

1. Priorities and key issues for the Belgian government in CFSP

Belgian positions towards the political finality of the European integration process, as regarding European Political Cooperation/CFSP, has shown great consistency since the fifties. Belgium has been fully engaged in favour of the double process enlargement/deepening of the European construction. As Prime Minister Verhofstadt recalled at the Charles University in Prague March 2004:

‘The new Europe is not a limited, static or exclusive entity. It is global, dynamic and inclusive. The founding fathers never intended to unify Europe solely at the economic or monetary level. Right from the start their aim was to bring the member states closer together in all areas: on the cultural, political and military levels too’.

And also in the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, on 10 February 2004:

‘The direction indicated by history is quite clear. The future of Europe lies in the construction of a federal Europe. I am weighing my words carefully here, because this is a loaded concept. But the trend is unmistakable, even if it is moving ahead in fits and starts. We first created a single market; we eliminated our internal borders; we created a European Central Bank and we introduced our own European currency. Since Amsterdam we have been working on a common foreign policy with a High Representative, who will soon be a real Foreign Minister. We already have Schengen and Europol, and soon we will have a European public prosecutor. We have a European defence’.

As stated in these latter declarations, and in accordance with the Belgian European commitment, Belgian Prime minister evoked at many occasions in 2004, in a very optimistic way despite the lasting problem of Iraq, the federal way on which the

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European Union is now engaged, and insisted that great steps had been taken in the field of ESDP, so that European Defence was already a reality.

The **current basic views** of CFSP/ESDP of the Belgian government can thus be described as following:

- (a) To strengthen the role of the High Representative for CFSP/European Foreign Minister and to encourage the dialogue between the latter and the European Commission;
- (b) To pursue the building of a European security and defence identity;
- (c) To reach the Headline Goal 2010 endorsed in 2004;
- (d) To work for the strengthening of the co-operation between NATO and the EU;
- (e) To reinforce the EU capabilities to prevent international crises.

In addition, the Belgian government commits resolutely itself to put forward that the respect of human rights has to become a fundamental principle of the CFSP.

More specifically, in **2004**, in the field of CFSP/ESDP, it can be asserted that the Belgian government put a particular accent on:

- Promoting multilateralism, in general by granting special attention to the reform process of the United Nations Organization and in particular by favouring a central role for the United Nations in post-war Iraq;
- Implementing the decisions endorsed within the EU in 2003 regarding ESDP;
- Promoting the Peace process in the Great Lakes Region; ensuring the commitment of the EU in Central Africa.
- Enhancing the stabilization process in the Balkans thanks to the global approach of the EU and enabling the takeover from SFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in coordination with NATO.

2. National Perceptions and Positions with regard to CFSP Issues in 2004

Although Belgium considers that important headway has been made in the CFSP process this last decade, the divergences of the member states and the inefficiency of the EU during the Iraq crisis was regarded as a serious **failure** of the EU. According to Belgium, the Iraqi crisis showed that the success of European foreign

policy still strongly depends on the extent to which the national foreign policies of its most influential Member States coincide.

The crisis in the **United Nations** Security council, resulting in a unilateral war against Iraq that Belgium rejected, also deeply concerned the Belgian government. As a result, Belgium called in 2004 for the UN to play a central role in the political re-organization of the country. Belgium claimed to be satisfied with the progressive involvement of the UN in the reconstruction process in Iraq, regarding the unanimous adoption of Resolution 1546 (09/06/2004) as the return to a truly multilateral approach.

