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Contribution to the PES Manifesto 2009

**« EUROPE IN THE WORLD »**

(contribution)

It is an absolute necessity that the European Union defines a common foreign and security policy. Being at the same time an economic giant and a political dwarf is a position that cannot be held for long: both levels merge with time and letting things go will end in levelling them down. There is no stable economic nor social well-being for European citizens who would put the rest of the world aside: history proved that the latter always reappeared, sometimes very harshly!

The last decades showed that defining such a common policy though is not an easy task. The Union is not, and will not be in a near future, a nation State that shares a common tongue and culture as the result of a thousand-years-old history! The ambition should consist in focussing on setting priorities and actions for which, regardless of any countries' past, well-understood national interests would lead to defining and implementing real common policies. Let us be clear on what the word "real" contents: means corresponding to aims and an appropriate decision-making capacity. Let us be even clearer: a policy becomes "real" first if, when decided by those who aim to implement it, it goes along with the definition of the financial - military if needed - means that will make it credible; but also with an agreement on majority-based decision mechanisms that will prevent paralysis.

Such an approach naturally leads to select a limited number of fields of action and, hence, to put aside a more considerable number of others. However, nothing prevents a State to be on its own when dealing with matters out of those assumed in common! Very concretely, this contribution addressing the PES proposes five areas of action for a Common Foreign and Security Policy that would actually deserve the name: the Balkans, the Middle-East, Africa, the transatlantic relations and defence.

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One would hope that the European Union has learnt from its dreadful experience during the collapse of Yugoslavia: firstly, widely diverging views sustained by History and not reduced by a preliminary common reflexion, implying a total incapacity to decide; then, the decision at the lowest level to send the UN peacekeeping forces, helpless onlookers of despicable war crimes; last, when the awareness that non-interference made

us accomplices finally came out, the Union realised that, without any commitment of yet unconcerned United States, it was not able to start any slightest military action such as the bombing of the Serbian batteries around Sarajevo : no one has forgotten what followed.

Today, unsurprisingly, the Balkans break the news again. The inevitable independence of Kosovo may stir up sleeping fires: how to explain that derogations given to a few should not create a precedent for others?

The Union shall not pretend to be surprised this time! It must state, as soon as possible, a policy relying on experience that shall balance incitation and sanction! Incitation: a conditional short-term perspective to enter the European Union that, with the Schengen tool, can guarantee a free circulation of citizens belonging to different states and prevent communities to ask for additional changes in borders. Sanction: the Union must have it known that it considers itself as the local guarantor of the decisions of the United Nations, in particular of the Dayton Agreements in Bosnia, and that it is ready to take all necessary steps, even the force, to have them respected!

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The situation in the Middle East probably represents today the most dangerous threat on worldwide peace. In terms of justice, the situation that has been made to Palestinians for the last forty years is unacceptable. In addition, it sets a growing mass of Arab Muslim population against "the West"; it reintroduces a religious conflict into a world where the East-West confrontation has disappeared; it is used to justify Al-Qaida's insane terrorism.

The European Union must strongly reaffirm its commitment in the region, which could not be limited to a financial drip to the Palestinian Authority. The Union must strongly reaffirm the aim of a peaceful and secure coexistence of two States, Israeli and Palestinian. It must reaffirm its support to the Taba agreements as the starting basis to set definitive borders, which implies the acknowledgement of both the principle that for any Israeli colony inclusion, territorial compensation must be given in return, and the principle that East-Jerusalem will become the capital city of a future Palestinian State.

But an active European policy could not be limited to statements: the Union must also have it known that it is available to participate at high level in an international force that will inevitably need to be interposed at the new borders during a transitional period, with a view to ensuring that agreements are duly respected and preventing from any extreme reaction from both sides.

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Africa is, geographically and culturally speaking, the closest

continent to Europe, which sustains a privileged relationship through the Lomé then Cotonou agreements. At the same time, it is the continent where poverty remains high and where development proves very difficult. The persistence of military conflicts between and within States is a major cause of these difficulties, which may not indefinitely be attributed to the aftermath of colonisation: for sure, the latter was organised rather more with a view to exploiting countries than their developing, and the definition of borders was rather more concerned with European interests than local reality. However, it appears that the difficulty to set democratic regimes - or simply ones that are respecting fundamental freedoms - constitutes the key element in order to shape a favourable evolution of the situation.

The European Union has admittedly given a growing importance to the respect of human rights as the condition to its support and cooperation. It is however not as obvious that all of its member States, which sustained historical relations with a number of countries of the continent, have shown as much strong will. In the matter of African policies more than any other else, the question is raising of how national and European policies are complementary, even compatible.

If it is to be considered that solidarity between Europe and Africa will be a key element of global balance, most policies to be undertaken must be designed on a European level. A common policy must stress the strengthening of sub-regional blocks and the support to the role of the African Union as the guarantor of peace on the continent.

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The second war in Iraq illustrated up to caricature the current limits of the European unity in the field of transatlantic policy. On a key issue, the complete spectrum of reactions could be seen, from a blindly following Tony Blair to a blazingly opposing Jacques Chirac! George Bush's decision could however be predicted, and was probably made as soon as September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

If the European Union wishes to play a global role, it must learn from this dreadful experience which consequences are still palpable. It would prove unproductive to open again one more ethereal debate on transatlantic relations: national histories and situations do exist and prevent major change in the attitude of one or the other member State towards the United States. Though, the lessons learnt from the past two decades may serve as a basis to define a common policy.

At the core of this reflexion, one shall find the unquestionable acknowledgment that, though the European Union and the United States do possess common values and merging interests, there also exist situations where defending those values and interests may lead to sharp divergences. Can democracy be exported to the East just in the same way as oil to the West? Does the reappearance of nationalisms in Europe affect as much in Washington as in Brussels? One may find a lot of examples in the past years

that underline that the European Union should be able to adopt its own decisions and actions on such important matters as war and peace, the role of the United Nations or, simply, the management of its continental space and its neighbourhood.

All this supposes firstly to intensify the permanent thinking, within the European Union, about global world evolution and potential crises it may generate: the unforeseen occurs much less often than one would think! It supposes secondly a friendly confrontation with the Americans, seeking agreement but not excluding disagreements: who may pretend today that the American policy fighting terrorism implemented for the past seven years has led to its reduction?

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Finally, a last priority: the carrying out of a common defence and security policy. As pacifists in temper and values, the Socialists and Social Democrats have always been exceedingly shy on military issues. None of them would however give support to the idea that justice can stand without a police force able to have its decisions respected. But it remains problematic to transpose that on an international level! The lively memory of the European wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century certainly explains part of it: though, experience proved that sole pacifism is not strong enough to prevent wars from happening!

It is however clear that implementing the four priorities above may lead to appeal to force, or at least the threat to use it. This means that those of the member States that have both will and means to do it must define together, according to common priorities, the military capacities they may need along with their commanding bodies. The European Union already stated that a legitimate military operation is one that comes from the legitimacy of the United Nations. But such an operation shall be envisaged in the framework of common policies whatever the commitment from our allies can be, hence implying distinct instances to think, plan and, in last resort, act.

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To gain true efficiency, a common foreign and security policy, even limited to areas considered as priorities, also needs full support from our citizens, made aware of the shared stakes. Conversely, common actions led advisedly will strengthen this support. It is up to politicians now, those of the Left in particular, to be able to explain the values and challenges that justify the commitment of the Union.

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