia-Montenegro to share.

The seminar opens at a crucial moment for Serbia-Montenegro, as you wait for the outcome of the European Commission's Feasibility Study – the first step on the road to eventual membership in the EU. The key condition we have insisted on is cooperation with the ICTY. For us, that is prime evidence that Serbia-Montenegro wants to be taken seriously as a state capable of meeting its international obligations, and, in future, its obligations as a member of the EU. Shared values are fundamental to the EU project, including the common security culture that underpins ESDP.

The ESDP originated in response to events in this region: the EU member states recognised their failure to respond rapidly, robustly and coherently to the unfolding tragedy in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. The first ESDP missions on the ground were here in the Western Balkans: EUPM in Bosnia-Herzegovina launched in 2002; followed the next year by Concordia in FYR of Macedonia, the first EU military mission. Concordia has now been succeeded by the Police Mission Proxima. And in December last year, in the ESDP's most ambitious mission to date, the military operation Althea took over from SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The missions' purposes are now evolving from crisis-management and conflict-prevention to institution-building – assisting the countries of this region as they reform their institutions and prepare for closer integration and eventual membership in the EU.

But ESDP is not only about the Western Balkans.

In 2003, Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo stabilised an emerging civil crisis in Bunia and improved the humanitarian conditions.

EU Special Representatives have been appointed for the South Caucasus and for Moldova, to complement the EU's Neighbourhood Policy, and an ESDP Rule of Law mission is providing advice to Georgia.

The EU's security interests extend far beyond its immediate neighbourhood. The threats of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and organised crime know no borders. The EU is gearing up to tackle the underlying causes: economic underdevelopment, mass poverty, failing states.

Military responses to the new threats are not enough. The EU has an unrivalled array of instruments at its disposal. If we are to make a contribution that matches our potential, we need to be more active, more coherent and more capable.

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish tomorrow's seminar every success, and I look forward to learning your conclusions.