Nevertheless, the Iraq crisis that undermined CFSP was also considered by Belgium as a powerful **trigger** for **fundamental decisions**. The crisis was not, in the Belgian optic, unrelated to the major European endeavour in favour of deepening CFSP/ESDP mechanisms –as political Europe builds itself on a ‘step-by-step’ basis, in a dynamic relation with crises. In the Belgian perspective, the Iraq conflict highlighted the need for the Union to think of itself as a global actor on the international stage, and showed that the European Union would not have an effective foreign policy if it was not based on an effective military capability –notwithstanding the political feature of the disagreement. In this respect, the Brussels summit between France, Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg (29.04.2003) was considered by Belgium as a turning point, and the Union soon started ‘learning the lessons’ from the Iraq crisis. Despite the country was promoting further evolutions, the decisions endorsed concerning CFSP/ESDP late 2003 (both triggered by the Convention and the Summit of the Four) –at the time the negotiations on QMV were in a deadlock– meant a leap forward not only for ESDP, but merely for the European Defence.

Indeed, the **European Security Strategy** (ESS) endorsed on 12 December 2003 by the EU member states has definitely been viewed by Belgium as an instrument for enhancing consistency/coherence in the EU security policy. Moreover, as the EU was obviously lacking strategic clarity and a clear definition of its strategic interests, objectives and priorities, Belgium began to think the future ESS at an early stage. In December 2002, the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Security & Global Governance Department of the Royal Institute for International Relations (IRRI-KIIB)

to launch a strategic reflection on Europe's security policy. An informal IRRI-KIIB working group was working on a European strategic concept, while in May 2003 the HR/SG Javier Solana was asked by the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs to elaborate a draft strategic document. IRRI-KIIB's 'European Security Concept for the 21st Century' represented a Belgian contribution to the elaboration of the 'European Security Strategy'.

See IRRI/KIIB, "A European security Concept for the 21st Century. A Belgian contribution to a comprehensive EU Security Strategy", Egmont Papers, Number 1, Brussels, Academia Press, April 2004.

(<http://www.irri-kiib.be/papers/egmontp1.U560.pdf>)

Regarding the Solana Document, Belgium in particular focuses its efforts on its commitment to **effective multilateralism** and to the promotion and the respect of **Human Rights** and universal values worldwide. Belgium is convinced that the role of the United Nations has to be reasserted as a place for multilateral and universal dialogue, especially following the 2003 international events. Therefore, Belgium follows with particular attention the United Nations reform process initiated by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2002.

See 58th General Assembly of the United Nations: Belgium's priorities (27/10/2003).

(<http://www.diplomatie.be/en/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=10295>)

In addition, Belgium pleads for a more active EU regarding the Petersberg missions on which rested the Headline Goal 2003, and that remain the basis of Headline Goal 2010. Headline Goal 2010 is indeed viewed by Belgium as an instrument to implementing the European Security Strategy; and **conflict prevention and crisis management** considered as important commitments in favour of effective multilateralism. In spite of limited national capabilities –important shortfalls remain– Belgium has contributed to every military mission of the EU since the EU was declared operational, i.e. Concordia, Artemis and Althea.

By maintaining their **original positions** towards the war in **Iraq**, many EU member states, including Belgium, have hindered the European Union from playing a global role in the reconstruction of the country. However, first steps towards compromises have been taken in 2004. For instance, Belgium clearly stated that it would not like to

send military personnel to Iraq. However, the government approved on September 10, 2004 the country's contribution to UN air transport in Iraq, in accordance with its will to favour a growing role for the UN in Iraq.

In the same logic, Belgium remained wholly opposed to the involvement of **NATO troops** on Iraqi theatres of operations. But as an element of appeasement towards the United States, the Belgium authorities eventually did not oppose the decision endorsed at the transatlantic Summit of Istanbul (June 2004) to set up a mission by NATO officers to train Iraqi security forces (fall 2004). Nevertheless, as other NATO member states, Belgium refused to place the mission under the American command ruling the coalition.

The **transatlantic partnership** is still considered by Belgium as an essential strategic priority for Europe, and April 2004 NATO enlargement was considered as historical –even if the accent was essentially put on the EU enlargement. Nevertheless, the transatlantic partnership must neither hinder the development of ESDP/European Defence, nor imply “followship” for the Europeans regarding American foreign policy.

