

A European Global Strategy: Ten Key Challenges

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Strategy is about identifying priorities and matching instruments and means to those priorities. Most states and other international actors do this from time to time. For a sui generis and multilevel actor like the EU, developing a strategy would appear even more necessary. The first objective must be to agree on common interests and values. On that basis, we define common goals and then identify and mobilise the instruments to achieve them. Thereby we set the level of our collective ambition and reach a clearer understanding of what should be done together, and what can be left to member states. Done in the right way, such a strategy would not only set out medium- and long-term goals, but also provide guidance on achieving these goals through the day-to-day conduct of policy.

Javier Solana's European Security Strategy (ESS) of 2003 was the EU's first serious effort to develop a foreign policy strategy document.¹ Many of its elements remain valid today, but the world and the EU have changed since then. The ESS reflects a view of a world essentially led by the United States and the EU working closely together. In the last ten years, a truly multipolar world has emerged in which economic weight and power are shifting towards Asia, and new actors have increased their influence. The EU, for its part, has expanded from 15 to 28 member states, greatly extending the scope and diversity of its foreign policy interests. The EU's new external action structures provided for in the Lisbon Treaty are still at an early stage and urgently need a more coherent policy orientation.

It is therefore time for a strong new impetus towards a European global strategy. This paper identifies some of the key challenges that need to be addressed in this context.

1. SCOPE

European foreign policy in a broad sense remains divided into three components: the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP); member states' individual foreign policies; and the external action led by the European Commission. This fragmentation lies at the heart of the EU's weakness as an international player. The CFSP claims to lead on EU foreign policy, yet in view of its limited mandate and its intergovernmental structure, it is really the weakest link in the chain of EU activities. The Lisbon Treaty aimed to ensure a more comprehensive approach by double-hatting the high representative and

¹ "A Secure Europe in a Better World", 10 December 2003, available at <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

creating the European External Action Service (EEAS). But despite some progress, the gap between the various components of EU foreign policy remains wide. Narrowing this gap requires a strategic framework encompassing all the dimensions of external policy. Only by pulling together all its instruments and assets will the EU be able to act as a transformative power and play a role in developing the rules of global governance.

Questions:

- *Should a new strategy focus primarily on foreign and security policy, or should it deal with all aspects of external relations, including the external aspects of internal policies?*
- *Should the analysis focus on the short term or should it look at a mid-term perspective (for instance 2030)?*
- *Should we aim for a one-off paper, or should it be a living document that is reviewed and updated regularly?*
- *Should we look to develop a comprehensive framework to be complemented by regional and topical substrategies?*

2. PROCESS

It is frequently pointed out that the process of developing a strategy is actually more important than the final product. Bringing together the key stakeholders in EU foreign policy for an in-depth discussion of key challenges and possible EU responses can in itself promote a deeper collective understanding of the issues and a greater commonality of views. There is therefore no need to rush. The new team at the top of the EU institutions, which will take office in late 2014, should be involved in finalizing the document.

Beyond the member states and the EU institutions, the conversation should also draw on the expertise of think tanks and academics. Four think tanks have already made an important contribution to the debate.² Even though the final result of the 2008 review of the ESS was not satisfactory, the method of organizing a number of topical seminars bringing together policymakers, officials and experts has worked well. Such meetings could be part of the new process.

Questions:

- *Should we envisage an individual or a group to take the work forward in its initial stages?*
- *How can we ensure ownership and the active involvement of the key stakeholders throughout the process?*
- *How can we ensure productive interaction between policymakers and academics?*
- *How can we achieve a document that receives the full backing of the European Council while avoiding a drawn-out, multilateral drafting process?*

3. VALUES AND INTERESTS

The EU Treaty is quite explicit on the EU's shared values—including peace, human rights, democracy and the rule of law—which also underpin the EU's foreign policy. It is a lot less clear regarding the EU's shared interests, which obviously evolve with the progress of integration and the changing geopolitical context. The EU's current foreign policy is marked by a lack of strategic analysis and often also by a reluctance to ask hard questions about EU's collective interests. That is

² “Towards a European Global Strategy. Securing European Influence in a Changing World”, May 2013, available at <http://www.europeanglobalstrategy.eu/about>

why a strategy's main task would be to identify the key longer-term interests and the instruments to secure those interests. But the strategy should also deal with the relationship between values and interests, which is not free of tensions. A purely interest-driven policy will be short-sighted and cynical. An overly idealistic foreign policy will founder in a world built on power relationships. A lack of consistency in its approach exposes the EU to criticisms of hypocrisy and double standards. A tendency among member states to “outsource” the promotion of values to the EU (human rights dialogues), while dealing with (economic) interests themselves, can damage the EU's credibility as an international actor.

