

## 4th International Seminar on Security and Defence in the Mediterranean

### Ten years of the Barcelona Process: Results and new aims

New threats according to the European security strategy

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#### Introductory remarks

The European commitment in meeting the new threats in the new security environment did not make its first step with the European Security Strategy (ESS) document adopted in December 2003. I will remind, for instance, the “European Common Strategy for the Mediterranean Region” adopted by the Council of St. Maria de Feira, in June 2000. But in that moment the new security environment couldn’t yet be assessed in its full and real dimensions like now; September 11<sup>th</sup> had not yet happened.

There is a theory, according to which September 11<sup>th</sup> has not been a turning point in modern history, the end or the beginning of an epoch. I will not deny that there is something true in this theory, nevertheless I am inclined to think that the strategic and security situation, after September 11<sup>th</sup>, is not comparable with the previous one. But before explaining why, there is the need of a preliminary inquiry about the concepts of “threat” and of “risk”.

#### Threats and risks

Last year, in this same seminar here in Barcelona, the French representative, my good friend Rear Admiral Coustillière explained, very clearly, the difference between these two concepts. Threats are only those depending on human willpower, and since strategy, according to the doctrine, is dialectics of opposed willpowers, only threats and not risks have strategic meaning. This does not imply that risks are not strategically relevant. In fact, the ESS mentions two of them, specifying that they are not threats “in the normal strategic sense”:

- the rise in temperatures predicted by most scientists for the next decades

- the energy dependence<sup>1</sup>.

Today, two years later, we could add the virus of the avian influenza, according to the alarm diffused during the recent Malta meeting.

Why are these risks so relevant, and what makes them similar to the threats, considered in their “normal strategic sense”? Obviously, it is because they modify the security environment and even the freedom of action of the states in meeting the challenge of the new strategic threats. Furthermore, some of these risks could also become weapons, and then be exploited as proper strategic threats: it is obvious that the energy dependence can be a strategic weapon in the hands of energy producers, and the avian influenza virus, after minor genetic mutations, could become a biological weapon like any other virus.

Thus, the concepts of “threat” and “risk”, even if distinct, are tightly intertwined. Of course, something similar has always happened: for instance, the weather conditions have always been an important strategic risk, but only after September 11<sup>th</sup> threats and risks have become tightly intertwined, to the point that they are substantially undistinguishable.

### **The new threats in the ESS: terrorism, WMD proliferation, failed states and organized crime**

I will now focus on the threats. The ESS, adopted in December 2003, mentions three key threats:

- Terrorism.
- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD).
- Failed states and organized crime.

Facing all these threats, even the proliferation of WMD, imply a certain interrelation between military and non military means.

Terrorism has always been a non-military threat, but if we take into account the large use of destructive means in the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack, or also in the Madrid and London attacks, we would wonder if there is some real difference between a military attack with normal air bombers and such terrorist attacks. It is evident that the recent episodes of international terrorism have been perpetrated through a warlike use of non-military means. That is why United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1368, often criticized for that, considers these attacks equivalent to the military ones, at least for the legitimacy of self-defence. We know that this fact reversed decades of contrary doctrine and judicial opinions, like in the famous Nicaragua sentence.

1. Europe is the world's largest importer of oil and gas. Imports account for about 50% of energy consumption today. This will be 70% in 2030. Most energy imports come from the Gulf, Russia and North Africa. Italy in particular will continue to depend, in the near future, on the energy resources coming from the Persian Gulf and North Africa, areas that are characterized by major instability.

Controversy about the legal response to terrorism is still huge and, apart from the two UN Conventions against terrorism, outside Europe the definition of terrorism itself has not been agreed upon. There is no common definition even within the EU, we might add, taking into account a recent –and widely discussed– sentence this year of an Italian judge about the difference between terrorism and guerrilla warfare.

Notwithstanding some partial concession to the United States contained in the ESS document, terrorism and the way to deal with it is still the major deadlock in reaching a broad consensus in the International Law. Of course, in an evolving world situations change, and then also International Law must change. Even customary Law is not eternal. But evolution implies consensus, and the stalled evolutions of International Law on this point, as the last *Strategic Survey* of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) suggests, is one of the major factors of risk that terrorists could easily exploit for their purposes.

According to the ESS document “Proliferation of WMD is the single most important threat to peace and security among nations”. This point is now at the centre of the strategic debate, because of the Iranian problem. Kenneth Waltz, and most of the Realistic School, would disagree with the ESS’s statement. They not only understate the importance of this threat, but also sometimes add that proliferation could be a factor of improved stability. I will not discuss this point, but certainly Waltz cannot deny that Proliferation increases the frightening risk that terrorist groups could acquire WMD.

