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**The trend in European public opinion on security and defence  
in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks**

**REPORT**

submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations  
by Mr Crema, Rapporteur

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in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks*

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted unanimously by the Committee on 6 May 2002.

<sup>2</sup> *Members of the Committee:* Mr Debarge (Chairman) ; Mrs Castro Masaveu (Alternate: *Fernández Aguilar*), Lord Russell-Johnston (Vice-Chairmen); Mrs Agudo Cadarso (Alternate: *Arnau Navarro*), MM Banks (Alternate: *Vis*), Bartsch, *Budin*, Baroness Billingham, Mr Eversdijk (Alternate: *Dees*), Mrs Fernández Capel Baños, Mr *Graas*, Ms Hoffmann, Ms Jäger, Mr Jardim, Ms Katseli, Ms *Kestelijn-Sierens*, MM Lacão, Legendre, Masson, Naro, Nauche, Occhetto (Alternate: *Crema*), Pavlidis, Selva, Mrs Smith, Mrs Süßmuth, MM Timmermans, *Van den Brande*.

*Associate members:* Mrs Akgönenc, MM Bergvinsson, Gawlowski, Ms Gülek, MM Kaminski, Lorenz, *Matuska*, Kelemen, Reikvam, Tabajdi, Talír, Yürür, N...

N.B. *The names of those taking part in the vote are printed in italics.*

**RECOMMENDATION 710<sup>1</sup>**

***on the trend in European public opinion on security and defence  
in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks***

The Assembly,

- (i) Recalling that the Laeken Declaration stresses the need for greater involvement on the part of the public at large in the process of reform of the European institutions;
- (ii) Convinced that a common European security and defence policy can only be effective if subject to democratic scrutiny by parliaments and citizens;
- (iii) Observing that opinion polls and research reveal that the public at large is increasingly convinced that guaranteeing the necessary conditions of peace and stability for the development of the common European area should figure among the priority tasks of tomorrow's Europe,

**RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL**

Propose to the European Union and to the 28 countries of WEU that they should:

1. Endeavour to promote discussion and develop communications so as to maintain the focus of public attention on issues connected with the building of European security and defence structures;
2. Ensure, as decision-making with regard to reforms directed towards the implementation of the European Security and Defence Policy proceeds, that the public at large at all times receives all the information and explanations it requires;
3. Conduct more research on trends in public opinion and collate and disseminate research produced on this subject in the various European countries;
4. Make practical use in security and defence policy planning of data showing the points on which the views of European citizens converge and set about resolving from the outset any which are a source of tension.

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted without amendment by the Assembly on 4 June 2002 (3<sup>rd</sup> sitting).

## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

*submitted by Mr Crema, Rapporteur*

### *I. Introduction*

1. Public opinion with regard to security and defence issues has taken on a new dimension following the attacks of 11 September. First of all, the military action taken by the US-led coalition has highlighted the importance of public support for the success of an operation. Secondly, Europe's efforts to build a genuine defence capability call for a good system of information at both national and European level to mobilise public opinion in the various member states. Indeed, without sufficient public support, no progress can be made towards European integration in the security and defence field.

2. Public opinion, however, is difficult to pin down or, as claimed by Pierre Bourdieu, "there's no such thing as public opinion". This is even more true at European level. According to Pierre Bourdieu, public opinion is a "construction", one that is "composite" in nature. Furthermore, a distinction must be drawn at national level between "passive opinion" – represented by the majority of people, who rarely take an explicit stand – and "active opinion", more limited and composed essentially of pressure groups. Although the latter play a crucial role in contributing to mobilising passive opinion, the bulk of responsibility lies with the media and political leaders, who must find the ways and means of winning the public's support for their actions.

3. Finally, it is becoming more and more necessary, above and beyond public opinion at national level, to take account of international public opinion, on which there needs to be a precise and ongoing study. Since 1973, the European Commission has been taking the pulse of public opinion to find out the views of the citizens of the European Union. Over the last 25 years it has conducted opinion surveys on almost every aspect of life in the European Union. It is important to develop the use of such analyses in the field of defence, in parallel to national surveys, in order to enhance awareness and build a more general picture of the expectations of Europeans, the values they share, their perception of risks and threats and the credibility of the European institutions.

### *II. Colloquy on "Building Defence Europe with the support of public opinion"*

4. The central theme of the colloquy that was organised by the WEU Assembly and EuroDéfense and held at the French Senate on 5 November 2001 was "Building Defence Europe with the support of public opinion". Public opinion has become a significant variable in the process of shaping a security and defence policy and has increasingly to be taken into account.

