

The Croatian View on the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

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The entrance of the Republic of Croatia into the European Union – as its twenty-eighth member (on July 1, 2013) – was specific for two principal reasons. First, Croatia is the first post-socialist country from Western Balkans (a term created by the EU during the 2000 Zagreb Summit)² to be admitted to the EU membership. And second, Croatia is the first post-conflict, post-socialist country that succeeded in meeting the membership criteria and join other EU member states after being military attacked in early 1990-ties, when one third of its territory was occupied, and where bloody armed conflicts were raging until the liberating military actions Lightning and Storm in 1995. Although the NATO and EU membership were set by all Croatian governments as principal foreign affairs goals of the state that emerged after the disintegration of the former SFR Yugoslavia, intensification of armed conflicts both on its territory and in the neighborhood have resulted in the situation where efforts on international recognition of the state, its positioning within the new international environment, and liberation of the country became, naturally, priorities of Croatian foreign policy and overall diplomatic activities of the time.³

Same as all other post-socialist countries, or countries of the “new democracy”, on its institutional path to Europe Croatia became a member of the NATO first, with the EU membership to follow. Of all social groups in Croatia full membership in the NATO was most strongly supported by the members of the armed and security forces who saw in this a possibility for faster restructuring, modernization and education of their institutions and participation in international military operations. In those times Croatian official politics was not accentuating the importance of the Euro-Atlantism as increasingly important sub-system of the overall new European and international relations, thus reforms undertaken for the NATO membership (not only those within the defence and security sector, but in Croatian society as a whole) were

not sufficiently linked with efforts on creation of conditions for realistic achievement of EU standards by Croatian society. In spite of the fact that the EU had made it very clear what were the particular expectations which are to be met by Croatia on its path to EU membership,⁴ Croatia was at the time primarily focused on its cooperation with NATO. Within such a context, Common European Foreign and Security Policy, or its sub-component Common Security and Defence Policy, unfortunately were not a prominent subject of analysis and discussions within the political, diplomatic or academic communities in Croatia.

Even when negotiations on accession to the EU have intensified, after obtaining the NATO membership in 2009, the issue of Common Security and Defence Policy was not a dominating one.⁵ However, this had some positive sides as well. Namely, differing from times of accession to NATO, European Union was not perceived by Croatian citizens as a global military player that is forcing democracy all over the world by military strength, thus additionally destabilizing the world order. In other words, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) was not viewed neither in positive, nor in negative context, therefore it had no effect on strengthening of Euroscepticism and weakening the public support to EU membership. Of course, formal Croatian representatives in negotiation process have officially “opened, negotiated, and closed” the Chapter on Common Foreign and Security Policy.⁶ But Croatian public, media, and large part of political elites held that within the accession communication strategy the Republic of Croatia should focus on possible economic and financial benefits arising from the membership. Availability of the cohesion funds and possible new investments from the EU were the main topic of discussions. In spite of the security situation in the Western Balkans which was not fully resolved,⁷ or that in neighboring regions (Mediterranean, Middle East), the CSDP was rare-

ly mentioned as a framework for solving these issues, or a role which Croatia might have in it. Difficult economic and social situation in the country, further worsened by the effects of global financial crisis,⁸ led to additional reductions in the defence budget. This was also part of the reason why any initiative aimed at discussing the issue of Common Security and Defence Policy and Croatian engagement in it had problems in finding the fertile soil.

However, even within such unfavorable internal political and economic circumstances, the Ministry of Defence has succeeded in forming a small team – within the existing resources – assigned for monitoring and analyzing the developments in institutionalization and implementation of the CSDP and possible Croatian engagement within it. It must be noted that experiences gained by Croatian membership in NATO, ranging from participation at political meetings of various bodies of the organization to participation in peace missions across the world, have greatly helped in creation and realization of Croatian goals in relation to the CSDP. This wider Euro-Atlantic framework has made it possible for the EU to accept Croatian presence (without decision making powers, of course) at political meetings at which the CSDP was discussed in times when Croatia was still not a full EU member. This was certainly of great importance in times when information on CSDP within the country was not widely present. By Croatian membership in the EU, the CSDP, as a sub-system of CFSP, automatically became an integral part of internal policies which Croatia, as an EU member, should observe and implement in line with all specifics on both sides.

