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- Alexander Siedschlag*  
 “FOCUS”: Foresight Security Scenarios to Plan for Research to Support the “EU 2035” as a Comprehensive Security Provider 5

**Methods & Techniques in Scenario-based Foresight**

- Todor Tagarev and Petya Ivanova*  
 Analytical tools in Support of Foresighting EU Roles as a Global Security Actor 21
- Todor Tagarev, Venelin Georgiev, and Juha Ahokas*  
 Evaluating the Cross-impact of EU Functions as a Global Actor and Protector of Critical Infrastructures and Supply Chains 34

**Threats, Scenarios, Roles**

- Luca Urciuoli, Toni Männistö, Juha Hintsa, and Tamanna Khan*  
 Supply Chain Cyber Security – Potential Threats 51
- David López and Oscar Pastor*  
 Comprehensive Approach to Security Risk Management in Critical Infrastructures and Supply Chain 69
- Uwe Nerlich*  
 Challenges in a 2035 Perspective: Roles for the EU as a Global Security Provider? 77
- Dana Procházková*  
 The EU Civil Protection Upgrading Needs 88

*Volume 29, Number 2***Scenarios and Security Research Planning**

- Thomas Benesch, Johannes Goellner, Andreas Peer, Johann Hoechtl, and Walter Seboeck*  
 Scenario Space for Alternative Futures of Security Research 111

*Brooks Tigner*  
Referencing the Future: The EU's Projected Security Roles  
and Their R&D Implications 120

*Dana Procházková*  
Natural Disasters' Management and Detection of Priority Problems for Future  
Research 127

### **The Way Ahead**

*Ricard Munné*  
Future Security Trends and Their Impact from an Industry Point of View 147

*Uwe Nerlich*  
Towards Europe 2035 – In Search of the Archimedean Screw: FOCUS in Perspective 161

### **I&S Monitor**

Acronyms used in this volume 185

## **CHALLENGES IN A 2035 PERSPECTIVE: ROLES FOR THE EU AS A GLOBAL SECURITY PROVIDER?**

Uwe NERLICH

**Abstract:** Within the 2035 timeframe Europe and EU will need throughout to respond to impacts from changing global environments, i.e. above all to adapt internal structures and to widen collective mission profiles (“progressive framing”). The European Security Strategy (ESS), the Internal Security Strategy (ISS) and the Report on the Implementation of the ESS identified emerging key threats. Both strategy and capability developments—for cyber, energy security, maritime security, space, CBRN, etc.—will require consistent effort and new approaches. The roles Europe could assume as a global security provider will determine Europe’s future. Plausible future EU missions are examined in this paper in a global context and in view of risks and challenges on a global scale.

**Keywords:** EU missions, progressive framing, foresight, threats, EU decision-making, strategy, capabilities, cyber, space, maritime, energy security, defence.

### **Perspective Framing: Beyond the Petersberg Tasks**

Within the next quarter of a century, the global political, economic, strategic and natural environment and the critical infrastructures on which societies will depend are certain to be different from today’s and, more importantly, they will be different from today’s expectations and guiding objectives. This is especially true for Europe and its global role, its dependencies on external powers, markets and raw materials, its exposure to unstable populations and unlikely prosperity in neighbouring populations and the uncertainties that beset the EU’s social and economic stability and political coherence as well as the dynamics of global power structures. Current previews are at least as uncertain as respective expectations have been some 25 years ago. Yet security research should be able to reduce uncertainties.

In the absence of a constitutional finalité, the EU is in a perennial process of change for as long as it serves the purposes of its members. In a world of potentially increasing global changes, if not turmoil, it will be pivotal for the EU that its development is guided by a concept of its global role that is shared by sufficient collective shaping

power within its membership. Such concepts will increasingly require more of a long-term orientation for ongoing processes.

Concepts for a global security role for the EU will require that its security posture—strategic orientation plus capabilities—and its internal structures for collective decision-making match. The Petersberg Tasks do not so far provide a sufficient base, although they have been incorporated into the Lisbon Treaty. They have never so far been the basis for decisions that define global roles for the EU. The upper level is critical for the EU's global role, but it has never been specified except for two widely different general interpretations: It does not rule out any military activities *vs.* it includes all military activities below the level of NATO responsibilities which in turn are also open to discussion, in particular in the longer run.

