

Aims of the EU's Fight Against Terrorism – Protecting Freedom

Will Madrid prove to be Europe's 9/11? The answer to this frequently asked question is "yes" and "no." We did not need Madrid to know that modern terrorism has a barbaric face, and we did not need the pictures of dead Spanish commuters to know that Al Qaeda considers Europe a "legitimate" target. Citizens of the European Union (EU) had already been among the victims of the attacks in New York, Bali, Casablanca and Istanbul, and many other places. The European Union responded swiftly: terrorist assets were frozen, airline and maritime security were tightened, as were our immigration and visa policies. Terrorist cells were exposed all over Europe, and planned terrorist attacks were thwarted. A European arrest warrant enables European law enforcement agencies to pursue terrorists across national borders.

At the same time, "Madrid" destroys any lingering illusions some Europeans may have had that Europe would be safe from terrorism. It is one thing to be conscious of one's vulnerability, it is altogether different to have been actually targeted. We know that blowing up Spanish trains does not satisfy Al Qaeda's appetite. And we are aware that Al Qaeda cells are ready to commit other murderous acts. Not surprisingly, Al Qaeda considers even the deaths of fellow Muslims an acceptable price to pay in the struggle to destroy liberal democracy. Muslims in Europe disagree, as did the father of Sanae Ben Salah, a 13-year old Moroccan girl killed on one of the Madrid trains. "It is a cardinal sin," he said. "You go to hell for that."

Some American commentators have described 11-M as a test of Europe's manli-

ness, as an opportunity for Europeans to display the power of Mars, and not just the charm of Venus. They take coming decisions on a continued presence of European forces in Iraq as the measure of this. But what does this mean? Does the test lie in whether or not our forces remain stationed in Iraq? I do not think so. Some European countries have forces in Iraq, some have forces in Afghanistan, while some, such as my own country, have forces in both. European forces are active in many other areas as well. European forces will stay in Iraq for as long as European governments and parliaments believe their soldiers can play a useful role in rebuilding Iraq as a sovereign and peaceful country, and of course, for as long as the Iraqis want them to stay.

To know what the real test is, one has to ask oneself what goal Al Qaeda is trying to reach. Al Qaeda's programme is ideological more than political, megalomaniac rather than concrete. But let us summarize it as the ambition to destroy a society based on liberal democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights. In its place would come some sort of medieval caliphate that would be Islamic in name, but totalitarian in its essence. In Osama Bin Laden's Utopia, there would be no place for freedom of speech, freedom of religion, or equality between the sexes.

The real test for EU member states and their partners is therefore to combat terrorism in all its forms, by appropriate means, while protecting precisely those universal values and fundamental freedoms Al Qaeda seeks to destroy. The European Union is a community of values in which there is no place for discrimination on the



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basis of religious or ethnic backgrounds. The question of Turkish EU membership, for instance, will be decided not on the basis of religious criteria, but on the basis of political criteria that reflect the values enshrined in the EU treaty.

At the European Council summit on 25 and 26 March, EU leaders adopted further antiterrorist measures. Gijs de Vries from the Netherlands has been appointed as a counterterrorism coordinator. He is charged with the coordination of all the EU's counterterrorism efforts. Cooperation between intelligence services is being further intensified, and Europol – the EU's own Interpol – will have greater responsibility for coordinating police operations.

Strengthening the Transatlantic Relationship

We will intensify our effort to disrupt terrorist organizations' financial flows and freeze their assets. Willingness to engage in the fight against terrorism will also be a litmus test for relations with third countries. The EU is prepared to assist those countries that are willing but unable to take action against terrorism and will reconsider relations with the unwilling.

Nevertheless, the threat that we face is multi-dimensional. We cannot win the fight against terrorism if we lose the battle for hearts and minds. We need to better understand what tempts some young Muslims to join Al Qaeda, in order that we can develop an effective response.

The European Union is promoting cross-cultural and interreligious understanding between Europe and the Islamic world. It is my firm belief that Europe's own Muslim communities have a crucial role to play in this dialogue. Clearly, this dialogue would benefit from an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which instead currently serves as a catalyst for hatred. That is why Europeans have been treating the Middle East peace process as a foreign policy priority and why we have been asking Washington to do likewise.

Europeans are not naive. We realize that our love of freedom makes us vulnerable. Terrorists use the freedom in our societies with the aim of destroying that same freedom. This is truly an asymmetrical war. But if a civilized society wants to remain civilized, it has no alternative but to try to uphold the rule of law, even in times of public emergency. People must be able to distinguish between the societies they belong to and the terrorist movements for whom the lives of human beings have no value.