On institutional level Croatia has increased the number of institutions with competences over the CSDP issues. Croatian Sabor as a whole, and especially its Committee on Foreign Affairs, must discuss these issues, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has further strengthened its relevant

unit (formed during the negotiation process) – Independent Service for CFSP and CSDP. This institution has detached security and defence policy from CFSP even on a normative level. But the lack of systematic process of information and education on the CSDP project within Croatian society represents an aggravating circumstance for all those who should be professionally dealing with it, as well as for forming the public opinion on this issue in Croatia.

In academic community the Common Security and Defence Policy is being studied as an independent collegium only since autumn 2013 at the PhD studies of political science at Faculty of Political Sciences of the University in Zagreb, with duration of 30 hours. It is also integrated within the collegium on Trans-Atlantic Relations within a specialized post-graduate course Foreign Policy and Diplomacy (since 2010), and within the collegium on Euro-Atlantic Integrations during the third year of graduate studies (since 2005).⁹ There is no systematic organization of expert seminars for members of state administration which would make their work easier, rather such education is being organized on an ad-hoc basis, mostly through participation in workshops in other EU member states. Within this context the importance of the summer school held on the islands of Šipan and Koločep must be highlighted. This program is being organized for the past 13 years by the Atlantic Council Croatia with an aim of introducing young leaders of the region (and wider) with European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes, including the CFSP and CSDP.

Upon reviewing everything that was accomplished so far it may be concluded that in relations between Croatia and CSDP by far the most was achieved within the Ministry of Defence, and thanks to this Ministry, be it on political, civil-military or educational level. This was also confirmed at the previous European Council held on 19-20 December 2013 where defence was official topic discussed by the EU leaders for the first time since 2008.¹⁰ Immediately after obtaining the membership status Croatia (July 2013) has actively engaged itself in preparation for discussions at this summit. And the summit itself presented an opportunity for Croatia to state – for the first time in the capacity of a full EU member – its views on further CSDP development, which opportunity was used by the Croatian delegation headed by the Defence Minister.

On that occasion Croatia has not only voiced its positive opinion on European Commission Report on Defence Industry and Markets (of July 2013) and support to Final Report on Status of CSDP made by High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, but has also made several constructive suggestions aimed at a more efficient CSDP implementation.

1. Increasing the Effectiveness, Visibility and Impacts of CSDP

Republic of Croatia supports the existence and development of the CSDP as an European project. For if the EU wishes to be a credible global player within the contemporary international relations it must develop its defence component¹¹ for protection of its strategic global interests, members' territories, its citizen, and its values. In that, defence and security must be implemented and viewed multidimensionally, taking into account the existing military challenges to security, as well as asymmetrical challenges (non-military challenges) which are increasing in quantity and quality. EU's approach to development of the CSDP must be total and all-encompassing, regardless of how difficult this would be to implement. And Croatia, with its tragic experiences from the recent past may be of great assistance to the EU in this field. Halting the bloody armed conflicts on Croatian soil and attempts on solving crisis in its neighborhood have proven that in contemporary crisis military force has not been fully expelled as an instrument for solving them, although there is an array of other methods and instruments available as well. Existence of such non-military mechanisms and continuity in their implementation is especially effective in both the pre-conflict and post-conflict times. Today the Republic of Croatia forms an institutional part of European and Euro-Atlantic world and it is the EU and NATO member. However, in its immediate vicinity there is still military presence of both NATO and EU forces (Kosovo), along with numerous non-military instruments, measures and programs of the two organizations. Without them the security in this peripheral part of Europe would be much less stable.¹² Croatia therefore holds a position that in its all-encompassing approach to CSDP the EU must put an accent on adaptation and implementation of its existing and proven instruments on diplomatic, humanitarian, social, economic, and development

levels. Only through synergy in such activities, in combination with classical military action if necessary, could this contribute to increasing the security and stability, as well as prosperity in the future, both in Europe and other crisis regions of the world.¹³ The very existence of such mechanisms for action within the EU must be viewed as its advantage over other, mostly military and security organizations of today (primarily NATO). These instruments are enabling the EU to position itself as a leading player in solving extremely demanding and complex crisis (for example in Syria) where the use of military force alone is not an optimal solution. Croatia is also stressing the importance of Croatian neighborhood – which is now also the EU neighborhood – the region of Western Balkans which, according to Croatian positions, represents an extremely favorable ground for testing the effectiveness of the CSDP.