The Petersberg Tasks were originally intended to guide conventional force planning, and they are relevant to the extent the EU's conventional force planning has become a reality. They do not constitute a global security role. Widening the Petersberg Tasks would need to address roles with global consequences and it would need to address future strategic challenges:

- capabilities that can impact from any distance (advanced drones, other advanced robotics systems, strategic cyber capabilities, space capabilities, etc.)
- capabilities that can disrupt external EU lifelines (energy, communication, rare earth materials, etc.)
- changing economic and financial leverage that can generate or reinforce security challenges to the EU, as the First Annual Report (November 2011) on the Implementation of the EU Internal Security Strategy rightly observed
- challenges that result from differentials within the EU's environment/wider neighbourhood (population, age, migration, employment, disintegration, competence, etc.).

Depending on the type of challenge, distinctions between internal and external security differ. They get blurred in all four categories of challenges. For the first it does not exist except in case of outdated definitions of responsibilities. For the other three it will depend on how the internal structure and how the political, strategic, economic, etc. environment develops. Besides, do they apply to borders of the EU or its member states?

Given the EU's current economic clout and prevailing coalitions, any state of the EU can trigger security consequences on a global scale:

- Disintegration or failure to develop internal structures in line with emerging challenges will have negative impacts – with repercussions on the EU.
- Confining the EU's security role to islandized or mere neighbourhood-solutions would tend to marginalize the EU, but it would still tend to have global security consequences (emerging vacui, changing coalitions, changing strategic dependencies). The EU's viability could be at stake.
- The division of labour from Cold War situations is theoretically still conceivable: that the EU stays focused on non-military challenges and is protected by NATO or some substitute with US involvement.
- A more active regional security role within some agreed regional division of labour could have consequences for global security, e.g. in the Middle East and North Africa. But at this stage the EU's posture as a security actor would not suffice except in case of supporting coalitions with the US and/or strong regional allies. It would require a degree of strategic competitiveness.
- The EU could build up capabilities to become a coalition partner in major crises that could make the difference.
- It could do the same—depending on the global strategic environment—as a strategic balancer between global competitors.
- Even in the longer run it remains doubtful whether the EU will acquire the capabilities and strategic orientation as an autonomous power as envisaged prior to the ESDP.

Subsequent scenario-building and analysis will serve to weigh these potential global roles. As Kishore Mahbubani, one of the wisest observers of global security has warned, “many in the rest of the world are astonished that EU leaders and officials spend so much of their time on their internal arrangements when most of their emerging challenges are coming from external sources. A deep structural flaw has developed in the EU decision-making processes. Virtually no EU leader dares to suggest that the EU should spend more time looking outside rather than inside the EU.”<sup>1</sup> What this boils down to is that a global role for Europe would require more than a strategic posture to secure survival in front of major challenges, but the ability, will and resources to shape a sustainable global order to minimize external risks.

### **The Extending Range of Common EU Missions**

Within the framework established by the Lisbon Treaty, the evolution of the CSDP, the so-called Petersberg Tasks and the understanding of the overarching European Security Strategy, supplemented by the subsequent Internal Security Strategy, repre-

sents an intergovernmental negotiating process that aims at balancing, adapting and correcting the dual system of the European Union in view of changing circumstances.

Within the 2035 timeframe this is an open-ended process that could lead in various directions. The core elements governing this process are and have been the range of common EU missions, the capabilities needed to fulfil these and the types of commitment on the part of the Member States. These elements are not endpoints, but respond to challenges and opportunities at given points in time. They will thus be sought to match needed innovations consistent with the legal/structural EU framework within which they are to apply. In terms of the Lisbon Treaty this process is indeed best described as “progressive framing.”

The so-called Petersberg Tasks have become part of the EU framework for developing the ESDP. They have themselves undergone changes. The Petersberg Tasks had been agreed at the time as part of an effort to upgrade the Western European Union (WEU) in the aftermath of the Cold War and with the threat of major invasions gone. The tasks were vertically enlisted: with a low end and a high end. The WEU emphasized the lower end, but the high end was understood to include even full scale conflict. The WEU language was considered conducive to agreement precisely because it allowed various interpretations. After all some of the key terms like humanitarian missions and peace-enforcement were contentious.<sup>2</sup>

During the negotiations on the Amsterdam Treaty, the 15 Member States choose at the time to use the Petersberg Declaration of the WEU (1992) rather than developing a new description of types of collective EU missions.

