

The European Union's Eastern Enlargement: a Guarantee of Security or a Security Trap?

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Eastern Enlargement is not only a promise of economic prosperity, better life standards and political stability, it also represents potential threats to the security dimension of the EU. We are referring to problems, which are already known to the Union, such as organized crime (drugs, weapons and human trafficking, money laundering), illegal immigration and terrorism, but whose scale might become even greater with the shifting of the Union's border eastward and the entrance of the new Member States into the Schengen area. This paper proposes to demonstrate that the current security threats, which are unprecedented in the history of the Union, do not correspond to the classical concept of security. It also aims to show that the present actions of the EU are oriented towards immediate results and, consequently, unable to fight and prevent problems in the long run. The potential consequences of these actions are also analyzed to explain how counter-productive they may become. A comprehensive approach to these problems, however, could provide the Union with the adequate framework to develop a long term effective solution: a structure that would combine border controls, security and intelligence services, defence and external relations could be a good instrument to insure security within the Union's borders.

The decision to write this article started to develop as I read through one of the most recent documents on Portugal's National Defense: Published exactly one year ago, the Strategic Concept for National Defense (Resolution nº 6/2003 of the Portuguese Council of Ministers) impressed me by the fact that it showed very clearly that the Portuguese current capabilities need to be adapted to the new security threats. Indeed, an interesting analysis was made on how current problems, such as ethnic and religious conflicts, mass migration, drug and human trafficking, terrorism and organized crime in general, differ from traditional ones. This ambitious document also developed another interesting aspect as it underlined what the Portuguese State should do in order to stop and prevent such problems. It is curious, however, to see how little impact the European dimension had in this document, where national interests do not seem to have much in common with European ones and references to NATO are more frequent than the ones to the European Union (EU). This helps us keep in mind that European integration may be quite advanced in some areas, but that security and defense is still not one of them. Although I chose the Portuguese Strategic Concept for National Defense to start this article, this should not be interpreted as a criticism towards the position of Portugal alone. Actually, this is a situation that concerns all the members of the EU. In this sense, this paper aims at demonstrating that the current refusal of Member States to go deeper in terms of security integration may be hampering our chances of fighting new threats. In other words, I believe that the current propositions to improve national security and defense are insufficient to tackle the problems described earlier. This can be exemplified by the potential security problems brought about by the Eastern Enlargement and the way the EU is handling them.

In May 2004, the EU took one of the greatest steps of its history, as ten new Member States joined the 50 year-old dream of a more peaceful, reunited and economically developed Europe. Being

such an important event, it required a great amount of preparation, both on the EU's and the new Member States' sides. Indeed, for a few years already, much has been done in terms of economic and legal approximation, as well as institution building. Although some of these transformations also concerned security matters, we believe that these preparations were insufficient in the long run to face, problems that fall out of the classical scope of security and that have already started to appear. The definition of security adopted in this article is Barry Buzan's one «which includes political, economic, societal, environmental as well as military aspects and which is also defined in broader international terms» (Buzan, 1983, p. 214). To be more precise, it is a definition that stems from the New School of Security Studies, which defends the widening of the security agenda to issues that are non-military, in the sense that they affect individual security needs.

Most European citizens still have a traditional understanding of external threats to security, generally connecting it to armed conflicts. When asked to identify a source of insecurity, many of them answer back the Middle-East region. Others say the Balkans, justifying their choice of this area as being one of ethnic problems, with poor infrastructures. Few mention Eastern Europe, as it is generally considered as a region where conflict is much less probable. They are correct in this sense, but they are also expressing a limited definition of security. According to Sabine Weyand, «traditional definitions of security have been closely tied to the defense of a population and a territory against military threats, by the use of armed forces. (...) The military conception of security has largely excluded consideration of potential non-military threats and non-military means of providing security» (Weyand, 2000, p. 11). Indeed, there are new forms of threats, different from traditional ones, which are endangering European security. John Baylis and Steve Smith see the appearance of these new problems as «a movement away from conflicts between the great powers to new forms of insecurity caused by nationalistic, ethnic and religious rivalries within States and across state boundaries» (Baylis & Smith, 2001, p. 269). Threats, that today's EU has difficulties identifying, preventing and specially solving.