Being a maritime country with a strong maritime tradition and identity, Croatia also advocates for creation of a Common Strategy on Maritime Security within the overall EU approach to CSDP, due to the strategic importance of seas and maritime security.¹⁴ This strategy should certainly take into account the energy security as well.¹⁵

However, the implementation of the all-encompassing approach to the CSDP, regardless of which part of the world is in question or the character of particular crisis will not be possible unless a better coordination and cooperation between the CSDP instruments and other EU policies is achieved.

2. Enhancing the Development of Defence Capabilities

Reductions in defence budgets have become a daily fact of life across Europe.¹⁶ On the other hand all those who participate in CSDP implementation on the ground are facing shortages in material and technical resources needed for achieving the goals set upon them. EU leaders admit that maintaining the balance between financial restrictions and lack in capabilities on one side, and changed geopolitical and geostrategic image of the world with numerous new crisis and potential asymmetric threats on the other, is becoming an ever more difficult challenge for effective CSFP realization. Republic of Croatia supports the development of the EU forces, but it also finds that the project of

“Pooling and Sharing” capabilities alone is insufficient for creation of complementary forces capable of defending the EU. To that end the Republic of Croatia suggests intensification of cooperation with the forces of other international players, primarily with NATO, but also with the UN, OSCE and African Union. Also, the EU should, same as NATO did, better define its strategic partners and partner states. This could help in avoiding any duplication of EU forces and inefficient spending. As a first step, the EU should identify existing shortcomings and deficits in EU forces and then determine the priorities in regards to what forces the EU wants to have and can have. Croatia supports development of the key common military capabilities that are presently missing, such as air-to-air refueling, remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), cyber defence, satellite communication, but also holds that if these high cost projects are going to be launched a higher level of cooperation among EU member states in areas like joint investments in research and development and in dual-purpose projects (military and civil) should also be achieved. As majority of CSDP missions are of civil nature, Croatia also advocates for further development of civil capabilities aimed at early crisis identification and enhancements in education and professional training of civil experts for CSDP.

When speaking of concrete military capabilities for rapid response Croatia stands on a position that further development of EU Battle Groups – conceptually based on cooperation and solidarity between member states who are assigning parts of their national forces for this purpose - should be continued. This at the same time enhances interoperability and strengthens ties between the personnel participating from different countries.¹⁷ Even before its full membership in the bloc Croatia participated in EU led peace operations and in EU Battle Groups. This has also shown itself as an invaluable experience in transformation, adaptation and development of Croatian armed forces.

3. Strengthening Europe's Defence Industry

Systematic, long term defence planning of CSDP must be followed with attempts on better synchronization of European defence industry. But due to specific national interests and existing

contractual commitments of particular national defence industries this might be hard to implement. Such fragmentation of European market (which often leads to duplication) does not work in favor of the CSDP.

Continuing decrease in allocations for defence in EU member states, as well as shrinking of the market for their products represents the next serious problem for European defence industry. Between 2001 and 2010 expenditure on defence have decreased from 251 billion EUR to 194 billion EUR. As a consequence of this investments in research and development have also drastically dropped – by 14% between 2005 and 2010. At the same time the US has spent seven times more than all EU member states combined.