This constructive ambiguity prevailed throughout. On the way to the Helsinki Headline Goals the upper end was becoming more important in view of the envisaged combat forces.

The development since the St. Malo Declaration in 1998 was focused on requirements for “the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, for decision-making on their use and the readiness to do so in order to respond to international crisis”<sup>3</sup> where the Alliance as a whole is not engaged. The overriding aim at that stage was that “Europe can make its voice heard in world affairs.”<sup>4</sup>

In this (British-French) perspective Europe was indeed seen as a potential global security player. But the scope of EU force development narrowed soon thereafter and was focused on crisis management, including all military missions with the exception of collective defence, i.e. where NATO as a whole is engaged: support of civilian population in areas of natural disasters, evacuation of citizens from crisis areas, monitoring of cease fires, of borders, of air- and sea-space and embargoes, establishing and maintaining a secure environment, stopping hostile actions, separation of

parties by force, and other types of enforcement. With the exception of territories inside the European Union, such missions are possible whenever and wherever politically decided.”<sup>5</sup>

While the Petersberg Tasks have been included into the Amsterdam Treaty (Title V) in 1997 and thus be made part of the EU legal and institutional structure, the Helsinki process rendered them operationally less relevant as a platform: The EU missions were to be carried out within the EU structure, the Petersberg Tasks served rather to confine the range of EU missions at least with regard to the upper end.

Thereafter the EU mission profile took new turns in several directions towards both an envisaged global role and internal security.

### **The Emerging Global Challenges**

In 2003, the European Security Strategy (ESS) was adopted.<sup>6</sup> With 9/11 and the Balkan wars behind, the ESS stated that new key threats are confronting Europe and the world that are global in scope and require EU responsiveness. In an era of globalization, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand: strategic terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts that can impact on European security and worst of all a combination of key threats.

These key threats could impact on Europe much more severely than any of the uncertainties which the Petersberg mission profile was addressing. The ESS envisaged an active and capable European Union that would make an impact on a global scale. But no mission profile developed nor did capabilities to match such new requirements. The idea to supplement the ESS by an implementation document similar to NATO’s former Military Committee (MC) documents (see MC 14.3 and MC 48) was dropped: The ESS was agreed under special circumstances that were considered unlikely to be repeated.

Dominant perceptions by major players in other regions rather saw a continuing marginalization of the EU in the global context. Ongoing EU and NATO enlargement in Eastern Europe reinforced an approach that sought above all a world modelled after the European Union, as former Secretary General Javier Solana has stated.<sup>7</sup> And indeed in such a world Europe would be strong as a “continent-sized island of stability in a global ocean of turmoil.”<sup>8</sup> Yet this was inconsistent with the key message of the ESS and indeed with the new geopolitical and strategic realities of the world.<sup>9</sup>

The key challenges for the EU in a global context, and for Europe’s future within a 2035 timeframe, will be determined by how Europe—its member states and the EU at large—will prevail in what tends to become an increasingly competitive environment. At this stage the EU and its members are still in the process of responding through



external strategies and enhancing decision-making structures. But while the major competitors are states, the EU is a dual structure, as Robert Cooper, one of the key authors of the ESS, has observed, “new in that it is historically unprecedented and also new because it is based on new concepts, a system of overlapping roles and responsibilities ... with none entirely in control.”<sup>10</sup> No single member state will have the resources to prevail and the EU’s institutional process no longer aims at a single identity. As Carl Bildt has pointed out, however simplified, states like the US have to harmonize “institutional views,” while Europe has to coordinate “national views.” When states like the US finally decide on a policy, they have the resources to implement it, while this is almost completely lacking in Europe.<sup>11</sup>

The global role envisaged by the ESS in 2003 thus would be different from how major states are likely to perform and impact within a 2035 time frame, irrespective of leverage and ranking. The EU will face global challenges that are developing in the global context. It could and may engage in coalitions with future powers. It is likely to have shaping power in diplomatic schemes like Contact Groups for conflict solutions – with major powers and international organizations like the UN and NATO involved. It may at times be represented by the EU at large and/or individual Members States that bring leverage to the problem. And all that boils down to the need to cope with the existing and emerging key threats. But while the US, China, Russia, India, Brazil and others have the opportunities to shape and pursue national strategies and respective mission profiles, the European Union needs to forge common decisions that are constrained by its legal and institutional structure or provide the flexibility for selecting external actions with global impact.