See Foreign Affairs Minister Louis Michel: The case for a transatlantic entente cordiale - Opinion, Financial Times, 02.02.04.

(<http://www.diplomatie.be/en/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=14613>)

During the Iraq crisis, the so-called ‘letter of the Eight’, that upset Belgium, appeared to the authorities as a piece of evidence of such a ‘followship’ –notwithstanding the fact that neither the pro nor the contra granted the priority to the CFSP process. Regarding the relation between enlargement and CFSP/ESDP, Belgium develops an ambiguous discourse. On one hand, Belgium ensures that there is only one ‘**new Europe**’ –the enlarged one–; that disagreements already existed among the Six, the Twelve or the Fifteen; and that the enlargement is likely to deepen the weight of Europe on international affairs and reinforce its union in CFSP/ESDP. On the other hand, the ‘letter of the Eight’ –despite it involved actual EU member states– was at some point considered by Belgian minister of Foreign Affairs Louis Michel as an automatic pro-American reflex of the Central and Eastern Europe countries –and even as a lack of European political awareness. The enlargement anyway entails the

necessity of reforming the European institutions, in order to ease the Foreign Policy process: Belgium has long been very concerned with the functioning of a EU with almost thirty Member-States. Nevertheless, the insistence on the need for flexibility mechanisms in the enlarged EU, if it follows the political guidelines Belgium has set up for decades, hardly occult the paradoxical fear for an American dividing line across Europe. More largely, Belgium wants to move forward towards more integration, and is concerned by the blockades that are likely to happen in many member states, as the extent of the European integration process remains unclear.

'The European Union has seen, since a couple of months, a debate on what the Germans call "das Kern-Europa", the nucleus Europe, the pioneer group, two-speed Europe. As a matter of fact, this is not a new debate. This discussion has been going on for years. Jacques Chirac talked about it in the year 2000, before the Bundestag. And even before that, Jacques Delors developed his well-known theory about the concentric circles. This subject of the two-speed Europe is not an unspeakable subject, quite on the contrary. It is a subject, which raises the question of the very nature of the European integration as the Union enlarges ever further. For this enlargement will not come to a halt on the 1st of May when ten new member states will join us. I am convinced that in fifteen or twenty years, the Union will count forty members or even more. In a speech I gave before at the Humbolt University in Berlin, last November, I called this an evolution towards a European Federation within the European Union. In such a set-up, the Union would form the common basis, containing both the "acquis communautaire" and all those common policy areas where all forty or more member states are willing to cooperate. I do hope there will be as many such common policy areas as possible. And in that set-up, the Federation would build upon that common basis and organise cooperation in those areas where not all member states wish to join. But of course, and that is essential, all member states that do wish to join, should be allowed to do so.'

See Challenges for the European Union, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Institute for European Studies, 10 February 2004, Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister of Belgium (<http://www.diplomatie.be/fr/policy/euenlargementdetail.asp?TEXTID=16015>)

See official speeches related to enlargement:

Discours aux autorités du Pays – Palais de Bruxelles – 28.01.2004 – Le Roi/Toespraak tot de Overheden van het Land – Paleis te Brussel – 28.01.2004 – De Koning

Karelsuniversiteit – Praag – 02.03.2004 – Premier Guy Verhofstadt/Universiteit Charles – Prague – 02.03.2004 – Allocution du Premier Ministre Guy Verhofstadt

Challenges for the European Union, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Institute for European Studies, 10 February 2004, Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister of Belgium

Le 5^{ème} élargissement de l'UE dans moins de 3 mois – 05/02/2004 – M. Louis Michel, Vice-Premier Ministre et Ministre des Affaires étrangères

Ratification du traité d'adhésion – La Chambre – 04.12.2003 – Louis Michel, Ministre des Affaires étrangères/Bekrachtiging van het toetredingsverdrag – Kamer – 04.12.03 – Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Louis Michel

All these documents and further speeches are available at <http://www.diplomatie.be/fr/policy/euenlargementspeeches.asp>

See also Franklin Dehousse (Director of European Studies), Wouter Coussens (Researcher), *The enlargement of the European Union. Opportunities and threats*, sept. 2002 (extract from the next edition of *Studia Diplomatica*: Introduction, Table of Contents, General Conclusions. For the full text, see *Studia Diplomatica*, Vol. LIV: 2001, n° 4).