We love life, unlike the terrorists, who say they love martyrdom. Life is precious and worth fighting for. We value the lives of all our citizens, regardless of their ethnic background, religious beliefs or sexual preferences. Europeans will not be passive in the face of a mortal threat against them and their children. We will be resolute in our counterterrorist operations, but in combating terrorism we will preserve our inherent values. That should be our pledge to everybody in Europe who fears both terrorism itself and the potential backlash in European societies. Sticking to this pledge will be the real test for Europe.

Early in 2004, Vice President Dick Cheney called on the European Union to shoulder its responsibilities and participate in a "forward strategy for freedom." At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Mr. Cheney criticized the European Union for lagging behind in military capabilities and called for greater cooperation and burden sharing between NATO and the European Union.

European leaders agree that, whatever their differences, the United States and Europe should maintain a united front in the face of tomorrow's challenges. They also agree that the EU should assume a larger share of the Transatlantic burden of maintaining international security and stability. There is a firm consensus among European and American leaders that the Transatlantic relationship remains the central strategic alliance on the global playing field and that both Europe and America must play their full parts.

During the Dutch Presidency of the European Union in the second half of 2004, EU-U.S. relations will be given appropriate attention, based on a broad agenda that includes security policy, terrorism, and economic issues.

In a stable and mature Transatlantic community there is always room for disagreement and debate. Some commentators have argued that recent disagreements, such as those over Iraq and the International Criminal Court, show that the relationship has entered a period of decline. The reality, however, is that virtually every decade has had its share of disagreements, over issues like Suez, Vietnam, cruise missiles in Western Europe and, most recently, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Each of these disagreements led to deep reflection, better mutual understanding and – in the end – greater determination to tackle new threats and challenges in partnership.

One need only look at the facts to see that we are still each other's natural and indispensable partners. Our relationship is based on a shared set of values. A high level of commitment to promoting democracy, good government, human rights and

freedom brings North America and the European Union together. Notwithstanding high-profile trade disputes, we are also each other's most important economic partners. In NATO, we possess the most successful military alliance in world history, an alliance that is being reformed to meet the threats and challenges of the 21st century.

Terrorism is the most acute threat that we currently face. *The day that not only government states but also terrorists and criminals can lay their hands on weapons of mass destruction, the world will become a totally unpredictable place.*

By involving Europe as a target, the Madrid bombings of 11 March 2004 destroyed any beliefs Europeans may have had of their safety from terrorism. What is worse, is that we know that Al Qaeda will not stop at blowing up trains in Madrid.

In fact, we know that Al Qaeda cells are ready to commit other murderous acts.

After the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001 the EU responded to *UN Security Council Resolution 1373* by drawing up a list of terrorist organizations

and individuals whose accounts were to be frozen. In accordance with *Security Council Resolution 1267*, all organizations with links to Al Qaeda have been placed on the list. The joint approach to terrorism is made easier by a new pan-European arrest warrant.

Following the Madrid attacks, EU leaders appointed Gijs de Vries from the Netherlands as a counter-terrorism coordinator for the European Union. Cooperation between intelligence services is being further intensified, and Europol will have greater responsibility for coordinating police operations. We are intensifying our efforts to disrupt terrorist organizations' financial flows and freeze their assets.

Willingness to engage in the fight against terrorism will also be a litmus test for EU relations with third countries. The European Union is prepared to assist those countries that are willing but unable to take action against terrorism, but will reconsider relations with the unwilling. The Dutch Presidency offers an excellent opportunity to reinforce Transatlantic cooperation in the fight against terrorism in all its forms.

Both America and Europe must have hard military power, as well as soft economic and diplomatic power, and be prepared to use both – as circumstances require.

The line that separates external from internal security is blurring, like the one separating ecological, criminal and military threats. The predictability of a bipolar world vanished with the end of the Cold War. The communist threat is gone. Borders have been flung open, and globalization has made its influence felt in every corner of the world. Unfortunately, terrorists and criminals have also seized their chance to exploit the open borders. Globalization brings not only opportunities but also challenges.

The same message is coming from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, President George Bush, and my European colleagues. As Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, states: “if we want to safeguard international peace and security, the multilateral system will have to find an effective response to new realities.” This is why NATO Secretary-General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has called for a multilateral system with teeth, one that can deliver on its promises.