In other words, in the longer run the gap between requirements for prevailing in global competitions and acting without jeopardizing its value base and institutional structure tends to widen. And while key threats are likely to stay, their impact and controllability will depend on how future global constellations are going to develop. There are no abstract threats.

Five years later the “Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World” (2008) emphasized that the key threats enlisted in the ESS had become increasingly more intense and complex – be it WMD proliferation that now combined with regional conflicts in Europe’s environment, be it terrorism and organized crime that since the Madrid attacks had severe internal and external dimensions. Moreover, in addition to an increasingly volatile global strategic environment, cyber security and energy security had become imminent challenges both in view of the external dimensions and the fact that they both concern the very lifelines of the EU. And as for cyber security, the EU is so far facing only the beginning of what could become a central challenge globally as well as within and around the European Union, as the ISS Implementation Review has rightly stressed.

While key threats and challenges thus increasingly called for roles for the EU as global security providers, if only to mitigate impacts on the EU itself, capabilities hardly kept pace and expectations. When compared to activities undertaken by other major powers, the gap between anticipated EU roles and capabilities threatens to increase further. However, this follows also from the fact that the EU member states have little more than the embryonic versions of what national and EU requirements ought to be, if that.

The only significant extension of the common mission profile, the so-called Petersberg Tasks, has been the combat against terrorism to which all agreed EU missions are understood to be contributing, although in view of the primary responsibility of member states for combating terrorism the role of the EU is limited to four tasks: strengthening national capabilities, facilitating European cooperation, developing collective capabilities (e.g. making best use of EU bodies like Frontex, Sitcen, etc.), and promoting international partnerships.<sup>12</sup>

Beyond that an effort was made during the negotiations on the Draft Constitutional Treaty to review and rework the Petersberg Declaration (Working Group “Defence”). However it did not advance in the direction of new and emerging key threats, but added instead a few missions at the lower end of the Petersberg list: joint disarmament operations, rescue operations and military advice and support. This was eventually included in the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 42-44). But given that the Treaty was conceived on the basis of the 2001 Laeken Declaration and based mostly on the work of the 2002/2003 Convention, insiders like Jean-Claude Piris observed that the Treaty “already looked outdated” at the time it entered into force.<sup>13</sup>

Generating roles for the EU as a global security provider will be a determining factor in shaping European futures in a 2035 time frame. The key threats and challenges in a potentially competitive world will face the EU and require responses from this unique dual system. The EU has carried out missions in three continents since Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo. But in more demanding operations the EU would depend on the US or leave the mission to NATO.

The mission profile described through the Petersberg Tasks even in their Lisbon version cannot possibly provide a base for generating, let alone performing roles as a global security player. But it is an agreed segment of what the EU may decide to engage in. And there is room for further extensions not only at the lower end or in transversal direction as with counter-terrorism.

Looking from the perspective of the Lisbon Treaty, it has provided a stronger political and legal framework for the Petersberg-type-mission that should not be jeopardized. Major crises and advanced capability developments may become conducive for the further evolution of the EU framework. At this stage three avenues of approach

seem promising: dealing with unfinished business, using the built-in flexibility, e.g. for LOI-type solutions,<sup>14</sup> or through major differentiations within the current structure, as foreshadowed by the Treaty on Government, Coordination and Stability. The need for global roles for the EU as a security provider will not go away.<sup>15</sup>

It will not suffice for developing future global security roles for the EU as envisaged in the ESS and beyond. However, developing further the current agreed mission profile is in line with the understanding that European security is an “evolving concept.”

