
Sustainable Security in the Age of Globalisation

26th February 2008

A comprehensive understanding of the concepts security and security policy, which incorporates different aspects such as peace keeping, reconstruction and defence on the one hand, but also climate and energy political security issues on the other hand, was at the centre of discussion at a seminar jointly organised by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung London, the European Movement and the German Embassy London on 26th February 2008.

Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, the former British Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Peter Hain, Helga Schmid of Javier Solana's team, Member of the German Bundestag Ursula Mogg and Dr Angelica Schwall-Düren, Nick Witney of the European Council on Foreign Affairs, Tom Burke of Rio Tinto, Colin Challen MP, Lord Wallace of Saltaire and Oliver Geden of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs spoke to an audience consisting of renowned representatives of the fields of politics, political consultation, research and media. Important participants were amongst others Lord Anderson of Swansea, Mark Leonard of the European Council on Foreign Affairs, the president of the World Future Council, Bianca Jagger, John Palmer of the European Policy Centre, Katinka Barysch of the Centre for European Reform and Alastair Newton from Lehman Brothers.

Even though it was acknowledged that the EU has already proven itself in many cases as a bringer of peace and stability as well as recognised new security challenges, the limited nature of its practical instruments in this policy area was lamented. Nevertheless, a coordinated European Strategy was regarded a possibility. For this, as several participants argued despite the EU's difficulties in formulating and pursuing shared interests, it would be necessary to develop a European rhetoric on security policy away from a discourse of responsibility towards one of interest. A common interest in security (which depends on a variety of factors) could lead to a common strategy.

For this reason as well as others, not only would the formulation of interests have to be a common project, but it would also have to be communicated effectively to the European public by all member states. In the field of a traditional understanding of security and on the grounds of issues of costs and practicability of national specialisation, the German side propagated afresh the idea of a European army to which the British participants continued to react with some

skepticism and pointed out that even national specialisation, which is partly already practiced today, might not be able to solve all problems (such as for instance British-German differences on Afghanistan).

In the course of further discussion, climate change and security issues resulting from it, such as energy policy, but in the future also water and food scarcity and new migration patterns were mentioned. Generally, it was stated that these should be addressed with strong arguments for efficiency as this would not only alleviate the situation with regard to climate change and energy security, but also preempt enormous future costs for the balancing of different types of scarcities and migration. Even if this kind of action might seem electorally unattractive, it was necessary that European governments showed the will to leadership.

It was argued that Europe has both the understanding of the importance of the climate issue and the competence for global leadership in them, but currently it was still lacking the political will. In this, coherence of this political leadership – currently still lacking – was particularly important. Equally, it was insufficient to simply make moral judgements about those member states that still pursue their own individual climate and energy policies. Instead, one had to be clear that all states rely on their own unique energy mix and face unique subsequent dependencies that lead to just these national policies. For this reason, it was important to establish (as was done in the Lisbon Treaty) the concept of energy solidarity, that should apply for instance to the following areas: 1) energy storage, 2) energy infrastructure, 3) internal European energy market (which will ensure that the energy mix and subsequent dependencies, though factually still unique to each member state, become the same for all EU member states in practice).

All together, the urgency of this topic was emphasised, as in contrast to traditional security issues (e.g. the cold war turning into a hot one) the danger for humankind in this context was not a hypothetical one, but very real; it was not important what could be done, but what must be done. One approach – to the German side a rather peculiar one – was demanded by the British participants who argued that a war metaphor (along the lines of “if this was a war, we wouldn’t leave it to the markets to sort it out, would we?”) and war psychology with regard to mobilising the population and rationing resources might be useful.

The concluding discussion focussed on the role of Europe and of the Lisbon Treaty, which explicitly refers to a broader security understanding in the solidarity clause. An important argument introduced the necessity of a social Europe, with social minimum standards for the safeguarding of social sustainability that should in the long run be implicated not only across Europe, but also globally. Here, as well as in other areas relevant to security policy, the EU had to act more confidently on and communicate more clearly how it envisions the coming world order: 1) multilateral, but in what way precisely? 2) envisioning itself as an independent and important world power 3) more confident in the utilisation of the means available to it. 4) envisioning itself not only as a civic, but also necessarily as military power. It should not be pushed into the role of a moraliser or other roles that other states assign it (US: trading block, Russia: competitor, China and India: promising, but unrealised, future balancing power). For this, the above-mentioned approach and the rhetoric of *realpolitik* would be helpful.