3. The Results of the Intergovernmental Conference 2003/2004 on the Constitutional Treaty

Satisfied with the compromise reached by the Convention (consistent with the spirit of the Laeken Declaration), the Belgian government strategy within the Intergovernmental Conference aimed to maintain the results of the Convention. According to Prime Minister Verhofstadt, '*Belgium is well known as a passionate supporter of the Community model, a federal Europe, and a Europe that is as democratic as possible. The proposals made by the Convention are clearly a huge step in this direction*' (Challenges for the European Union, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Institute for European Studies, 10 February 2004). The objective of the Belgian government, in accordance with its Benelux partners, was then to strengthen its efforts in order to ensure the Constitution was adopted before the 2004 European

elections.

a) External Representation

Proposals initiated by Belgium on the institutional aspects of the EU have been aggregated in the Memorandum of the Benelux entitled “A balanced institutional framework for an enlarged, more effective and more transparent Union” (4 December 2002).

http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/press/oth041202_fr.htm

http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/press/oth041202_en.htm

The Memorandum says that the capability of the Union to influence international events is dependent on the cohesion between its internal and external policies, on a common will shared by the institutions and the member states, on the availability of adequate means and on the coherence in voicing the position of the Union:

The roles of High Representative for the CFSP and Commissioner for External Relations should be performed by a single person (known as “**double hatting**”), who enjoys the status of Commission Vice President, but operating in the field of CFSP and CESDP under the authority of Council. The High Representative/Commissioner for External Relations is nominated by qualified majority by the Council in its composition of Heads of State and Government and in accordance with the President of the Commission. He exercises his competencies in accordance with the community procedures or in accordance with the procedures, which apply specifically for the CFSP in function of the field of action concerned. He is discharged of his role as Council Secretary General. He is responsible for the external representation of all issues relating to CFSP or CESDP.

The Commission performs external representation for all other policies of the Union, as is already the case at the WTO. Even before the Constitutional Treaty enters into force, the High Representative should be able to participate in the meetings of the Commission. The analysis and policy planning unit, which is already at his disposal, should be reinforced during this period and become a common service for him and the Commission.

After the coming into force of the new treaty, the High Representative must have the right of initiative in the field of CFSP and should be able to refer to the services of the Commission, which for questions related to the CFSP could be reinforced by experts from the member states.

- About the **Council Presidency**, the Benelux is of the opinion that the system of the Council Presidency must be reformed in order to guarantee the effectiveness and the continuity of Council's activities in an enlarged Union. The status quo is no longer a viable option.

At the same time, The Benelux wants to safeguard the principle of equal treatment of all member states, just as the balance between the institutions of the Union. The Benelux is of the opinion that the proposal of President of the European Council, appointed outside the circle of its members and for a long period, does not come up to these conditions.

In determining the Council Presidency, the role of the Member States must be respected. The Benelux favours a distinction between the legislative and executive functions within the European Union's institutions. To this end, the Commission must surely chair the General Affairs Council and the External relations Council. Thus, the President of the Commission must chair the General Affairs Council and the High Representative/ Commissioner for External Relations must chair the External Relations Council.

Furthermore, the Benelux favours maintaining rotation on the level of the European Council and specialised councils. The Benelux will in any case never accept a President elected from outside Council.

