

## **The European Security Strategy – Austrian Perspective**

The following essay gives the Austrian view on the ESS from a security political perspective and analyses the needs and possibilities for further development.

### **Aspects of the current Austrian Security Policy**

As a consequence of the international security-political paradigm-shift, the Austrian Security- and Defence Doctrine, agreed in December 2002, determines the European Union as the central framework of Austrian security policy. In this doctrine, traditional Austrian neutrality-policy was conceptionally replaced by politics of European solidarity, also including an adequate military contribution to the whole spectrum of ESDP tasks. Although NATO membership remains an open option within the context of the Austrian Doctrine, it is very unlikely to be realised in the medium term, especially due to the post-Iraq-war developments. The Austrian orientation on ESDP is therefore based on domestic political reasons, as well as on the comprehensive interlinkage of almost all fields of policy making in the EU. The primary aim of Austrian security policy should be to promote Austria's role as an active and solidary player within ESDP in order to preserve national and European security-interests, as well as maintaining Austria's position in the group of European financial core contributors and policy shapers. Due to its economic and cultural strength, Austria is part of those countries which can positively participate in the further development of the EU. Since ESDP is gaining more importance within European policy making, Austria needs to intensify its efforts in the field of security policy in order to maintain its position of influence. These objective and analytical demands for a reorganisation of the Austrian security policy, equipped with an ambitious and proactive military component that meets European standards, have already been given birth to a concept. However, it seems that these ambitions are in conflict with the traditional Austrian Defence Policy which is oriented towards conventional threats and,

moreover, too weak with respect to current available capabilities for international operations.

Despite this current political situation in defence matters, Austria supports all political developments which contribute to strengthening the EU's security policy. Therefore Austria has welcomed the new ESS and encourages its further development. For this reason, Austria concentrated on single selected changes during the first phase on commenting for example on putting more emphasis on the important role of Russia, as well as on the question of disarmament for the European Security.

### **The European Security Strategy – Initiation of a new phase of ESDP- Development?**

The first phase of ESDP development dates back to the period between 1999 and 2003, when institutional requirements were established and ESDP was set up by voluntary national contributions of traditional armed forces composed of up to 60.000 troops. The adoption of the ESS and especially its realisation gave start to a new phase in ESDP development. This phase can be seen as an attempt to develop modern so called "transformed" rapid reaction elements and necessary strategic assets, and to increase the politically binding character and the demand for military operations. In this way, the EU should be capable of meeting its responsibility to establish and safeguard international security.

The EU adopted its security strategy in December 2003. By doing so, it attempted for the first time in her history to develop a uniform strategic concept. The document is the prerequisite for a credible and efficient security-political appearance of the EU. It must be seen in the context of the constitution draft and, in a broader sense, also in connection with the still unfinished draft of a "European Defence Book" (EDB). Basically, the constitution treaty is to regulate institutional questions dealing with the further development of the ESDP. The EDB is to provide deeper insight into the security strategy with regard to concrete operation scenarios and EU military requirements derived thereof.

The ESS must be seen in close connection with the US national security strategy and thus with US foreign policy. In certain respects, Solana's strategy can be considered to be an answer to the US doctrine. It reads like the European attempt to at least join the American debate about appropriate reactions to the new threats in a globalised world, even if it does not allude to the currently central security-political problem, i.e. the question of a "preventive deployment of military forces".

The ESS is based on the ambition of turning the EU into an international player who is more powerful and capable of acting, and who takes responsibility for international security and peace. The document was very well received by both the member states and the US, and was considered a constructive measure in face of a lacking common policy prior to the Iraq War. As opposed to the first draft, the ESS version that was eventually passed is no longer based on an independent will to shape global politics but is written in the sense of supporting an effective international order in the spirit of the UN Charter.

The particular challenge for a European strategy is that it has to take into account the diversity of the strategic and defence traditions of its member states. At the same time it has to develop a sufficiently accurate guideline concept for European Security Policy that may provide concrete instructions for actions and that represents a pre-defined and generally accepted security-political action frame. The ESS should be the conceptual-strategic superstructure for both defining sub-strategies and action plans (e.g. proliferation, fight on terror, dealing with "rogue states") and for further developing national security defence doctrines. With the ESS, the European countries have tried to agree on a common interpretation of the changes in international politics after September 11 2001, as well as on the development of a common threat perception. In addition, a common basis for a new strategic dialogue with the US is to be established. The aforementioned objectives demand that the EU member states first define their common politico-strategic goals and the instruments to be provided and used in order to reach them.