Last but not least: failed states and Organised Crime. In many parts of the world, bad governance, civil conflicts and others factors have led to a weakening of states and of social structures, and even to the collapse of state institutions, with serious advantages for terrorist or for criminal groups; revenues from drugs can allow terrorists or criminals to stay in power or to gain more power than the state itself.

### **An important question: why?**

We should really ask ourselves: why is all that happening altogether, right now? Is the usual explanation, the fall of the Berlin Wall, sufficient?

André Glucksmann has suggested that it happens because too many states have modernized themselves without civilizing themselves. Of course, we should first agree on what “progress” and “civilization” are, and personally I am not fit for such an enormous topic. But Glucksmann’s argument reminds me of what Bertrand Russell wrote about progress: “Modern technology gave rise to conflict between social organization, and then human life, and human nature”.

This is important when we pretend to ensure better security and better stability by enlarging the area governed by democratic regimes. Of course I agree in principle; but too often in recent decades attempts to export democracy and rule of law, or human rights, have failed. We should ask ourselves why.

I do not agree with Montesquieu's theory, that stresses the importance of the climatic factors, but certainly exporting democracy is not an easy job, and one must also take into account that sometimes ill-rooted democracy can be exploited by non-democratic forces to gain power and to suppress democracy itself: this has been experienced in Germany with the Nazis and was close to happen more recently in Algeria, and could happen again in the near future.

I will not deny that democracy is the correct solution. I fully agree with Michael Novak, when he writes that "democracy is the new name of peace", but I will be far more cautious in selecting the ways to achieve it.

### Some considerations about the new security environment

All this leads me to some reflections, mainly on three points:

1. There is a great *vulnerability* and *complexity* in the modern societies, due to the social and technological organization, both of power and of social life. Furthermore, there is a growing complexity in international relations, because of the progressive globalization of the economies and the increased cultural interaction, and that makes it very difficult to analyse events and consequently to precisely identify the possible crisis situations. It is even more difficult to "geographically isolate" these situations within clearly circumscribed areas. Equally complex is the identification of the direct or indirect effects not only of such situations, but also of the possible strategic options to deal with them. *Unpredictability is the main character of the next strategic challenges.* This is a serious problem because, as Von Moltke teaches, strategy is knowledge, that is, the application of knowledge to the political or military problem, i.e. to practical life. Then, we must make a great effort to improve our knowledge in the hundreds of fields of which, due to the complexity, the strategic problem consists.

2. *Knowledge* itself is a complex phenomenon; there is a theoretical knowledge, and today like yesterday it is of great importance; and there is a practical knowledge, even a situational knowledge. Network-enabled capabilities are of vital importance to allow an effective situational awareness. To this purpose, there is the real need to establish a euromediterranean network. I praise this Foundation for the subject of last year's Seminar: intelligence. I want also to stress the importance of a well-known project of the Italian Navy, launched at the last "Regional Seapower Symposium of the Mediterranean and Black Seas Navies" in October 2004 in Venice: the Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic centre (V-RMTC). It is a communication network, allowing real time data exchanges on merchant traffic in the Mediterranean basin, to give a substantial contribution to the security of the maritime traffic and, as a whole, of the countries of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, which depend, to a great extent, on the region's maritime trade. It is enough to remind that 25 countries actually face these two seas representing only 1% of the global seas' surfaces, with more than 80 ports and 2.000 connections, and that 20% of the global crude transits there. All these data, given the evident vulnerability of the Mediterranean basin,

make us aware of the serious consequences, not least catastrophic pollution, resulting from possible attacks undermining the maritime traffic's security.

3. A last consideration refers to the most serious strategic problem connected with the new threats and with their unpredictability: the sunset of the "presupposition of rationality" as a traditional pillar of the strategic subjects dealing with collective behaviour, included non-state actors. Now, and not only because of the fundamentalism emerging in various religions (islam, judaism and even christianity), the "presupposition of rationality" often does not help in foreseeing what the strategic counterpart will really do.

## Conclusion

The multilayered and unpredictable nature of the new threats demands the development of new capabilities and maybe also a new way of thinking about many things that in the past were commonly accepted; for instance, the distinction between police forces and military forces, which is an achievement of the modern state, is becoming evanescent, and could be fading in a few years; that means that the armed forces will conduct operations more similar to police operations, first of all abiding by the rule of law, and police forces will conduct operations often undistinguishable from the military ones.

In any case, tomorrow like yesterday, security will be everywhere, and as the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) Javier Solana put it, a precondition for development; and will be a global public good, indivisible by frontiers that are substantially a heritage of the past.

What we should fear most is the incapacity of our minds to adapt to the new circumstances and to understand the new challenges in a continuously evolving world, and the ways to meet them.