This future Enlargement will bring the border of the EU (and, in a few years, of the Schengen area) closer to problematic countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Russia and Moldova. If, on the one hand, they cannot be compared to the Western Balkans in terms of conflict potential, on the other hand, these countries still maintain a certain economic and political instability (incomplete legislation, poor law enforcement system, corruption, insufficient border protection and poverty). According to Ole Wæver, «the fragmentation of various states, like the Soviet Union, (...) has created new problems of boundaries, minorities and organizing ideologies, which are causing increasing regional instability» (Wæver, 1996, p. 149). Such scenario may improve, or regress, according to EU's future strategies. The situation of this new neighbourhood has led to the appearance of organized crime whose objective is to fill the gaps left by the States. Such organizations develop a wide range of activities related to money laundering, drugs, weapons and human trafficking (including human organs), prostitution, helping illegal immigration, terrorism, fraud, international car theft and smuggling art and endangered species, which influence the life and the functioning of the EU.

Although it is very difficult to measure the extension of organized crime, there is a widespread idea that drugs account for the most important part of the profits (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Investigative Program on Organised Crime 2003, <http://www.minneapolis.fbi.gov/>). Naturally, this can only be estimated from those transactions stopped by the police or customs officials. Profits resulting from drug trafficking would then serve to finance other illegal activities. Car theft is another important area, especially in countries such as Germany where there is a larger concentration of

luxury vehicles. Around two thirds of what is stolen is sent to Eastern Europe, where there is a more limited number of expensive cars. Trafficking illegal immigrants is not something new either, but it has continued to rise as borders have become easier to cross and economic and social differences between East and West are still important. In this case, Portugal's example is quite representative, as it has been targeted for the last four years by illegal migration networks. During this period, Ukrainian, Moldavian and Romanian immigration, fleeing from unemployment and poverty in their countries, have outnumbered the traditional African immigration. This kind of activity is often combined with prostitution, as it is difficult to obtain the necessary documentation to enter the job market legally (Carrapiço, 2003, p. 57). Another serious example of illicit crime is the smuggling of radioactive and microbiological material mainly coming from the territories of the former Soviet Union. After its disintegration, States were unable to continue to control this sector. It resulted in the rapid rise in trafficking of elements with important destruction capabilities (Husbands, 2003, p. 69). This was mainly due to an «increasing inability to fund the personnel and hardware necessary to maintain and protect nuclear infrastructures» (Finel, & Noland, 2003, p. 45).

What is particularly worrying is the rising number of this sort of criminal organizations and the fact that they now have the capability to operate on a larger scale than previously. They have more access to financial funding and technology and there is a growing tendency towards a diversification of the criminal activities, which means that they are now capable of causing more serious damage. Furthermore, it is difficult to predict how organized crime is going to orient its activities, as it seems highly adaptable and eager to introduce itself into emerging markets.

There is also the problem Roy Godson calls the Political-Criminal Nexus (PCN), «the collaboration of political establishments with the criminal underworld» (Godson, 2003, p. 259). Although the region being considered is not as affected by corruption as Mexico, Nigeria or Taiwan, it still has some influence on the functioning of societies. The form of collaboration and its degree varies according to the country, even if the results are usually the same: political, economic and social infrastructures are weakened and the population often loses confidence in the system that was originally created to protect it. What is especially worrying in the case of the PCN is that it is envisaged more as a social problem and not as a security one, which makes it even harder to fight it. The consequences of this set of problems can already be felt at the social level, due to a vicious circle between illegal immigration, poverty and violence, at the economical level, for reasons of Internal Market disruptions, and at human rights level, where cases of ill treatment and slavery are being discovered more and more frequently. Such consequences could even become more negative depending on the EU's initiatives.