## **EU missions in a global context**

Within the 2035 timeframe widening the Petersberg tasks has two closely related dimensions:

- EU missions will increasingly need to be seen in a global context and
- the EU will increasingly face risks and challenges on a global scale.

New key threats are confronting Europe and the world which are global in scope and require EU responsiveness: In an era of globalization, distant threats may be as much a concern as those that are near at hand: strategic terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts that can impact on European security and worst of all a combination of key threats to which the external dimension of organized crime was added.<sup>16</sup>

The agreed Petersberg Tasks should remain part and parcel of an EU mission profile that the EU might decide to generate in years to come in order to be able to cope with the key threats and challenges identified in the ESS and thereafter. But the scope of a future mission profile needs to become much wider – not only in terms of the range of threats and challenges, but also in view of how the means for EU responses could change: less oriented towards traditional capabilities and more towards calibrated advanced capabilities that tend to require smaller numbers, less complicated command structures, more effectiveness against emerging threats and challenges.

While the term “defence” may no longer be useful to describe the future kinds of threat aversion, future requirements may turn out to be even more demanding and certainly are different from soft requirements for traditional crisis management.

To provide for adequate responses and the capacity for cooperation, the EU will need to adapt to changing global conditions, to generate capabilities that match future challenges and to provide guidance to member states which otherwise tend to adhere to rather conservative defence and security policies. Irrespective of the global context the EU will need to widen its framework for defining strategic interests and assessing own requirements in relation to changing global risks and opportunities.

The new key threats have been identified, but this has not so far been translated into strategy, capability development and new security roles:

*Cyber security* is no longer confined to cyber crime, but nations increasingly build capabilities for disruptive, destructive and coercive uses as well as defensive potentials. Cyber war is used in direct attacks (see for examples Stuxnet, the North Korean attack on a publishing house in Seoul, Arab attacks on El Al and the Israeli bourse), and it can be used in coordinated attacks and to reinforce hostile operations. The EU may develop a future role in global cyber security as a prerequisite for its sustainability (the “*White Knight*” role).

*Energy security* is endangered by physical and electronic risks and threats. This pertains to pipelines, platforms, LNG transport, storage, distribution, deep-sea drilling, electricity grids, etc. The EU needs to develop a coherent energy security policy that relates to both strategy and capabilities. While this requires cooperation from members, industries and partners, only the EU would be in a position to steer energy security developments for Europe as a whole. In many variations, the EU would assume a *Conductor role in global energy security*.

*Maritime security* will increasingly become more demanding at the expense of land forces. Given Europe’s dependence on maritime SLOCs (sea lines of communication) on a global scale, its regional strategic orientation, the build-down of national maritime capabilities of member states, the diminishing US readiness and capabilities to fill European gaps unless this meets US national interests, and the expanding Chinese coastal infrastructures, *inter alia*, all call for a sustained effort to meet the challenges to maritime security, i.e. to SLOCs, harbours, passages, access, deep sea activities from geopolitical changes, coercive efforts, piracy, new strategic vacua, etc. The EU’s predicaments will tend to push for advanced roles in maritime security, or “*Mahanian*” roles.

*Space security* is yet another medium for developing new global security roles for the EU. The dependence of ICT infrastructures on space assets, the growing capacity of an increasing number of nations to use space assets to interfere with critical terrestrial activities and to paralyze large-scale structures, the emerging vulnerabilities of space assets and the beginning competitiveness of space activities will not spare European interests. The EU with its supporting agencies reinforced by European space interests could combine future capabilities with efforts towards mutual constraints (“*Armed Arbiter*” role).

*CBRN security* has taken on a new quality since it is intrinsically getting related to regional and local conflict. The ongoing 5 plus 1 negotiations with Iran provide a good example, but it does not provide for how to cope with the consequences of failure. The EU would be well positioned to deal with proliferation risks, to develop denial

strategies and to generate deterrence postures. *Controlling CBRN proliferation* is a task for European nations which have longstanding experience along with key partners. For the EU it has internal and external dimensions.

Additional areas where the EU can be expected to develop roles as global security players are extended air defence, in particular against advanced UAVs, role differentiation that requires enhanced dependability, the EU could reinforce increasing demands on R2P (Responsibility to Protect), etc. Widening the co-called Petersberg Tasks can be an important component in all of these areas.