Thus far, one of the weakest points in EU foreign relations has been the incongruence between the goals and the means needed to reach them. The EU has repeatedly pointed out the significance of soft power, i.e. the ability to influence

others through positive incentives rather than through coercion. However, it has gradually become more and more accepted that a comprehensive and effective security policy rests on the application of soft and hard power, complementing and mutually strengthening each other. The security strategy should, therefore, create the basis for the synergetic employment of all necessary security-political means. In the past, the EU was frequently (and rightly so) accused of reacting to crises only passively and too late. The new security risks, however, increasingly demand proactive and preventive actions.

The ESS is principally based on a “broader security approach” that, apart from military threats, takes political, economic, and diplomatic risk potentials into account. Therefore, the synergetic employment of comprehensive civilian and military means is of particular relevance also in crisis management.

Nevertheless, the document clearly concentrates on five top security risks, i.e.: strategic terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, “failed” states, regional conflicts, and organised crime.

The strategic goals that should guide the political EU actions are based on three pillars: extending the “security belt” around Europe, strengthening the world order while observing current international law and promoting good governance (promoting democracy, fighting corruption, and developing co-operation), and proactively fighting old and new threats. The guiding principles for future international EU activities are to be effective multilateralism under UN primacy and preventive actions (in a comprehensive security-political sense). In this context, it is necessary for the EU to develop a strategic culture that does not rule out military action as a last resort, while at the same time respecting international law. The fact that the new security risks cannot be met adequately with existing military operating procedures, is obviously expressed by a modified “self-defence concept” and the idea that “with the new threats the first line of defence is often abroad”. The ESS intends to make EU policy more active and coherent, and above all, improve her ability to act. This includes special institutional measures to guarantee the comparative advantage the EU enjoys, as opposed to other international organisations, i.e. “security from one source”, increase in military spending, reduction of duplication, and improvement of

the capabilities for civil crisis management. That these demands do not match reality is best reflected by the fact that out of the total 100 billion Euro budget a mere 63 million Euros have been allocated to the CFSP for 2004.

In summary, the positive aspects of the EES – beside the fact that it actually exists – is the global approach of the future orientation of European security policy, the concrete description and prioritisation of the core risks, the emphasis on the necessity of European military capabilities and the acknowledgement of matching civil and military measures on the whole spectrum of international crisis management.

However, the weaknesses of the ESS are to be found in the circumstance that the complex question of how to achieve task sharing with NATO and the USA remains open. Furthermore, the ESS misses a clear statement of time-horizons for making the necessary means available as well as achieving a coherent coaction between internal and external security. Therefore, it remains to be discussed which role the military can play in coping with the identified security risks, especially “strategic terrorism”.

### **“Way ahead” seen from the Austrian perspective**

An important step for concretion would be the concept of a “European Military Doctrine” (EMD). Austria would support the development of such a document. A precise coordination of the military objectives on the European level represents a crucial pre-condition for the continuing process of “Europeanising the Austrian Armed Forces”.

Although the realisation of such an EMD could turn to be rather problematic – both the acceptance of 25 defence ministries and a reliable CFSP are needed – this step would certainly be of great advantage, especially for the small EU member states. The EMD would facilitate the reorientation of the national defence planning on clear European objectives and duties. Furthermore, it would reform the framework of deepening the integration of the armed forces and it would include defence-politics of the bigger EU member states. Another crucial factor would be the higher level of legitimisation of the military in international operations, meaning: “The higher the

accordance among the member states, the stronger the domestic political acceptance”.

Another aspect would be the development of a European information strategy, bringing the aim and necessity of an European security policy closer to the European people. Due to the EU's ambition to become a global player, the security political dimension does gain in more importance. Therefore, also small EU member states such as Austria are postulated in the security political framework of the Union, in order to actively meet the new security-political challenges. This means that EU-membership necessarily requires a higher level of security-political engagement, a fact which has neither been fully recognised by the political establishment, nor by the Austrian population. Broad acceptance of the aims of the ESS is also in Brussel's interest. That is to say that the ambition of becoming a real global actor also requires the support of large parts of the European population.

In the Austrian point of view it is worth mentioning that the adoption of the document as such was already an important first step of development. Yet, the ESS should undergo a permanent review process in order to adapt to the rapidly changing international challenges. Therefore, such a review process – including the above mentioned aspects – should further include following analytical editing:

- The importance of Turkey for European security. After all, Turkey is directly involved in 13 out of 16 conflict situations that could have impact on the EU.
- The role of the EU in “Greater Middle East”.
- Concrete aims and steps for deepening the integration of European armies.
- The development of a European strategy of Homeland Defence.

Certainly, such a review process has to constantly question whether the self-defined aims can be realistically achieved. In order to evade the recurring critique of pursuing a declaratory policy, and for the sake of credibility of European action, clear priorities have to be set. This also means reducing, if necessary, excessively ambitious goals, and concentrating on really achievable projects. It will be essential to adjust EU strategic objectives to the available military capabilities and to the political feasibility, especially in the context of multiple strains put on the EU through the enlargement.