5. As Mr de Puig pointed out in his introductory address, "It cannot be said that defence needs are always clearly perceived or understood by public opinion", and it is true that defence is one of the most sensitive and difficult subjects for the public to understand. It is therefore necessary for all national parliaments and the WEU Assembly "to try and make our citizens understand what the challenges are for security and what obligations a European country has in terms of its defence and the security of its territory". In describing the changes that have taken place following the events of 11 September 2001, Mr de Puig noted that the situation today had changed by contrast to the cold war years, when European public opinion was not really aware of defence-related issues and defence expenditure was not a priority item in European countries' budgets, and that the gap between public opinion and government defence requirements had narrowed. "For the first time, public opinion has woken up to a real danger in the form of a large-scale terrorist threat for which it was unprepared". Mr de Puig considered that in view of the current situation, the time had come to familiarise the public with security and defence problems and explain how vitally important it was to build a European defence system able to rise to the challenge posed by terrorism and armed conflict, so as to secure popular support for the action being taken by the governments.

6. This introductory address was followed by a speech from Mr Emile Blanc, Chairman of EuroDéfense, an association that promotes the exchange of information and the analysis, study and discussion of ideas among national associations in ten European countries. He stressed that reactions

in public opinion often had an irrational basis: “When individuals are deprived of freedom and confronted with danger, they have no hesitation in pitching in and fighting, but in the absence of an immediate threat, public opinion is indifferent, passive and even blind. (...) informing, explaining, discussing and educating are what we should be doing”.

7. During the ensuing round table discussion, Romania’s Defence Minister, Mr Pascu, stressed the endogenous aspects of the current debate on European defence and pointed out that prior to 11 September, it had been the process of European integration which had made closer cooperation on security and defence inevitable. “The need to step up our coordination of foreign policy activities has also led us to make a start on integrating our defence systems”. He went on to stress that the conflict in the Balkans had not done much to make public opinion aware of the need for a European defence, not least because NATO’s structures appeared to meet that need adequately. While the idea of institutionalising European defence was generally well received in public opinion, there was not enough support for it to create a momentum “enabling Europe to forge ahead in this new era”. Public opinion was not yet ready for a substantial increase in defence spending.

8. In contrast, the events of 11 September had a big impact in that they drew attention to the domestic dimension of security which has begun to take on more importance than the external dimension. From now on western countries may face new threats that are not just of a military nature. This point was taken up by several participants, although Senator Manzella (Italy) maintained that “it is impossible to differentiate between external and internal threats. There is a high degree of overlap and a complex interweave between external and internal security policies (...)”. He nonetheless welcomed the results of surveys showing that European public opinion was responding to the new challenge in “a genuinely European spirit”. Faced with new threats, the public understood that the European Union had to react as a body.

9. According to Mr Pascu (Romania), the new context also required a redefinition of the role of the armed forces, who would have to be able to deal with different situations simultaneously. This meant setting up, as had been done in Romania, a single system that covered all types of crisis that might break out in parallel, either within the country or outside it.

10. The debate became more focused when Mr Claude Dehouck, a member of EuroDéfense France, presented the results of a survey carried out at the request of the Belgian Defence Minister in April 2001 on public opinion in the 15 EU member states, which painted a picture of the Union prior to the 11 September attacks. The survey was in fact a first sounding at European level on “European views on the common security and defence policy”. When asked about the confidence they had in 16 different types of institution, most Europeans put the army first, followed by the police, whereas political parties came in for stinging criticism. In all, the rate of public confidence in the army is higher than 65%. When it came to their opinions on decision-making on defence issues, four out of ten Europeans thought decisions should be taken at the European Union level. The most pro-European countries are Italy (63%) and France (56%) whereas the United Kingdom (22%) and Denmark (27%) were, unsurprisingly, bottom of the list. In contrast, one out of two Europeans considered that it was up to governments to decide whether to deploy troops to take part in a military intervention. Mr Dehouck pointed out that “the most federalist option, i.e. a binding majority vote, came last among the solutions proposed, with only 7% in favour. These two results clearly show the gap between the theoretical desire for a European defence policy and the way it is implemented in practice”.

11. The views expressed on the role of a future European army also showed, as Mr Dehouck noted, that there is not much enthusiasm among Europe’s citizens for Petersberg missions: fewer than one out of two Europeans was in favour of them, even though their legitimacy was acknowledged to a far greater degree in the six founding member states.