The EU is naturally concerned with these issues and has already taken some actions, which it believes are able to cope with this kind of threats. Where European legislation is concerned, there is a growing tendency to provide citizens with a more secure EU. The European Council at Tampere (1999), for instance, underlined that the EU should pursue its efforts to fight organized and transnational crime, as well as pay more attention to prevention. More recently, the EU Strategy of the New Millennium on the Prevention and Control of Organized Crime (May 2000) has been adopted as the current framework used to improve cooperation at EU level in this area. Since then, other documents have contributed towards this goal. It is the case of the Dublin Declaration on Tackling Organized Crime in Partnership (November 2003), which served as a basis for the Irish Presidency to continue the work developed so far. The latter suggested, among other things, that a model protocol for partnership be created between the public and the private sectors, at national level, in order to incite these actors to work together in organized crime prevention. One of the

most recent documents having contributed significantly towards this area is «A Secure Europe in a Better World» (December 2003). The Iraqi crisis, which managed to divide Europe politically, also produced an awareness of the need to create a framework and a coherent guideline for all its security initiatives. This new European Security Strategy, presented as being highly beneficial for the EU, is meant to empower the EU's position in the world by demonstrating its unity and the fact that it is ready to start sharing responsibility for security matters. Being a major step, it considers a broader approach that combines political, economic, intelligence and military aspects intended to foster good governance in its neighbourhood. Although it is a general document, it addresses the question of organized crime, terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts and State failure very clearly. In practical terms, it suggests prevention and early intervention, as a means to foster democracy and insure security, considered as a precondition for development. This strategy, which is meant to reflect European identity, is presented as the best way to achieve internal security. The Constitutional Treaty may also bring, in the future, some solutions to the problem of security, since it plans quite a number of reforms with positive consequences for this area. As far as the Common Foreign Security Policy is concerned, it includes the gradual definition of a Common Defense Policy, which could lead to a Common Defense, and a Solidarity Clause, similar to NATO's Art. 5. Still within External Relations, it underlines the EU's will to foster deeper relations, based on co-operation, with its neighbours in order to create a space of prosperity. There are also reforms in the Justice and Home Affairs area, the most important ones being the future creation of the common policy for asylum, immigration and external border control and a closer coordination of national police forces, customs offices and intelligence centres (European Convention, 2003, p. 41- 203).

Where practical changes are concerned, much has been done in the last recent years: there was the creation of the EU Programme for Combating and Preventing Illicit Arms Trafficking (1997) (www.grip.org/bdg/g1657.html), the EU pre-accession pact on organized crime (1998) (www.ceps.be/Article.php?article_id=183), the Group of States Against Corruption initiative (1998) (www.greco.coe.int/), the EU Joint Action on Small Arms (1998) (<http://projects.sipri.se/expcon/eujointact.htm>) and the EU Arrow project to combat firearms trafficking (1999) (EU Joint Action Report 2001). More recently, and among internal security matters, we may find border protection measures, such as reinforcing physical security, raising the number of guards, providing personnel with technical training, creating computer systems, implementing new technology and changing the visa regime. Other actions, also taken within the scope of Justice and Home Affairs, were the deepening of co-operations between national police forces, intelligence agencies and customs offices. As regards External Relations, the EU has recently known some important developments in the area of the European Security and Defense Policy due to the creation of the Rapid Reaction Force. Neighbourhood relations have also gained from the suggestions of the Wider Europe Document (2003), which is meant to promote regional and sub-regional co-operation and stability by offering neighbours the future prospect of closer economic integration.

The above initiatives are indeed important to insure that the Enlarged EU is acting according to the same standards and that the current security structure is improved in order to work as well as possible. However, some of these changes may also have other kinds of consequences, which, in the long run, may even become contrary to the EU's objectives. We should ask ourselves, for instance, if reinforcing border security really is an efficient method to fight the problems threatening the EU, or if this should be seen more as a security complement. If the level of protection at the border check near Przemysl, dividing Poland and Ukraine, is increased, illegal organizations will most probably

redirect their routes to another region. «Unless the EU is prepared to ring its entire external border with fences and guard towers, to blockade the whole coastline and to make extensive searches of every person and container arriving in the EU» (Townsend, 2003, p. 34-35), organized crime will always manage to go around security checks. Indeed, physical security will not be able to guarantee, in the long run, the adequate protection against this sort of threats. Furthermore, it will also contribute to the construction of a «Fortress Europe». As President Kuchma puts it, «the European Union is replacing the Iron Curtain with a paper curtain across Europe» (Grabbe, 2000, p. 17). Such Union could only transmit a very strong message of exclusion to its neighbours, erasing most of the efforts for dialogue. To be more precise, «a structural notion in which the self-help attempts of states to look after their security needs, tend regardless of intention to lead to rising insecurity for others as each interprets its own measures as defensive and the measures of others as potentially threatening» (Herz, 1950, p. 157).

