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# Peace without money, war without Americans. Can European strategy cope?

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► **To cite this version:**

Delphine Deschaux-Beaume Deschaux-Dutard. Peace without money, war without Americans. Can European strategy cope?. *European Security*, 2017, pp.151-152. 10.1080/09662839.2016.1260006 . hal-01795191

**HAL Id: hal-01795191**

<https://hal.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/hal-01795191v1>

Submitted on 6 Jun 2018

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**Sven Biscop, Peace without money, war without Americans. Can European Strategy cope ? London, Ashgate, 2015, 102 pages, £18.31. ISBN 9781472442918.**

Journal:	<i>European Security</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	Book Review
Keywords:	

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Manuscripts

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3 **Sven Biscop, *Peace without money, war without Americans. Can European***  
4 ***Strategy cope ?* London, Ashgate, 2015, 102 pages, £18.31. ISBN**  
5 **9781472442918.**  
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10 In a context of crisis in the Middle East (Syria, Yemen...), of tensions in the East  
11 (Ukraine) and migration crisis, the EU's external action is being put under considerable  
12 pressure. Thus reflecting on the question of the EU's strategy is not only interesting, but  
13 necessary, as the European Security Strategy (ESS) from 2003 has been reviewed and turned  
14 into a Global Strategy –“Shared vision, common action. A stronger Europe” presented by the  
15 High Representative Federica Mogherini at the European Council on June 28<sup>th</sup> 2016. The aim  
16 of Sven Biscop's latest book *Peace without money, war without Americans* is to help define  
17 what this European strategy should be. This latest opus proposes an interesting extension of  
18 his previous book and of an article published in *International Affairs* in 2013<sup>1</sup>.

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20 The book starts with this sharp assessment: the EU is currently faced with the reorientation (or  
21 pivot) of the American strategy towards Asia and autonomy is thus forced upon Europe (p.xi).  
22 Therefore the EU is facing a double challenge as heralded in the title of the book: Europe not  
23 only needs to become able to use force when necessary against a context of restricted defence  
24 expenditures for most EU countries, but also has to be able to act militarily without being  
25 backed up by American military support. The key element of the argumentation is to exhort  
26 the EU to take advantage of the US pivot in order to define a clear and substantial strategy,  
27 thus enabling Europe to act as a real collective strategic player on the international security  
28 stage.  
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31 This short and effective book (102 pages) is divided into four parts: a prologue (bearing the  
32 suggestive title of “Snow White and the seven fallacies”, Snow White representing the EU),  
33 and three chapters. The main thesis developed in the book is the following : faced with major  
34 strategic challenges, the EU needs more than ever to act collectively on the international  
35 security stage and needs a real grand strategy in order to fulfill this need (“a strategic actor  
36 requires a strategy”, p. 31). The author underlines that the EU already has the platform to act  
37 and masters important economic, diplomatic and military means. But what is still missing is a  
38 consistent strategy to define what to do, and with what priorities and instruments, when  
39 Europe's interests are jeopardized. Hence most of the EU member states keep thinking in  
40 terms of national interests instead of on a collective European level. The example of the  
41 military intervention in Libya in 2011 is striking on this matter: not only could the EU not  
42 intervene on a collective European basis but the member states which participated under the  
43 British and French leadership had to rely on NATO's assets. Thus Sven Biscop raises the  
44 question whether the EU can cope in a context of enormous challenges, not only in the Middle  
45 East but also in the East (Ukraine) and with low military budgets.  
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48 To answer this question, the author starts with a prologue listing the seven fallacies preventing  
49 the EU from being the collective actor that it could be, considering the military tools and units  
50 and policy processes Europe masters especially through CSDP. Thus not only the national  
51 strategic reflex but also the lack of political will and of strategic thinking at EU level, and the  
52 misrepresentation still going on about the relationship between the EU and NATO (“the CSDP  
53 and NATO are not two different castles [...] they are but wings of one and the same castle  
54 that defends the shire as a whole”, p. 8) among others constitute important impediments.  
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57 <sup>1</sup> Sven Biscop, “ Peace without money, war without Americans: challenges for European strategy”, *International*  
58 *Affairs*, Volume 89, Issue 5, September 2013 , pp. 1125–1142.  
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3 These impediments prevent the EU from playing the global strategic role it could and will  
4 have to play in the near future, as the United States has started to show quite clearly that they  
5 would not get involved in the settlement of security crises in Europe's neighborhood unless  
6 forced to do it (see the example of Libya or Ukraine lately).  
7

8 The three following chapters aim at demonstrating how these impediments can be overcome.  
9 Chapter 1 focusses on the need for strategy at the European level by clearly identifying what  
10 should be expected : a European strategy which would be effective not only relies on the  
11 affirmation of European core values, but also aims at setting priority objectives and pointing  
12 out the instruments and means to achieve them. As Biscop states, answering the strategic  
13 challenge is crucial as it comes down to own question: "the option is to act together or not to  
14 act at all" (p. 41); as the member states can no more imagine to overcome individually the  
15 many security challenges surrounding them. Chapter 2 proposes an in-depth analysis of how  
16 the ENP failed to stabilize the EU's neighborhood and proposes interesting arguments to  
17 reform it and make it effective, by differentiating clearly the strategic needs in the southern  
18 neighborhood and in the eastern neighborhood. Finally, chapter 3 assesses the state of  
19 European defence capabilities and shows that the EU has important means but keeps  
20 jeopardizing their efficiency by cultivating competition with NATO. On the contrary Biscop  
21 advocates for the use of both NATO and CSDP as tools to back up a well-articulated EU  
22 strategy. Strategy won't promise success but at least it will enable the EU to act autonomously  
23 by being aware of its interests and the instruments to defend them (p. 92).  
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26 The book is a must-read for anyone who is interested by the subject of European security and  
27 defence policy and particularly for European political leaders, as it offers convincing  
28 arguments expressed in a fluid and vivid writing style.  
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