12. The conclusions Mr Dehouck drew from the survey were that “While the idea of a European defence is fairly well known in most countries, it remains a somewhat vague concept and support for it is superficial”. Although the majority of Europeans approve the concept of setting up a European defence in one form or another, i.e. with a policy and structure that are not just national, they are still a long way off being in favour of a properly integrated defence policy”.

13. Furthermore, Mr Dehouck noted that “it is in the six founding member states of the European Community, with the possible exception of Germany but only on certain points, that public opinion is most in favour of a common security and defence policy. More often than not, the United Kingdom is at the opposite end of the spectrum”. This gap is also apparent in areas other than defence.

14. The conclusion that can be drawn is that there is no real convergence of opinion in Europe about a common security and defence policy and that the public’s views about it very often reflect those of their own government. A number of speakers in the debate in fact stressed this absence of convergence. Mr Guardans said: “It cannot be said that there is a large body of people in Europe who respond to the same impulses, watch the same news programme, read the same newspapers, listen to the same radio station, note what political leaders say at a press conference or vote simultaneously (...). This is therefore a problem that concerns the European integration project as a whole, not just defence policy (...). There is no single European public opinion but 15 different ones (...)”.

15. Mr Bresson, a member of EuroDéfense France, spoke of the need, in a democratic context, to take account of public opinion but agreed that the main problem was that a European public opinion as such did not exist. Nevertheless, he proposed concentrating on the differences in public opinion that had emerged in the survey, pointing out that “one of our problems in building Europe is precisely that our peoples, history and hence the reactions of our citizens are not the same. What is vitally important is that we should not overlook this problem because it is a very important one (...). If we do not share the same perception of threats or see our common destiny in the same way, we will not be able to work together on defence”. This leads to the basic question: “how to arrive at convergence of public opinion?”.

16. Taking another view, Mr Dumoulin of the University of Liège, Belgium, said one of the most important findings of the survey was that “it nonetheless shows there is agreement about and support for the ESDP among a majority of Europeans, this being something that was little known”. With a view to reaching a common understanding about notions of risk and threat, the 15 EU member states had agreed that as of 2002 the Institute for Security Studies should be given a remit to study this question. On the basis of such a study, the Fifteen would issue an official document on security and defence. This would probably make it possible to prepare information papers “so that the European public opinion would perhaps one day share the same views about security and defence”.

17. Looking at the issue from a different angle, Mr Bársony, a Hungarian member of parliament, emphasised that procedures had to be fully transparent in order to secure public support. He rightly pointed out that while public opinion did of course exist, surveys showed that in the 15 European Union member states it was not “very well informed about the procedure of interest to us (...). Generally speaking, we tend to use vocabulary with which we are familiar but which 95% of ordinary people do not understand”. He said future security challenges would be of a different type and would come from the region of central Asia. This would mean that the United States would have to change its strategy and the public would have to be kept properly informed about the situation. In this connection he referred to the need to establish effective parliamentary scrutiny over foreign and defence policy, pointing out that “parliamentary scrutiny and transparency are two fundamental requirements for real support from public opinion; without them we will probably do things that the public will never understand”.

18. In contrast, some participants talked about the problem of an “obsession” with all things institutional which merely aggravated incomprehension among the European electorate when it came to defence issues and the terminology used. In the end, as Mr Wilkinson, a British MP, noted, “it is direct threats that are at present worrying the man in the street – the fear of biological warfare or terrorism spreading throughout Europe”. In this connection, a proposal made by the secretary of the Spanish Delegation to the WEU Assembly, Mr Daranas, should be taken up. He suggested launching a publicity campaign to inform the public about the meaning of certain notions “whose practical application may have a direct impact on the lives and economic and tax situation of European citizens”. As far as parliamentary work is concerned, he also proposed “holding regular debates on defence issues as a matter of course and making them more comprehensive than has so far been the case, by including both internal and external security in the concept of defence”. In his opinion the

national parliaments should devote at least one full debating session to security and defence issues in general.

19. Some participants, however, drew attention to the fact that the media and political leaders in particular had an undeniable influence on public opinion. A French journalist, Mr Pierre Bayle, said the media often distorted the facts and people were exposed to a huge amount of information every day which explained why public opinion was so versatile, as had been shown by surveys which produced wholly different results within the space of a few months. It was therefore likely that a surfeit of information led to indifference among the public. Referring to perceptions as they had been described, Mr Bayle said that public opinion regarded the response to the crisis in Afghanistan as fragmented and did not see it in any way as a concerted one: “there is no analysis about the choice of a common strategic response at European level”. Hence the need to educate the public and prepare people in Europe to accept higher expenditure and a new joint effort directed towards greater involvement in the Balkans instead of relying on American forces.