This would be, not only, a psychological separation in the sense that it would make relations more difficult, but it would especially be a physical one. As it is well known, we are considering a geographical region characterized by the existence of ethnic groups, who would be prevented from easily traveling into their country of origin. Another important consequence would be the decline of cross-border regions. For instance, there is a great number of Ukrainians, the so-called «petty traders», who depend financially on the possibility of crossing the Polish border to sell goods at higher prices. By doing so, they are compensating for their low wages and for the State's incapacity to provide them with a good life standard. Increased border controls and the need for a visa to travel into Poland will reduce substantially this sort of activity and lead to more poverty, social instability, and maybe even to political unrest (Batt, 2003, p. 23). The Ukrainian State would hardly be able to tackle this situation, which could lead to the appearance of a vicious circle of insecurity, where illegal organizations would be the ones that profit the most. Finally, it is worrying how the new Member States have not been included in most of the decision-making concerning the security area. After all, if they are going to be the future border, the EU should listen to their opinions and learn from their experience. Frontier control should be a shared responsibility, not an imposition of other Member States' security vision.

We should go even further and ask ourselves if the practical actions taken so far are really sufficient to guarantee the security the EU is looking for. Let us take the example of police forces. It is already possible to find co-operations between members of different national security services. In order to achieve this goal, they have developed dialogue platforms, communication channels and international meetings aimed at simplifying their work together.

However, supporting a structure such as this may rapidly become inefficient and frustrating. Firstly, it must be very hard to co-ordinate a team of 25 players whose police forces have different methods, means and objectives. In other words, «different policy approaches have different security 'cultures' and tend to follow (...) different security models and security logics» (Anderson & Apap, 2002, p. 2). It requires a great deal of investment in communication, negotiation and other administrative procedures that make this system time-consuming and inefficient. Secondly, this inefficiency becomes even greater when the threats they are facing are not playing the game according to the same rules: while criminal organizations are moving freely within the Schengen space, police forces are still facing national limitations. This lowers the chances of completing information puzzles in time to recognize and stop threats. «Different security and police forces, anchored in their respective countries, detect the separate activities of different cells, but no one necessarily sees the link» (Townsend, 2003, p. 7). In this sense, it is urgent to reform EU's police

forces' structures and methods in order to adapt them to today's problems.

The reality of intelligence services is not much different. It is easy to understand the crucial importance of intelligence in the prevention and fight against security threats: the most important characteristic of organized crime is probably the fact that it is difficult to identify. Naturally, it would be much easier if these threats were stemming from States interested, for instance, in transferring drugs or armament to another country. In this case, it would be more evident to understand who they are, their intentions as well as their capacities. The problem with non-State actors is that there is no background to start from; there is the impression of trying to fight an invisible enemy, which has no borders, nor political responsibility, and the only solution is to find as much information on it as possible. The latter will then serve to draw decision-makers' attention towards the necessity to take action and as a basis in the planning and execution of adequate responses. This is why we have to make sure that our intelligence services are collecting accurate data and that their current working methods are not jeopardizing our collective security goal.

For the moment, European intelligence depends mainly on the activity of national agencies and of some institutions such as Europol, the Intelligence Division of the European Military Staff and the EU Satellite Centre. Although much has been done to improve their functioning, some problems still remain. The most important one has already been referred to as being a severe handicap to police effectiveness: indeed, cooperation difficulties persist both between national agencies and between the latter and European institutions. According to Bjorn Muller-Wille, «cross-border exchange between national agencies and/or European units is a good indicator of how near the EU countries stand to each other and how close they really are to the declared ambition to produce security collectively» (Muller-Wille, 2004, p. 15). This is particularly important as the EU intends to adopt its own security policies and should not, therefore, be as dependent on national agencies as it is now. Another problem is adapting to new threats, as more efficient ways of operating have to be developed. This challenge is somehow related to the first one in the sense that today's security environment calls for methods of joint action. If national agencies are not able to cooperate correctly, then their methods will not be improved either.