Does it really make sense to describe the Transatlantic relationship as a confrontation between a “hyperpower” and a limping economic giant? This only serves to propagate the simplistic tale of an all-powerful America that no longer needs the multilateral system, and a European Union that defends multilateralism only because it lacks the means to act unilaterally?

This black-and-white picture does not do justice to the facts. In my experience, few people in Washington still support the idea that the United States is so powerful that it can do without friends. Opinion polls show that the American public believes in multilateral cooperation. The difficult road to peace and stability in Iraq and Afghanistan, has taught us that concepts like unipolarity, or “hard” versus “soft” power, are outmoded. In fact, both America and Europe must have hard military power, as well as soft economic and diplomatic power, and be prepared to use both as circumstances require. And while EU members have the task of improving their military capabilities, the United States needs to improve its post-war reconstruction and peace building capabilities. There is little point in winning wars if one does not have a proven concept for winning the peace.

In the meantime, we must not forget that countries like China and India are also evolving into great military, economic and cultural powers. Two hundred years ago, Napoleon said that when China awakes, the world will tremble. And now, like the rest of Asia, China is waking up, and nobody knows how strong it will become or how it will use its military and economic might. Russia, too, remains in the equation. Which means that Europe and America must make the role of international policeman and peacemaker consonant with the need for broad-based international cooperation.

In the light of this increasingly complex agenda, there is one danger against which it is imperative that the U.S. and the EU cooperate and act jointly: the growing threat of weapons of mass destruction. How can we make the multilateral non-proliferation regime more effective so that we, and the generations to come, will be protected from this threat?

The discovery of the secret black market in nuclear weapons technology run by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan has opened our eyes far more than any previous developments in North Korea, Libya or Iran. The current non-proliferation system is not preventing the spread of nuclear technology or the materials needed for weapons of mass destruction. Mr. ElBaradei has said that the recently discovered cases of illegal trade in nuclear technology are only the tip of the iceberg. It is essential that loopholes in the system be closed as quickly as possible. Several recent proposals may point the way.

In an address at the National Defense University in February 2004, President Bush argued for a UN Security Council non-proliferation resolution that would inter alia require states to cooperate on criminalizing proliferation. Such a resolution would provide a basis in international law for tightening export and transport controls. The Netherlands supports this proposal and believes such a resolution should be adopted under *Chapter VII* of the *United Nations Charter*, to make it binding on all member states.

Another important subject is enforcement of the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) and verification by the IAEA. Parties to the Treaty are free to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, but

some are prepared to abuse that freedom. Under the current regime, states have the right, subject to monitoring by the IAEA, to build up a complete nuclear fuel cycle, but once the cycle has been completed, they can denounce the NPT, refuse access to IAEA inspectors, and begin to produce nuclear weapons 90 days later. Although this is certainly not the intent of the treaty, such a scenario has been playing out in North Korea, and many are worried that Iran may have embarked on the same road.

We need a universal regime that is binding on all countries. The road to that regime is long, but a first step might be a Security Council resolution declaring that withdrawal from the NPT automatically constitutes a threat to international peace and security. This would create a *de facto* prohibition against denouncing the treaty after becoming a party to it. For such an approach to succeed, all countries must regard the NPT as fair, and therefore one important step is for nuclear states to put more effort into reducing their own arsenals.

IAEA inspectors must not only be able to verify whether a country is doing what it claims – as is now the case – but also whether it is doing anything it has not declared. This is the basis of the *Additional Protocol*, which all IAEA member countries should be required to accept as the new safeguards standard. At the very least, accession to the *Additional Protocol* should, in the short term, become a prerequisite for providing nuclear materials to a country for peaceful purposes.

Along with strengthening the multilateral non-proliferation regime, it is necessary to tackle the feelings of insecurity that drive countries to arm themselves, as well as the deeper roots of instability. I have in mind regional crises like those in the Middle East and Kashmir. The EU’s strategy includes detailed non-proliferation criteria for its relations with third countries. Iran and Syria are already feeling the effects of this policy. The security strategy also has a “soft” side that focuses on effective ways to tackle instability at its roots and to export stability to regions bordering the EU.

We have a clear interest in supporting the calls for reform that we now hear coming from many quarters in the Mediterranean and Middle East regions. Both Americans and Europeans want to support voices for democratic reform in

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these regions. The desire for more intensive dialogue and closer cooperation is very strong. Other G-8 countries also play an important role. The European Union will continue to use existing instruments that have proved their worth, such as the Barcelona process aimed at strengthening economic and political links with the Mediterranean countries, and MEDA, the EU program for development co-operation with countries in the Mediterranean and the Middle East with which the EU has concluded association agreements.