20. Another interesting view on the role of the media came from General Capuzzo, a former army Chief of Staff, head of the Italian police force and Chairman of EuroDéfense Italy, who agreed that while it was necessary to take account of public opinion, it had to be borne in mind that “public opinion was not always right. I am not always able to accept what public opinion says. When I see the results of American television polls which tell us what the feeling in the public is, I reach the conclusion that we could simply go and wipe out the whole of Afghanistan with the agreement of 90% of the American population! What I am trying to say is that because the public responds to what it sees on television, in the press and to what it hears from politicians and demagogues, the objectiveness of public opinion is sometimes rather an unknown quantity. We parliamentarians and our institutions (EuroDéfense, the WEU Assembly, WEU and the European Union) must try to explain things to the public. We must try to educate and inform people so that they do not believe everything they see and hear on television and then form opinions that are wholly unacceptable”. In referring to the institutional aspects, General Capuzzo argued that consideration had to be given to the degree of sovereignty European citizens were prepared to give up in order to implement a European Security and Defence Policy. He wondered whether, in the wake of 11 September, the strategic concept for European defence could now be confined to Petersberg missions, and what steps should be taken to obtain more support in public opinion for an increase in European defence budgets. In his opinion, the media were essential if that objective was to be achieved.

21. Giving the closing address, Mrs Durrieu, Senator, and Leader of the French Delegation to the WEU Assembly, stated with some confidence that French public opinion gave its spontaneous support to concepts about European defence, vague though they may be, was ahead on these matters and understood the seriousness of the situation confronting Europe. “The public is behind us because it wants more security and because it is afraid (...)”. This shows yet again that, in the face of new types of threat, it has now become impossible to differentiate between internal and external security. Mrs Durrieu acknowledged that “in my country, as in all others I think, international problems take second place and are immediately eclipsed by any more direct problem affecting people’s daily lives”. She went on to suggest that “for the moment there is no contradiction in the public mind between the idea of a Defence Europe and the Atlantic Alliance. Public opinion is well aware that there is no option other than a system incorporating both structures, that there has to be action on both sides and that both approaches have to be strengthened in parallel until we reach the stage perhaps where Europe will achieve autonomy, this being the ideal of all those who claim to be Europeans”. In stating these principles, Mrs Durrieu stressed that even though there was spontaneous support among public opinion for the idea of European defence, it also needed explanations, information and assurances about the ways and means of achieving it. She therefore summed up the problem in the following terms: “We talk little, and not properly, to the public. There is a clear democratic deficit (...). We are a long way off the ideal of European citizenship”. In addition to the democratic deficit, there was also a political deficit, because building Defence Europe implied that at some stage there would have to be political integration in Europe and that preference should go to the participation of the national parliaments, perhaps in the form of an *ad hoc* assembly, and to a system that went beyond a strictly intergovernmental structure. In conclusion Mrs Durrieu said that “our citizens are willing because this

is the only guarantee of security and lasting peace and because they understand that this is the price that has to be paid, but they must also be closely involved in setting up this Defence Europe and in the decision-making process (...)".

### *III. Eurobarometer*

22. Eurobarometer public opinion surveys have been conducted since 1973 each spring and autumn on behalf of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Press and Communications, Opinion Polls. The aim of this kind of survey is to give an overview of the attitudes of European citizens towards the European Union, its policies and institutions, including a large number of other related issues.

23. The first Eurobarometer survey conducted after the events of 11 September records an increase in the level of anxiety throughout European public opinion, but also shows significant growth in confidence in the European Union and support for its initiatives. In particular, a large number of Europeans (89%) say that they personally fear terrorism, with an increase of 12 percentage points compared with a survey conducted last year; 79% are extremely worried about the proliferation of nuclear, bacteriological or chemical weapons of mass destruction (+17 points) and 64% fear a world war (+19 points).

24. At the same time, Europeans have more confidence in the European Union and its institutions, with an average rate that has reached 53% (+12 percentage points). This is also confirmed in the higher percentage of citizens who think that their country's membership of the European Union is a good thing: 54% (+6 points compared with the Eurobarometer 55 survey of last spring), the highest level for three years. It is remarkable that the greatest leaps were recorded in Denmark (+14 percentage points), Greece (+11), the Netherlands (+11), Germany, Austria and Sweden (+10 points each).