Meeting on 1st March 2004, the Benelux Foreign Ministers committed their countries in helping to strengthen the CFSP, the High Representative and the future European Foreign Minister, in order to enable the EU to establish itself as an effective actor that cannot be ignored in the international arena.

b) Decision-making

During the IGC, the Belgian government supported the extending of qualified majority voting to include a number of areas, such as justice, home affairs and

financial perspectives, as proposed by the Convention. Belgium even suggested to go further, by introducing QMV for fiscal and social matters, and for CFSP.

(http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/other/oth190603_fr.pdf)

c) Crisis management

Belgium agreed to move forward to a new Headline Goal, including the expanding of the Petersberg tasks, and to making reference to tasks that involve military resources.

As stated here over, Belgium has been involved in the EU military operations since their launching early 2003, namely in Africa and in the Balkans. The government shows readiness to envisage contribution to further interventions, in the limits of its military capabilities. Belgium is also likely to engage its forces in the civil part of conflict prevention and crisis management (see i.a. B-FAST and the 2003 Belgian proposal –with France, Luxemburg and Germany– to set up an emergency unit of humanitarian intervention at the EU level).

On March 1, 2004, a meeting of the Benelux ministers for Foreign Affairs Michel, Polfer and Bot agreed on a joint mission in Central Africa and assigned the respective heads of their African Departments and their representatives on the Political and Security Committee (COPS) to coordinate their activities and identify areas in which their countries could cooperate, especially in Burundi, the DRC and Sudan. In doing so, they highlighted their common will to ensure that Central Africa remained on the agenda of the European Union. Concerning the European Union's planned takeover from SFOR, the Benelux partners emphasised the necessity of distinguishing the tasks that the EU would have to fulfil in Bosnia-Herzegovina from those that would remain NATO's responsibility. The three considered the EU as particularly well placed to provide a global response to security concerns in Bosnia-Herzegovina, thanks to its ability to mobilise both military and civil resources.

(<http://www.diplomatie.be/en/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=15667>)

Belgium pays attention to the following geographical areas in the scope of CFSP/ESDP:

- (a) Central Africa: its former colonial area (Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi) is a traditional foreign policy issue for Belgium which tries to involve CFSP and the EU in the “Peace” and “democratisation” process and dynamics of the region;
- (b) Russia: to shape a strategic partnership (importance of energy supplies, especially gas);
- (c) Middle-East: to help every side and each partner to put an end to violence and to find a way of dialogue, negotiation and peace;
- (d) Mediterranean Region: to maintain the dynamics of an important partnership;
- (e) Balkans /South-East Europe: to promote regional co-operation and economic development in order to ‘stabilise the European continent’.

d) Defence

Although Belgium now mainly dedicates its armed forces to *collective security* missions around the world, the country is deeply committed in the development of a European *Defence*, in order to support the European Diplomacy and to grant the EU with a military weight, in addition to its demographic, economical and cultural power. Belgium’s ambitious positions on European Defence were detailed in the document issued in the wake of the “mini-summit” at the Egmont Palace of Brussels, together with the French President Jacques Chirac, the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the Prime Minister from Luxemburg, Jean-Claude Juncker, on 29 April 2003.

See CFSP Watch 2003/National Report Belgium and the original document available at <http://diplobel.fgov.be/en/press/homedetails.asp?TEXTID=6453>.

In accordance with this document, Belgium promoted in 2003-2004:

- the establishment of the civilian-military cell at the EUMS that undoubtedly will, following the Belgian Prime Minister, evolve into a European headquarters;
- the set up of structured cooperation on Defence –necessary if, in the long run, the Europeans want to have a real foreign policy;
- the creation and set up, in the course of 2004, of a European Defence Agency;
- a general clause of solidarity and common security binding all member states of the EU and making it possible to face all kinds of risks concerning the European Union;

On these issues, the positions of the Belgian government were calling for further integration, compared to what was achieved by the IGC.

4. Mapping of Activities in CFSP-related Research