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In conclusion, EU-sponsored research could play a pivotal role in preparing future EU security roles not only in technological, but also in conceptual and organizational terms, as well as via regular foresight studies aimed at anticipating new threats and roles.

**Acknowledgement:** This article reflects research results in work package 6 of the FOCUS project. FOCUS (“Foresight Security Scenarios – Mapping Research to a Comprehensive Approach to Exogenous EU Roles”) aims wide but with concrete policy guidance in mind: namely to define the most plausible threat scenarios that affect the “borderline” between the EU’s external and internal dimensions to security – and to derive guidance for the Union’s future possible security roles and decisions to plan research in support of those roles. The FOCUS project is co-funded under the Security Research theme of the EU’s 7th EU Framework Programme, for the period of April 2011 to March 2013. FOCUS brings together 13 partners from 8 countries, including universities, industry, think tanks and security information providers. This publication reflects only the author’s views and the Union is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. For more information visit the project website at [www.focusproject.eu](http://www.focusproject.eu).

## Notes:

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<sup>1</sup> Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2008), quote on p. 227.

<sup>2</sup> See Martin Ortega, “Über Petersberg hinaus: Welche militärischen Missionen für die EU,” in *Die Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik der EU*, ed. Nicole Gnesotto (Paris: EU ISS, 2005), pp. 87-104, quote on p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> See § 2 of the Franco-British summit Joint declaration on European Defence (St. Malo Declaration), Saint-Malo, 4 December 1998, <http://www.atlanticcommunity.org/Saint-Malo%20Declaration%20Text.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. This objective was set in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty.

<sup>5</sup> Rainer Schuwirth (former Director General of the EU Military Staff), “Hitting the Helsinki Goal,” *NATO Review* 3 (Autumn 2002): 9-11, [www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue3/english/art4.html](http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2002/issue3/english/art4.html).

- <sup>6</sup> See the final version of the European Security Strategy, in *From Copenhagen to Brussels. European Defence: Core Documents*, Chaillot Papers 67 (Paris: EU Institute for Strategic Studies, 2003), pp. 324-333, [www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp067e.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/cp067e.pdf).
- <sup>7</sup> Javier Solana, “Vorwort,” in *Die Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitik der EU*, ed. Nicole Gnesotto (Paris: EU ISS, 2005), pp. 5-12, quote on p. 12, available at [www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/5esdpde.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/fileadmin/euiss/documents/Books/5esdpde.pdf).
- <sup>8</sup> Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2009), quote on p. 21.
- <sup>9</sup> For a more elaborate effort to reconcile the two concepts see e.g. Sven Bishop, ed., *The Value of Power, the Power of Values: A Call for an EU Grand Strategy*, Egmont Paper 33 (Brussels: The Royal Institute for International Relations, 2009), available at [www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/sum/ep33.html](http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/sum/ep33.html).
- <sup>10</sup> Robert Cooper, *The Post-modern State and the World Order* (London: Demos, 1996), pp. 45 ff.
- <sup>11</sup> Quoted by Richard Holbrooke, *To end a War* (New York, NY: Modern Library, Random House, 1998), p. 366.
- <sup>12</sup> Council of the European Union, *The European Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, 14469/4/05 Rev. 4 (2005), <http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/05/st14/st14469-re04.en05.pdf>.
- <sup>13</sup> Jean-Claude Piris, *The Future of Europe. Towards a Two-speed Europe?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), quote on p. 44.
- <sup>14</sup> Solutions, developed by a number of EU Member States, e.g. in developing network enabled capabilities – see LOI-NEC, *Network Enabled Capability Pre-study*, Public Executive Summary (2006), [www.eda.europa.eu/docs/documents/LOI-NEC\\_Study.pdf](http://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/documents/LOI-NEC_Study.pdf).
- <sup>15</sup> See the forward-looking *Report on the Development of the common security and defence policy following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty*, European Parliament, Committee on Foreign Affairs (2010/2299 (INI)), [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2011-0166+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A7-2011-0166+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN).
- <sup>16</sup> Council of the European Union, *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World*, S407/08 (Brussels, 11 September 2008), [www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf).

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