25. The indicator that most concerns us is European support for a common foreign policy; despite expectations, there has not been any significant growth in this field, even though average support remains high: the Eurobarometer 55 survey of spring 2001 registered 73% of Europeans supporting a common security and defence policy in principle, and 65% of Europeans believing that the European Union should have a single common foreign policy. This last figure has increased only slightly to 66% (+1 percentage point), while the "support in principle indicator" remains stable (73%). France, Greece and Ireland are the only countries where a drop is recorded for these two items, which is counterbalanced by a more positive stance on the part of Luxembourg citizens, (+8), Italians (+11 support the common foreign policy and +6 support the common security/defence policy), Danes (+7 and +5 respectively) and the British (+2).

26. This picture shows how varied attitudes of the European public are towards such a sensitive issue as security and defence policy, and confirms the widespread feeling that European public opinion as such does not exist; instead there are different national opinions in the European countries.

27. On the other hand, despite the fact that public opinion is usually considered as being misinformed and disinterested about matters concerning defence, another survey, carried out in Europe between 13 and 23 November, at a time when the war in Afghanistan was entering a crucial phase, reveals that Europeans were taking great interest in the events: over 80% of those interviewed said that they were following events "closely" or "very closely", primarily on television. These results also confirm the heightened anxiety that is widespread among Europeans following the terrorist attacks of 11 September. This opinion survey (Eurobarometer Flash) of a sample of 15 000 EU residents conducted by the European Commission, was an attempt to record the reaction of the European public to the international crisis generated by the events in the United States. It showed majority support for military actions and concerted action by the EU and its member states rather than isolated intervention, as well as a tendency to support humanitarian aid rather than arms, support for restoring democracy and the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

28. On the whole, the majority of Europeans support, without exception, their governments' action in the anti-terrorist campaign, which confirms the findings of national surveys conducted in each country. 70% value "very positively" or "positively" the response of their government to the

11 September attacks, with the British (86.7% supporting Tony Blair) and the French (79.1%) showing most support. Justifying their active mobilisation, the British and French are also the most anxious about the consequences of the crisis whereas the Finns are the least worried. 60% of Europeans believe that the response to the crisis should be at both national and European level, against 12% who were in favour of solely national reaction and 21% solely EU action. This last figure is extremely impressive.

29. If we look at the situation in each country, we note that it is in the Netherlands that joint action at the European level only receives considerable support (34.4%), followed by Luxembourg, Italy and Spain. But the concerted action option is the one that receives greater support almost everywhere. Only the Austrians appear to be almost equally divided between the three options, with 26.6% in favour of a national level response, 23.2% joint action at the European level and 36.6% a response at both levels.

30. Although a majority of Europeans supported a share of intelligence (70.2%) and military bases being made available to the coalition led by the United States, views differed on the deployment of troops. On average, 48.2 % were in favour and 43.4% against, but here again the picture varies greatly from one country to another: it ranges from 65% support for military action in Britain, to (not surprisingly) 5% in Finland, 5.2% in Greece and 8.4% in Austria. In contrast, a vast majority of Europeans were in favour of sending humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and 70% believed that the EU should provide “massive” funding for the reconstruction of the country, which shows a high degree of sensibility among public opinion and a feeling of solidarity with the Afghan population.

31. Over 85% of those interviewed also expected the EU to take preventive action to ensure that the conflict did not spread to other countries, with Sweden most in favour. This is another remarkable finding in that it presumes a certain degree of coordination and common action. At the time when the survey was carried out, one European out of five said they “certainly” expected terrorist attacks. Nine Europeans out of ten thought it “essential” or “necessary” to improve European cooperation between the police and judicial authorities, which confirms how the events of 11 September served to increase the sense of insecurity among European citizens and how they tend to attach greater importance to “internal security”.

32. Finally, the survey also revealed that Europeans do not consider the Muslim and Arab community as a whole responsible for the terrorist acts, and over 85% of Europeans affirmed that the Arab world could not be judged on the basis of terrorist attacks committed by a few individuals.

33. The results and all the questions can be found on the Eurobarometer website address (<http://europa.eu.int>).

#### *IV. Surveys in the member countries*

34. A comparison of the results of the various national opinion polls reveals a high degree of convergence across Europe, but also a number of differences.

35. In France, the latest IPSOS survey (these have been carried out once a year since 1997 with the support of the Commission) was on the theme of “The French and Europe”. It showed that the new international climate that has emerged since the 11 September terrorist attacks against the United States has also had an impact on the way in which European issues are perceived. Generally speaking, the survey showed a majority in favour of the process of building Europe and a marked desire to forge ahead in many areas. A particularly interesting result was the growing support it showed for the process of building Europe. Indeed, 73% of French people consider Europe to be a good thing for them (+5 points since 2000), while 78% take the view that EU membership is a good thing for France (+7 points since 2000).

