

Speech at Cocktail Dinatoire
EUISS Annual Conference, “Conceptualising Strategic Autonomy”
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Restaurant Residence Palace, Rue de la Loi 155, Brussels

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Intro

- Would like to thank the EUISS and Gustav and Florence for the invitation and opportunity to speak here at the EUISS Annual Conference tonight. I am also taking the opportunity to thank the EUISS for **the close cooperation we have established** over the past years. The EUISS is, if I may say so, our think tank funded by Member States. The EUISS has contributed greatly to inform EU policy shaping chiefly in the areas of security, defence and CSDP, also helping us with outreach and public diplomacy eg during the EU Global Strategy drafting 2 years ago.

- It is important that we continue to work closely together. Especially in a context in which geopolitical changes are of an unprecedented scale and nature: more than ever, strategic foresight, scenarios testing and other forward-looking perspectives are crucial for informing the design of EU policy responses.

- The 2019 Work Programme of the EUISS (which has just been adopted by the Board last week) reflects the challenges and new security landscape that are already mentioned in the EUGS.

- The theme of the conference, **strategic autonomy**, is one of the main topics and priority areas where **reflection is needed to right-size a concept fraught with meaning and potential misperceptions**. As EEAS we look forward to hearing the insight from the academic and think tank expertise that is gathered here in this room and tomorrow.

- Let me expand the point on why foresight is more needed than ever and important for sound policy-making.

1) Broader outlook: contested world, political priorities, what have we achieved and where are the limits

- Geo context: when we look at today’s state of the world, we are witnessing a **period of instability and change** that directly affects us as Europeans. I will not enumerate here the number of challenges, you all know them very well.

- But let me flag one particular new challenge that some already call **the 4th industrial revolution**. We stand on the brink of a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live. We do not yet know just how it will unfold, but one thing is clear: the response to it must be integrated and comprehensive, involving all stakeholders of the global polity, from the public and private sectors to academia and civil society. But to harness these opportunities, we must also take the security implications seriously. This is a key point in today's Commission Communication on Artificial Intelligence, which asks the HR/VP to coordinate proposals for how to address the international security dimension.

- With multilateralism under attack, the EU has a prime responsibility to safeguard a rules-based international order and to help shape the **future of multilateralism** – acting in unity instead of letting others divide us. EU unity has allowed us to play a leading role in the international efforts to combat climate change and to keep the Paris agreement alive after the departure of the US we all regretted.

- And this is one of my main messages tonight and when it comes to **Strategic Autonomy**: being supporters of multilateralism and seeking greater strategic autonomy is not contradictory – to the contrary, if we strengthen our resilience and manage to join our efforts as a unified EU we can more effectively reinvigorate the multilateral order, which is the guarantor of overall peace, stability and prosperity.

- International rules and norms are needed simply to **avoid the return of the "law of the jungle"** to quote the title of Robert Kagan's latest book. This is also true for newer issues that are more elusive and where the 'rules of the game' are not defined by international law (cyber, digital, AI, hybrid) where the effects on warfare and EU citizens' security will require a lot more attention, knowledge and cooperation in the years to come.

- The positive news is that in face of this unpredictability all around, **the EU has still managed so far to be an anchor of stability** – but this is not a given. Our unity and our strength has become 'a point of reference' for others – as Federica Mogherini has described it. Instead of reducing international cooperation and partnership, the EU is actually increasing it because no single country can address those common challenges alone. At UNGA this year we have been united in support to multilateralism, as many others did.

- The demand for Europe has never so high. Important progress was achieved with our partners from the Western Balkans not least at the Western Balkans summit in Sofia where the Sofia Priority Agenda was adopted. The 12th ASEM Summit that took place in October here in Brussels brought together 51 countries and institutions, reiterating that only a multilateral approach will enable us to address and confront global challenges together. We are also intensifying efforts with our African and South American partners, like at the last EU-South Africa Summit in Brussels 2 weeks ago. All those examples illustrate that it is in our common interest not to abandon the multilateral system, but rather to reinvigorate it.

2) What needs to be done - enhancing strategic autonomy

- European strategic autonomy is a concept that has come a long way. It has recently received a new echo, not only through the Global Strategy but also with more recent Heads of State and President Juncker statements, including last June when referred to in the European Council conclusions. It is a **concept about responsibility**. It is a concept about Europe taking more responsibility for its own security thereby protecting our values and actively pursuing our interests.

- This is, of course, true in the field of **defence**. When needed, we want to be able to protect and defend European sovereign interests and values. We also want to be able to cooperate with third countries on our own terms. For acceding to this level of ambition, we have to raise our level of research and development, we have to deploy earlier, being more mobile and more operational thanks to additional training and equipment.

- This is exactly where **European initiatives** such as PESCO, European Defence Fund, MPPC, CARD or the Civilian Compact can be expected to trigger the indispensable dynamic for the challenges we are confronted to. It will contribute to strengthen NATO's European pillar.

- But taking greater responsibility does not stop at defence issues. Here, the term "security" should be envisaged in the greater sense with a **comprehensive and integrated approach**. "Economic security" is what comes to my mind or in other words the need for a stronger role of the Euro. In this regard, the European Commission published today plans to help to increase the use of the euro in strategic sectors such as energy, or aircraft manufacturing. Here it is important that the think tank community also reflects possible additional tools.

- We also need to assess our strengths, but also vulnerabilities in terms of energy, trade, space, infrastructure, cyber and other critical sectors. Our current level of strategic **and financial interdependence** must be measured against challenges that are not new. I am thinking of climate change and the urgency to act now as the UN IPCC Special Report on Global Warming warned us recently. We look towards the COP 24 in Katowice as a key moment for the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

- We need to protect and develop European success stories such as Galileo, Copernicus, Ariane launchers, Airbus which currently are more and more confronted to unfair competition, extraterritorial laws and financial uncertainty.

- Technological development and innovation can create tangible advantages but also significant new threats. We **need to modernise our approaches** and engage more actively with new actors at the intersection of technology and foreign and security policy, also building up the ability to set global standards in key technologies. Here, the work of Think Tanks such as the EUISS is extremely important.

- The nature of conflict has changed throughout history. Today, **cyberspace has emerged as the latest front**. Until the beginning of this century, technological innovation was very often driven by the defence sector. Today, we have new civilian technologies that have strong military implications and a direct impact on our security environment. This is also the case for artificial intelligence. Supporting innovation is not just important for our economies, it is also essential today for our security. This is also true with artificial intelligence; almost 50% of global private investments in artificial intelligence start-ups is today happening in China.

- We, Europeans, simply cannot afford wasting time, and we cannot afford to be less innovative than other world powers. It is a matter of economic growth and this is self-evident. But let me stress this: **it is also a matter of security**. Artificial intelligence is reality, not science-fiction. The public and private sector need one another like never before, and in this field more than ever. This is one of the reasons why Federica Mogherini created the Global Tech Panel, to help ensure that international ethics and rules can keep pace with human ingenuity.

3) What role for external partners, Think Tanks, cooperation and contribution EUISS

- One aspect of enhancing our preparedness to (new) risks and threats is analysis and foresight/awareness: **here the role of Think Tanks and the EUISS specifically can help us** address potential knowledge gaps and better understand emerging trends; providing us with insights, contextual knowledge, and forward-looking perspectives.

- The special cooperation with the EUISS as an EU agency that has privileged institutional access **makes you ideally placed to foster debates on matters of strategic importance**. Being part of the institutional landscape with your presence in Brussels, timely exchange and tailored dialogue events as well as bigger conferences such as this one are important bringing together and connecting actors, academics, Think Tankers, Member States representatives as well as EU officials.