Questions:

- *How can one best identify a limited number of key common interests that cover all aspects of external relations yet are sufficiently concrete to provide guidance on policy?*
- *Should we look for issues where member states' foreign policy interests overlap, or should priorities be derived from the EU's functions and/or values?*
- *How could we equip our institutions better to provide strategic analysis and promote a more substantive debate on the EU's interests?*
- *How can the EU ensure better coherence between promoting its values and protecting its interests?*
- *How can we better engage civil society in a values-based foreign policy?*

4. NEIGHBOURING REGIONS

The EU's plan to turn its neighbourhood into a “ring of well-governed states” (Solana) with which it shares “everything but institutions” (Romano Prodi) does not seem to be in good shape at present. But any attempt to develop a policy framework applicable to countries as diverse as Belarus and Morocco was bound to be difficult. Indeed, in light of the progress of globalisation, the entire concept of neighbourhood might require a fundamental rethink. If one takes a functional approach looking at key EU interests such as energy, migration, counterterrorism and so on, then a wider concept of “neighbourhood”—including all of the Middle East, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel and Central Asia—would make more sense. If the policy were targeted at countries that have a serious desire to move closer to the EU and for which the current European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) methodology, largely derived from enlargement, would really work, then the circle of participants would be much smaller. The philosophy underlying the ENP—that partner countries share EU values and desire a development based on the European “template”—does not correspond with reality in large parts of Europe's neighbourhood. This also puts into question the “more for more” conditionality, which is supposed to be at the centre of our approach.

The EU faces fundamentally different challenges in the East and in the South. In the East, the EU appears to be sliding involuntarily into a geopolitical competition with a Russian leadership that continues to approach the common neighbourhood with a zero-sum logic. In the South, the dynamics of recent developments and the emergence of new actors threaten to reduce the EU's limited and insufficiently coherent engagement to irrelevance.

Questions:

- *Should we go beyond the current ENP framework and look at a larger “strategic” neighbourhood encompassing the regions where important EU interests are at stake?*
- *How can we reconcile the tension between the wish for a single overarching policy framework and the need for tailor-made, country-specific approaches?*
- *Should the “enlargement lite” methodology (action plans, progress reports, etc.) be reserved for countries that display a genuine commitment to moving much closer to the EU?*

- *How can we achieve more buy-in and engagement from member states in the ENP and a stronger political focus?*
- *How can conditionality be adjusted to a diverse range of partnerships?*
- *How could one upgrade regional cooperation and the multilateral dimension of ENP? (Union for the Mediterranean, Arab League, Organisation of Islamic States)*
- *In the South, how can we ensure that the EU's incentives and level of engagement are more in line with the importance of the challenges?*
- *In the East, how can we better counter Moscow's zero-sum logic by a more substantive positive-sum approach from our side?*

5. ENGAGING ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING POWERS

Although the concept of a strategic partnership is constantly used in EU discussions, its meaning has remained quite unclear. Strategic partners have jokingly been defined as countries strong enough to divide the EU. Indeed, a key challenge in these relationships is the coherence between the EU's overall relationship with a strategic partner and the bilateral relations of individual member states. The tendency of member states to prioritise their bilateral relationship with a given partner over the EU's common approach will become increasingly problematic in the longer term. In view of the changing power relationships, even the bigger EU member states will struggle to remain relevant players in their own right. If Europe wants to continue to play an important role in global decisionmaking, member states will increasingly have to combine efforts and interact with key international players through empowered common institutions. For this, we need to define clear priorities in each relationship and we should fundamentally review our methods of engaging these countries. The current dominance of the bilateral dimension (summits, etc.) is a weakness of the current approach. Cooperation on concrete regional or thematic issues should be at the heart of these partnerships.

Questions:

- *How can we ensure more coherence between the EU and member states in engaging important partner countries, and how can we engage them in a more results-oriented manner?*
- **United States:** *How can we keep the United States engaged in Europe and its neighbourhood, and how can we reinvigorate transatlantic economic and security cooperation?*
- **Russia:** *How can we overcome Moscow's zero-sum approach towards the common neighbourhood, effectively support the modernisation of the Russian economy and society, and develop a more balanced and productive relationship?*
- **China:** *How can we develop a strengthened and more balanced economic relationship, engage China more effectively on regional and international issues, and encourage it to take a lead role in safeguarding global public goods?*
- **Other emerging powers:** *How can we bring together our different priorities—energy, trade, security, environment, development—and upgrade our methods of engagement in order to build mutually beneficial partnerships?*

6. ENSURING THE FUNCTIONALITY OF GLOBALISATION AND INTERDEPENDENCE

We owe today's international infrastructure of institutions and treaties to the simpler power constellation that existed after World War II. As a result of globalisation, the need for effective multilateral cooperation has increased since the early 1990s. But the world's capacity to meet these requirements has not kept pace. Important multilateral projects such as a new climate treaty or the Doha Development Round remain blocked, while some of the existing multilateral regimes are eroding. Due to the breakdown of the traditional hierarchy of nations, the emergence of powerful new state and non-state

actors, the spread of veto possibilities, and an overall weakening of international consensus, collective action today falls short of what is needed. The author Jan Bremmer has spoken of a “G-zero world”: a world order in which no country or durable alliance of countries can meet the challenges of global leadership.