36. Another important finding was the very high expectations that were expressed as regards Europe’s protective role. The majority of French people (70%) perceive Europe to be a positive factor in the fight against terrorism and crime. Their demand for European security shows that there is a real desire for the European construction process to be given another dimension, in addition to that of economic and monetary integration. To sum up, the survey showed that the French population has

high and deep-rooted expectations of Europe that have only been amplified by the events of 11 September.

37. Those results are also very much in line with the conclusions drawn from the nationwide debate on the future of Europe prompted by the Nice European Council which, in its Declaration, called for a broader and more in-depth debate in all member states on the future of the European Union. That Declaration also acknowledged the need for greater democratic legitimacy and transparency in the Union and its institutions, so as to bring them closer to the citizens of Europe. And indeed, when it set out the next steps in the process of reforming the EU treaties, the Nice European Council took the initiative of proposing that a broad public debate should precede the final phase in the reform process, which would be an intergovernmental conference followed by a European Council.

38. That initiative was perceived as a welcome effort to organise a Europe-wide public debate in which, for the first time in the EU's history, its citizens would be asked directly to reflect upon and express their expectations as regards the future of European integration, prior to any decisions being taken. In practical terms, only three of the 15 member countries – France, Italy and Spain – have thus far launched such a public debate. Although the outcome of that debate in France diverges somewhat from the opinion survey results and cannot, in any case, be considered as being statistically representative of French public opinion, it nevertheless gives some guidance as to the different perceptions of Europe that can be found among the citizens of France.

39. The debate was moderated by a group of ten personalities chaired by Guy Braibant which also had the task of publishing a summary of the results. It took place between April and November 2001, and therefore took account of the specific expectations of the French population following the 11 September events. The level of interest and involvement was extremely high, since 25 000 French citizens participated one way or another in this open debate.

40. The group published the results on 19 November 2001. Opinions that were radically opposed to the process of building Europe were few and far between. The group noted that “the nature of the debate on Europe has changed. It is no longer a matter of the advocates versus the opponents of European integration. Rather, differences of opinion concern the final objectives of political integration and the ways and means of bringing it about”. It perceived the need to further pursue that educational approach, since the participants were hard put to come up with any coherent vision of Europe's future. There was particular difficulty with the issue of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, and even more with the question of police and judicial cooperation. However, according to the group of experts, “this does not mean that our citizens are not interested in those issues – indeed, opinion surveys indicate otherwise – but quite the contrary: there is a consensus that Europe should play a leading role on the world stage”. The difficulty seems to be with getting to grips with the subject. Since 11 September, criticism of Europe's limited role has become more vociferous. According to the group, there is still a cruel lack of transparency in those particular areas of Union activity and there is a need to strengthen the educational component of the debate.

41. As far as the CFSP is concerned, a study of the different contributions to the debate received by means of circular letters or hearings conducted by the group shows that people have specific expectations as regards the creation of a European army, although their ideas on the practical arrangements are not very clear.

42. However, the Rapporteurs note with some astonishment that there were no particular remarks on the creation of the European rapid reaction force. The majority of contributors nevertheless wanted Europe to speak with a single voice on the international stage and were in favour of more visible external symbols of the Union. Some even proposed merging member states' diplomatic services. There were calls for a permanent EU seat on the UN Security Council and a clearer definition of the role of “Mr CFSP”.

43. Another surprising finding concerns the issue of security. Although there was agreement on the need to strengthen cooperation in order to combat all forms of international crime, the 11 September terrorist attacks did not provoke a sudden preoccupation with security.

44. Indeed, during the interactive debate on the *Source d'Europe* website ([www.information-europe.fr](http://www.information-europe.fr)), there were only a few brief reactions following the 11 September events, in most cases deploring Europe's failure to adopt a unified stance and its inability to coordinate national security and defence policies.

45. There was satisfactory agreement on one point, namely, the desire for the EU to have a greater capacity for action, particularly vis-à-vis the United States, or at least to be on an equal footing with it in the economic, monetary and, above all, political spheres. American dominance, particularly in the defence, foreign policy and economic fields, was deplored. The reference to a Europe that could speak with a single voice is due to the need, as perceived by the French, for a counterweight to American influence, although at the same time they realise that Europe's identity – in political, cultural and historical terms – has yet to be forged.