Also, where appropriate, we must reinforce existing structures, such as the cooperative activities of the European Union and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Our relations with countries like Yemen, which have so far remained outside the fold, must be placed on an entirely new footing. The political-military security aspects will be handled in NATO.

The ultimate aim is to improve the prospects for reformist forces and eradicate the breeding grounds for extremism. Even the appearance that America and Europe are trying to impose their will on others would be pernicious, so we must stress that the Middle Eastern countries are themselves responsible for these initiatives. The EU is promoting a cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue with the Islamic world. It is my firm belief that Europe's own Muslim communities have a crucial role to play in this dialogue.

Clearly, such a dialogue would benefit from an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict, which is currently a catalyst for hatred. It feeds the forces of extremism and serves as a recruiting ground for terrorists. It is a political black hole that cancels much of the good work done by reformists elsewhere in the region. This is why our common effort to further the Middle East peace process is crucial for our overall credibility and our ability to support reform effectively.

We must continue to encourage the two parties to reach a political settlement of which the essential elements are well known: the Taba plan, the Arab League's *Beirut Declaration* and the recent Geneva document have provided us with an increasingly detailed outline for a definitive solution. The parties, however, must first honor their commitments to the Road Map agreed by the four-power "Quartet" (the United States, the European Union, the United Nations and Russia), which is essential for rebuilding trust and bringing them back to the negotiating table.

The complex international agenda demands an active European contribution, which means that Europe must be able to respond to every sort of threat and challenge. To do so effectively, policy coherence is indispensable. We cannot afford the luxury of addressing only simple problems and neglecting more difficult ones. If the European Union really wishes to help make the world safer, it must mobilize all its hard and soft power, and use it wisely.

Since its enlargement on May 1, 2004, the European Union now has a population of more than 450 million and its Gross National Product represents one-fourth of the world total; it must be able to do more than it is doing now. The question is not one of competing with the United States but of assuming some of the responsibility that the Americans are currently shouldering. In short, we must share the burden.

The European Union is thus working hard on strengthening its military capability, so that the member states can deploy their armed forces quickly and effectively, even when the battlefield is far away. Such missions could take place under a NATO or an EU mandate. The recent Franco-British proposal to set up rapid reaction battle groups is not as new as it may seem. European countries had already agreed in 1999 to develop a rapid reaction capability. But the new proposals give concrete form to this objective. The aim is to create units of around 1,500 troops, with their own logistical and transport facilities, which could be deployed in theater in a matter of days. The EU member states possess only a single set of forces, whether under a European or a NATO flag. This means that any overlapping between the EU battle groups and the NATO Response Force, for which EU member states also provide the majority of units, will have to be avoided by means of a *smart rotation* system, which is currently being discussed.

The Netherlands does not believe that the further deepening of the European Security and Defense Policy implies a weakening of our Transatlantic ties. Europe needs America, and America needs Europe. In security matters, NATO is the Transatlantic forum that binds Europe and the United States. We must cherish and make optimal use of this forum, both in terms of political dialogue and concrete cooperation. This is equally true from Washington's perspective. *Ad hoc* arrangements are sometimes unavoidable, but

I believe the use of permanent structures, like NATO, is by far the best option – and NATO should be a two-way arrangement, with continued investment from both sides of the Atlantic.

We live in a world that can suddenly become unstable and dangerous, a world in which national borders provide less and less protection. To respond to this challenge, cooperation between Europe and America remains crucial. The problems we face are global problems. Neither the United States nor the European Union can handle the new threats in isolation. Global problems are best dealt with through collective action, provided, of course, that such action is credible and effective.

That is why we must increase the effectiveness of the multilateral framework. The United States, the European Union, Russia, China and other interested parties should continue to apply their military power under the multilateral umbrella. But in the longer term we cannot expect them to do so unless the multilateral system allows for effective action against serious and acute threats.

In short, the question of the Transatlantic relationship is part of an even more significant one: how can Europe, America and other important partners contribute to a more stable, secure and peaceful world? The international agenda forces us to work together. It is not a mere option but an inescapable necessity. Those Europeans who believe that our future path will diverge from that the United States should bear in mind that we rely on our partnership with the United States to keep the multilateral system intact.

When circumstances warrant, the European Union must not shrink from backing up soft power with hard power. At the same time, the United States should give soft power the credit it deserves. In the long run, both are necessary to maintain peace and stability. ■

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