Croatia, as a small country, with military industry that has only started to develop more intensively after the NATO membership, can not compete with larger and richer member states with traditionally strong defence industries (such as Great Britain, France, Spain, Germany...) and their traditional markets. Therefore Croatia places European defence industry into a wider context as a model suitable for connection with other segments of social development, thus contributing to successful transformation of society as a whole and fostering social and economic prosperity of the EU members. Namely, European defence industry employs some 400.000 people and indirectly supports another 960.000 jobs. Its turnover of 96 billion EUR in 2012 represents a significant contribution to overall European economy. Defence industry is also connected with a strong research and technology basis and highly educated personnel. Strengthening the civil component of the CSDP would open possibility for closer connection of civil and traditional military industries, and Croatia holds that this represents an excellent opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises within the EU member states (which are also the ones mostly affected by current financial crisis) to get involved in these processes. In January 2014 Croatian Defence Ministry has signed 14 contracts for a one year term with 21 Croatian civil firms for supply of civil and military equipment for armed forces (assault guns, accessories for guns, helmets, boots, and clothes). Total value of these contracts amounts to 66,04 million HRK (app. 8,7 million EUR) which will secure some 2000 work places.¹⁸

Republic of Croatia also supports development of the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base. However, it suggests that it is necessary to define a higher level of standardization and certification within the EU in order to avoid duplicating and irrational spending in European defence industry.

Engagement of Croatian forces in CSDP

Pursuant to Croatian Sabor decision of April 3, 2009, Croatia started its participation in operation ATALANTA on July 6, with one officer aboard a French frigate. So far 19 members of Croatian armed forces participated in this operation, including one female officer. Apart from the French frigate, Croatian officers have spent time on navy ships of Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Germany, in the operational headquarters in the UK (Northwood), and in the logistic base in Djibouti. At the moment one Croatian officer is placed in Northwood. By taking part in operation ATALANTA Croatia contributes not only to development of CSDPs capacities for crisis management but also to achievement of the EU political goals in the Horn of Africa. Along with concrete prevention and deterrence of pirates in threatening the safety of global maritime trade, Croatian forces are engaged in development of local capacities for fight against the piracy in countries of the regions, including Somalia.

Croatia is also involved in training mission EUTM Mali (providing training to 4 battle units of Mali armed forces, as well as strategic advice on the defence forces reform). Republic of Croatia donated infantry weapons to Mali (hand guns, assault guns, mortars and ammunition) in the value of over 1.0 million HRK. Donation was presented on July 16, 2013, and transport was provided by Sweden.

In October 2007 the Republic of Croatia has signed a treaty with the EU on participation of Croatian police officers in EU police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL-Afghanistan). The goal of this mission is to provide assistance in development of sustainable and efficient national civil police in line with international standards. Ten officers of the Ministry of Interior and one from Foreign Ministry (contracted diplomat) were engaged as consultants on police training, institutional organization of the criminalistics police, as coordinators in police reform, police instruc-

tors, and as coordinators of the training program within the International Police Coordination Board – IPCB. On February 25, 2014, NATO has decorated four Croatian police officers for their participation in peace operation in Afghanistan.

On July 20, 2008 Croatia has approved engagement of up to four police officers in EU mission in Kosovo – EULEX. The aim of this mission – largest ever launched within the CSDP – is to assist the Kosovo institutions in strengthening the rule of law, judicial independence, developing the multi-ethnic police forces and customs authorities, and overall assistance to sustainable development of Kosovo. Croatian policemen participate in monitoring as mentors and consultants to local police forces, thus helping the development of an efficient police system as one segment of the overall security system in Kosovo.

Republic Croatia has also participated in the Nordic EUBG 2011 and EUBG 2012/II under German leadership. Positive experiences collected during this engagement have led to a decision that Croatia takes part in EUBG every 3 to 4 years. Croatia also supports development of EU battle groups based on the Framework Nations concept in which larger EU member states undertake the role of a leading nation regularly and permanently allocating its troops to battle groups, while smaller member states join them on regional or partnership basis.

Croatia is also successfully participating in military academic exchange programs within the CSDP. Croatian cadets attend a two week military education (mostly PSO and MAPEX) at the Theresian military academy in Austria for the fourth consecutive year now. And Austrian cadets are for the third consecutive year visiting Croatia armed forces where they spend 6 weeks in on-the-job-training program before they become officers. Since the Croatian EU membership Croatian cadets also participate in the so called “International Week” of the German military school, and also use every other opportunity to participate at conferences of young military experts.