46. Visitors to the French Presidency website on the future of the EU agree that the Union as a whole is better placed on the international stage, from the diplomatic and economic points of view, than member states acting individually. Regarding defence, they note that there is a need to clarify relations between the EU and NATO, which indicates that public opinion is aware of defence issues and well versed in that field. Moreover, they are generally favourable to the idea of an independent European rapid reaction force capable of intervening in Europe or elsewhere.

47. In November and December 2001, the Gallup group conducted an international survey in 60 countries on the United States' military response in Afghanistan. The results indicate varying levels of support, with American policy being perceived in most countries as having negative effects. The citizens of almost all the western European countries generally accept the United States' military intervention, with the strongest support coming from those countries which rallied unhesitatingly to the American cause, in other words, the Netherlands (75%), France (73%), the United Kingdom (68%), Denmark (66%) and Germany (65%). A high level of support was recorded in the same countries for the idea of possible participation in the military action. Only in three of the 18 western European countries included in the survey was there any significant opposition to the military response and to participation in it. The countries were Greece (81%), Spain (49%) and Austria. The traditionally neutral countries expressed agreement with the United States' military action, but were opposed to the idea of participation in it: Finland (84%), Switzerland (76%), Sweden (64%) and Ireland (59%).

48. According to a survey conducted by the Italian opinion survey body, Doxa, in September 2001, the Italians' immediate reaction was to support armed intervention in response to the attacks, even if that entailed Italian participation alongside the United States (66%). However, 59% of Italians expressed some concern about the effects of such intervention on the world economy, while 33% took the view that the terrorist attacks would not have any lasting effects in that regard.

49. Gallup International also tried to establish whether since the 11 September attacks, in some countries, there had been an upsurge of anti-American sentiment which might call US foreign policy into question. Generally speaking, the answers were not very positive. In western Europe, it was only in Denmark (34%), Ireland (35%), Italy (40%) and the United Kingdom (40%) that the effects of American foreign policy were deemed positive. The Greeks and Spaniards showed the greatest hostility to American policy, with only 12% and 13%, respectively, in favour. Conversely, there was massive support for American foreign policy in central and eastern Europe, which was deemed by 11 countries to have positive effects for themselves.

50. As far as Italy is concerned, those results were contradicted by a survey carried out by *Peopleswg* for the catholic review *Famiglia Cristiana*, which showed a particularly critical attitude to US international policy. Indeed, according to that survey, 46% of Italians take the view that the United States is partly to blame for the tragedy that it suffered. Nevertheless, in the majority of cases, given the seriousness and emotional impact of the terrorist attacks, catholic Italy remains strongly attached to the defence of democratic values. It has aligned itself with the position taken by Pope John Paul II, who expressed solidarity with the American people and condemned terrorism, while calling for a restrained and discriminating response.

51. That last point gives food for thought about the basic values which are an integral part of the European identity and which the 11 September attacks have highlighted. Although European

integration is a recent process and there is still no single European identity that has been forged by centuries of unity, Europe nevertheless has a visible identity which sets it apart from the rest of the world and which is based on fundamental values such as the respect for human rights and for life, and the concern for social welfare.

52. The Council of Europe has organised three round tables in conjunction with a colloquy on the European identity. Dedicated since 1949 to upholding human rights, the rule of law and pluralist democracy, this Organisation is, by its very nature, determined to combat terrorism, which repudiates those three fundamental values by resorting to violence. The colloquy, which reflected upon the multiplicity of European cultural identities as the basis of a common identity, took on a new dimension in the wake of the tragedy in the United States, which was a dramatic reminder of the fact that the values shared by all Western peoples, such as human rights, democracy and the rule of law, cannot be taken for granted. Ambassador Josef Wolf recalled in that respect that, “defending these values entailed the rejection of a fatalistic acceptance of horror”. Several participants in the round table, essentially from the more recent member countries of the Council of Europe, stressed the fundamental importance of the rule of law as a foundation for the European identity. As Russian journalist Sergei Butmann put it, “In countries still torn apart by warring factions, European identity is the patch of blue sky which holds out the hope of a bright and peaceful future”.

53. Professor Dennis Driscoll of the University of Galway (Ireland) noted for his part that, “The real rights which all Europeans now enjoy, and which are guaranteed by instruments like the European Convention on Human Rights, are the driving force behind European identity, since they make Europe tangible and put social relationships on a new footing. The rule of law (...) gives us a new image of ourselves – and gives the rest of the world a new image of us too”. Some speakers claimed that what we had was not a European identity and European values, but rather a Western identity and Western values. Professor Driscoll recalled in that respect that what characterised Europe was a real respect for rights which was not just political rhetoric. Ambassador Noble remarked with regard to the search for a European identity in the Europe of 2001 that this identity was “surely provided by the European Convention on Human Rights and other important European treaties” which are a reality and not simply a political reality. “The most important difference (...) is that we have rights which are really guaranteed (...) both within (...) the nation and indeed within (...) the Council of Europe, and, at some later stage perhaps, within (...) the European Union”.