If the benefits seem so evident, why is it so difficult for intelligence agencies to exchange information? Although the answer cannot be simple, it is possible to say, with some degree of certainty, that it is related with the way they function. They are still very oriented towards national interests and sharing information with other countries, even inside the EU, does not seem natural. There is, above all, a sense of distrust (Muller-Wille, 2004, p. 15) caused by the fear of losing control and power. It is not easy to give up a piece of information that could become an economic, technologic or military advantage over others. Naturally, other reasons can also arise such as the financial and linguistic aspects. Nevertheless, intelligence agencies will only make progress towards harmonisation and a sense of unity when they realise that the benefits are higher than the costs. These considerations unavoidably lead to the question whether it would be better to pursue our efforts of cooperation or create an entire new structure at a European level. The answer was given, during a meeting between EU ministers¹, where a proposal to initiate a EU-wide intelligence agency was rejected. Instead, ministers agreed to appoint an official to co-ordinate Member States' fight against terrorism. Comments such as the one of Michael McDowell, the Irish Interior Minister, who said «national intelligence agencies could not be expected to share all of their secrets» (BBC News, 19th of March 2004), allow us to understand why this decision was taken and show us how reluctant Member States really are to give up national sovereignty in this field. How many more

terrorist attacks will it take for Member States to understand that intelligence services will not be improved with superficial changes?

It is also important to include, in this comprehensive approach, the contribution of the armed forces to the improvement of internal security. Although, they are more oriented towards external actions, their operations have a considerable influence on internal security. It is the case, for instance, of disasters at national scale, where the armed forces are the only institution having enough capacity to face the situation. Their influence is, however, usually less direct, in the sense that it is rare for them to intervene within their own territory. The consequences of their actions abroad can, nevertheless, be very important as they represent the interests of each Member State or coalitions of States and their operations are interpreted as political messages by the rest of the world. By participating in peacekeeping operations and by providing incentives to stability, the armed forces are creating better guarantees against the appearance of threats that could endanger the European internal security in the future. What is possible to foresee is that, in the future, the armed forces will carry out more missions less related to their traditional function, where an accurate cooperation with civilian forces will be extremely important.

Up to now, Member States had traditionally excluded the area of Defense from the European integration process. Although some attempts were made in this sense (such as the European Defense Community in 1952), none of them survived the conflict between Member States' national interests. However, the recent awareness of security threats has led the EU to rethink these matters and to consider bringing military issues into the EU framework. So far, the EU has been able to conduct missions of crisis management, also known as Petersberg Missions, which are still quite limited in terms of capability. Member States are becoming more and more aware of the fact that these missions may not meet future security needs of the EU and are launching a serious debate on Defense reform. It is possible to find at least four important documents pointing this way: the Commission's communication on a Defence Equipment Policy (March 2003), the Convention's draft Constitutional Treaty (2003), the Thessaloniki Presidency Conclusions (June 2003) and the European Security Strategy (December 2003). The latter points out that the EU has to focus more deeply on raising Defense capabilities, both through research and market competition. On the one hand, there is a considerable gap between the amount of money being invested by Member States into military research and the amount spent by the United States in the same sector. It is not possible to develop credible Armed Forces without a serious effort to improve the technology and the equipment they are using. On the other hand, it is important to underline the lack of competitiveness of most European defense industries (in the case of Portugal, they are practically none), as well as the poor cooperation between them. It is curious to observe that, recently, some civilian companies have even surpassed the military ones in technological terms and have replaced them in their army-supplying role. One of the reasons pointed out by Burkard Schmitt, while explaining why the sector is not efficient enough, is the number of differences between national regulations. Indeed, «a European defense equipment market with a single set of rules and regulations for procurement, competition, transfers and exports would be a major step towards industrial cooperation but also greater inter-EU competition» (Schmitt, 2004, p. 2). Some steps have already been taken in this direction, namely with the future creation of the EU Armaments, Research and Military Capabilities Agency. Whether the latter will be capable of taking cooperation further and foster integration, is something we will have to wait and see.