Conclusion

As a member of the NATO and the EU, the Republic of Croatia has clearly opted in favor of the collective defence system based on mutual cooperation and joint action. Not so long ago Croatia was a “receiver of security”, a country that received assistance from these very two organizations which helped it to become a free and equal partner in contemporary world. Today Croatia has an obligation, as well as willingness and concrete resources, to “provide security” throughout the world as a full member of these organizations. Participation in Common Security and Defence Policy is an important part of Croatian defence policy. Even before becoming a full EU member Croatia was contributing, within its possibilities, to peace supporting operations led by the EU and to EU Battle Groups, and will continue to do so as an EU member as well. Republic of Croatia is also aware of its objective weaknesses, but its defence system is still undergoing adaptation and development. Croatia stands on a position that complementarity, rather than exclusivity, of the NATO and EU defence systems and certain “division of labor” on mostly military (NATO) and civil (EU) tasks has made the Euro-Atlantic world stronger. Together these organizations have 28 members, of which 22 are members in both of them. Certainly, there remains ample space for further widening and deepening their mutual cooperation. By developing its CSDP, within the CFSP concept, the EU is clearly strengthening the European component of the Euro-Atlantic world.

Regardless of all fast pacing changes within international relations, Croatia understands that Euro-Atlantism is the pivotal point linking European countries with the USA, thus creating a strong political and military axis of the developed world. In this context Croatia, as a new EU member and a small country, would certainly like the CSDP to act as a link strengthening relations between European countries, and at the same time to reform a strong bridge between Europe and America. Technical problems that sometimes stand in the way of implementation of this idea should certainly be overcome with the desire to preserve and strengthen the Euro-Atlantism. And Common Security and Defence Policy may be a practical indicator of such unity and significant contribution to it.

Notes

- 1) Associate Fellow, AIES; Associate Professor at the Faculty of political Sciences, University of Zagreb, Vice Director of the Center for international studies, Zagreb, Croatia.
- 2) For more detail on EU summit held in Zagreb, see L. Cehulić: „Zagrebački summit i politika integracije Hrvatske u Europsku uniju“, *Europska unija – pravni, gospodarski i politički aspekti*, br. 28, Informator, Zagreb, November 18, 2000, pp. 2-6.
- 3) Mario Nobilo, *Hrvatski feniks. Diplomatski procesi iza zatvorenih vrata 1990-1997.*, Zagreb, 2000, pp. 127-640.
- 4) Fraser Cameron, *An Introduction to European Foreign Policy*, London, 2007., p. 132.
- 5) Martina Planinić, „Komunikacijska strategija za informiranje hrvatske javnosti o približavanju Republike Hrvatske europskim integracijama“ *Međunarodne studije*, Vol XI.no.2., 2011., Zagreb, pp. 91-107.
- 6) Sanja Tišma, Višnja Samardžija, Krešimir Jurlin (ur.), *Hrvatska i Europska unija. Prednosti i izazovi članstva*, IMO, Zagreb, 2012., pp. 159-164.
- 7) Dragan R. Simić, (ur.), *Integracija Zapadnog Balkana u mrežu globalne bezbednosti*, Beograd, 2011.
- 8) Croatia and the EU. More normal, more glumner, *The Economist*, January 18th, 2014, pp.23.
- 9) See www.fpzg.hr.
- 10) Anna Barcikowska, *Setting the stage for the defence summit.*, European Union Institute for Security Studies, September 20013, 31/2013.
- 11) Michael Merlingen, *EU Security Policy. What It Is, How It Works, Why It Matters*, Colorado 2012., pp. 235-243.
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- 15) L. Cehulic, A.V.Kuzmetsov, M.Celikpal, G.Gleason, “Energy Security in South East Europe“ in Sharyl Cross, Savo Kentera, Radovan Vukadinović, *Sharing South East Europe's Security Community for the Twenty-First Century*, Hampshire, 2013., pp. 114-133.
- 16) Alessandro Marrone, *Defence Spending in Europe in Light of the Economic Crisis*, IAI Working Papers 12/27 October 2012. Instituto Affari Internazionali, Roma.
- 17) Anna Barcikowska, *EU Battlegroups – ready to go?*, Brief Issue 40/2013, November 2013, European Institute for Security Studies.
- 18) *Jutarnji list*, January 17th 2014.

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