54. Opening the second part of the Colloquy on the European identity, which took place on 20 and 21 September 2001 in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe Secretary-General, Walter Schimmer, raised some interesting questions. Recalling that the European identity involved both cultural and political aspects, he explained that in the Council of Europe, Europe was defined as a community of shared values in a given geographical area. “In a dramatic way, our common European identity became evident last Friday when 800 million Europeans expressed their solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attacks in the United States by respecting three minutes’ silence. The formation of Europe (...) has so far largely rested on the postulate that its dynamic has to be primarily legal, political and economic. (...) During the last decade, after the 1989 reconciliation, Europe discovered the greatness and richness of its common past and fundamental unity of its history and values”. He agrees that the 11 September events were attacks not just against the United States, but against our civilisation and values, against pluralist democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Because of those values, he argues, our response must go beyond the desire for revenge and the understandable and necessary demand for enhanced security. He explains that “an essential part of European identity is the spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. In this context we should pay special attention to the danger of an increase in Islamophobia”. He also states that “our history is a pattern of interaction between different cultures and religions. When discussing European identity we must pay due attention to the enormous influence the great world religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, had on the genesis of our common values and ideals. We must (...) not forget that fundamentalism is not only a phenomenon in Islam, and that Islamic fundamentalism which preaches and uses violence is strongly rejected by the overwhelming majority of Muslims”.

55. With regard to that issue, the British Institute NOP Poll recently carried out a survey for the *Daily Telegraph* to determine whether the terrorist attacks had had any effect on British people’s

attitudes to Islam in general, and to British Muslims in particular. 13% of respondents claimed to be less favourable to Muslims since the terrorist attacks. Almost a quarter felt that Muslims were either not well integrated (19%) or very badly integrated (4%) in British society. However, the vast majority took the opposite stance. Nevertheless, the fact that 45% asserted that the Muslim leaders in the UK had not sufficiently condemned the 11 September attacks implies that there could be a rise in racial tensions. According to the ICM survey carried out in October 2001 for *The Guardian*, 25% of British people perceived Islam as a threat to Western values.

56. The need to adopt anti-terrorism measures compatible with the basic values of the Council of Europe was the key issue in the dialogue that took place on 21 January 2002 in Strasbourg between the Council of Europe Secretary-General, Walter Schwimmer, and the leaders of the non-governmental organisations. Mr Schwimmer also underlined the importance of the contribution by civil society to the Council of Europe's anti-terrorist action plan. "I am convinced that success in countering terrorism requires much more than governmental and parliamentary action at national and international level. What we now need is increased intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, enhanced action against social injustice and more balanced foreign policies. What we don't need are excessive anti-terror laws that undermine democracy on the grounds of defending it", declared the Secretary-General. In December 2001, Mr Schwimmer also stated that "Today we have two battles on our hands: we have to combat terrorism but we also have to protect democratic values and basic rights and freedoms. Terrorism will not be vanquished by repression alone, only when democracy and human rights prevail".

57. During the general conclusions of the Colloquy, there was a call to develop an ongoing dialogue among the different cultures that make up the European identity, in order to nurture a genuine hope of freedom.

#### *V. Conclusions*

58. The importance of public support as regards issues of European defence was highlighted in a study carried out by Franz Kernic from the EU Institute for Security Studies<sup>2</sup> on the relationship between public opinion and European security policy, in which he analyses the perceptions that dominate among the populations of the EU member states with regard to European integration and security and defence issues.

59. Most importantly, the author acknowledges that for a number of years Europe denied the importance of opinion research, avoiding using it as an additional instrument for decision-making and security and defence policy planning. He takes the view that opinion surveys should be used more extensively for policy planning and that this type of research should be developed more and coordinated better at European level. This would make it possible to detect "points of tension" between the opinions and ideas of the citizens of the different EU states, as well as points of agreement.

60. The conclusions refer to the need, first of all, to focus on public opinion as an essential element to be taken on board by governments for policy planning, and secondly to improve the quality of empirical research and information on security and defence issues, so as to enhance citizens' awareness of those issues.

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<sup>2</sup> Franz Kernic, "Public Opinion and the EU's Security and Defence Policy".