Nevertheless, trying to improve security and defense services alone would just be an attempt to mend insecurity; it still would not solve it. In order to do so, the EU must go directly to the

heart of the problem and therefore has to increase even further its dialogue and investments in neighbouring countries. It is important to establish a relation of mutual trust, where the EU is seen as open-minded, since «at the root of the security dilemma are mistrust and fear» (Baylis & Smith, 2001, p. 258). A deeper relation of this kind could not only help develop the country economically, it could also foster police and intelligence co-operation. Increased European investment could provide this region with an adequate administrative structure and the means to encourage economical initiatives, in order to fight poverty efficiently. Raising the level of EU presence in these countries, for instance, could be an interesting way to improve mutual trust: it could allow the citizens to have more contact with the EU, to know it better and to learn about its values, at the same time that it provides the EU with a greater inside knowledge of the region and its needs. This direct knowledge could be of the outmost importance for our intelligence services to analyse the current and potential threats to the EU. It is important to keep in mind that defense technology is not worth much if it is not accompanied by accurate information. As it was mentioned previously, understanding these new security problems, how their activities and funding are organized, is the first step to stopping them. The origin of the threats is something the EU should pay special attention to. Poverty is often a source of insecurity, but it is not the only one. There is sometimes the tendency to oversimplify situations that are extremely complex, which can lead to inadequate solutions. This is also an area where new Member States can play an important role due to geographic proximity and higher knowledge on these countries.

In this sense, it is possible to say that the European Security Strategy is a step in the right direction, as it aims to achieve security through a more global solution. By promoting democratic good governance and expanding institutions, it wishes to create political, economic and social stability in the countries around the EU. As we have seen previously, this document advocates that the best way the EU has to face its threats is to act quickly and in a preventive manner. To be more precise, there is a clear idea that the EU can no longer be reactive to problems and that action will bring more political weight to the EU. It is important, however, to say that acting may not always be beneficial, as it depends on the adopted forms of interventions (Vennesson, 2003, p. 4). It also requires a great deal of intelligence information. Personally, I believe that our intelligence services are not capable of providing us with the information necessary to act, as they have an insufficient level of co-operation. Furthermore, action may also be negative when the target countries are not ready for it. In other words, trying to push a State's evolution towards our democratic, social and economic level too quickly may create an unsteady society; it may even lead to the appearance of extremist reactions. Concerning the countries that are unwilling to join the international community and receive European assistance, the European Strategy adds that «there is a price to be paid, including in their relationship with the European Union» (Solana, 2003, p. 10). The price, however, is not specified, which can lead us to conclude that the EU may be, not only ready to apply economic or diplomatic sanctions to non-cooperative countries, but also to act militarily against them. If this last possibility is true, the logic question is with what army? Regardless of the progress made, European armed forces are still performing very limited actions. It is hard to say if they will soon have enough autonomy to carry out missions other than Petersberg ones. Another interesting question is how this global action against threats is going to be financed? Intelligence, military, economic and social development suppose a great deal of investment. It is not realistic to expect national governments to raise Defense expenditure when their countries are facing economic crises. It is difficult to explain this choice to a population who is more concerned with unemployment or pension systems. Even if governments are aware that security is a basic need for the rest of society to function, they also know that it is not easy to transmit this concept

and that, in some cases, it can even cost them future reelections. Finally, it is interesting to consider the differences between national and European interests and the resulting conflicts. Although this document is meant to be a common strategy, it will probably be quite complicated to implement, as there are still a lot of national practical barriers to the objectives of the text. «A Secure Europe in a Better World» has understood that the only way to overcome threats is unity and a global coherent strategy, what about Member States?

As we have seen, developing only certain areas, such as External Relations and Justice and Home Affairs, but without building a strong coordination between them, can hardly achieve the EU's security goals. In this sense, it is logical to suggest that any further attempts to create any methods or instruments to act in this field should be made within a comprehensive approach that would combine border controls, police and intelligence services, defense and external relations. Furthermore, it is especially important to underline the urgent need for reform in the actual European security structure and to promote further discussion on the kind of Europe we want and what its international role should be. Governments have to decide whether they want to continue defending their national interests alone or if they want to combine them within a structure that should be the result of political cohesion and where countries put aside their reluctance to give up part of their sovereignty in this area, in order to benefit from global security.

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Notes

1 This meeting followed the terrorist attack in Madrid on the 11th of March 2004.

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