The EU’s unique experience of rules-based institutionalised cooperation on a continental scale is directly relevant for confronting this problem. The EU needs to use its influence to upgrade the effectiveness of the existing multilateral structures and to encourage the emerging powers to share stewardship for global resources and the environment. It also needs to support regional integration projects in other parts of the world. Effective multilateralism in a multipolar political context must rest on a strong foundation and the linking up of regional integration efforts.

Questions:

- *How can we reinvigorate multilateralism in a multipolar world and encourage emerging powers to support rules-based institutionalised cooperation?*
- *How can we help reform international institutions and strengthen their legitimacy?*
- *How can we counter the decline in the EU’s influence in some multilateral forums by acting in a more joined-up, coherent manner and by more active coalition-building?*
- *How can the EU encourage and support regional integration projects in other parts of the world and develop effective cooperation between these projects as a stepping-stone towards improved global governance?*

7. ENSURING PROSPERITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

With the decline in its share of world trade, the EU’s role as the leading exporter of the world’s standards and norms is also at risk. Ensuring prosperity will require more dynamic innovation and more open markets beyond Europe as well as a more resilient rules-based global economic and financial order. Secure trading routes, access to raw materials, well-functioning cybernetworks and effective measures to combat organised crime and corruption will remain important security interests in the decades ahead. But these concerns could be dwarfed by the twin challenges of energy security and climate change. Given our dependency on energy imports from politically volatile regions, the potential for turbulence is enormous. Failure to address climate change could result in a significant rise in temperatures, disrupt agricultural production, increase the frequency of natural disasters and threaten the livelihood of millions. These developments could in turn exacerbate the competition for resources and undermine regional and global stability.

Questions:

- *How can we ensure that the current tendency towards regional and bilateral trade arrangements does not lead to increased fragmentation of the world economy?*
- *How can we ensure better policy coherence between trade, development and foreign policy?*
- *How can the EU reduce its dependence on energy imports, and how can it transition towards a low-carbon and resource-efficient economy?*
- *Through measures at home and action at international level, how can the EU re-energise its leadership in the fight against climate change?*

8. FOREIGN POLICY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

A global strategy should not overlook that much of foreign policy is about individuals. Protecting the rights and fundamental freedoms of people remains the core concern of a values-based foreign policy. Safeguarding the interests of EU citizens across the globe, particularly in crisis situations, has emerged as a priority in an increasingly volatile world. Citizens' initiatives and civil society organisations have become essential partners in promoting many of the EU's objectives. Finally, individuals can also become perpetrators and as such are the target of EU sanctions and international judicial procedures.

Questions:

- *With the rise of countries that do not necessarily share the EU's human rights philosophy, how can the EU become more effective in promoting this objective bilaterally and multilaterally?*
- *How could we make our conditionality policy more consistent and effective?*
- *Is there a need for a more joined-up approach between member states and institutions in protecting EU citizens abroad?*
- *How can the EU become more responsive to, and communicate better with, civil society organisations?*

9. PROVIDING SECURITY

Europe's security environment is characterised by increasing turmoil in neighbouring regions and a United States that is pivoting to Asia and reducing its engagement in our region. Severe resource constraints aggravated by the financial crisis hamper Europe's ability to respond to these challenges. These developments call into question the progress achieved in the last decade in turning the EU into a significant security provider. At December's European Council, this situation will be discussed at the highest level. Regarding the military dimension, Olivier de France and Nick Witney summed up the crux of the problem well in a recent paper: if Europeans want to count for something in the world, they are condemned to cooperate. Effective armed forces will be among the assets they will need to deploy, and that will require biting the bullet of significantly greater mutual dependence. However, the challenge goes well beyond the military sphere. The threats evoked in Solana's ESS—weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, failed states, regional conflict and organised crime—are still with us and are complemented by new risks such as cyberattacks and the consequences of climate change. Only an EU that manages to harness its assets from different areas and has the full backing of its member states will be able to ensure the security of its citizens.

Questions:

- *How do we define the level of ambition for military and civilian crisis management?*
- *How can we achieve greater defence cooperation among the member states and address the shortfalls of enabling capabilities?*
- *How can we finally make cooperation between the EU and NATO more effective?*
- *How can we link crisis management, humanitarian assistance and development efforts as part of a comprehensive approach?*

10. BRINGING THE INSTRUMENTS TOGETHER

Foreign policy in a globalised world requires an updated methodology and a more joined-up approach. To confront challenges including climate change, cybersecurity, access to natural resources, migration flows and state failure, a successful international actor needs to bring together various instruments and integrate them into comprehensive external action. In spite of sometimes claiming the contrary, the EU has great difficulty in living up to this ambition. EU institutions often work in an uncoordinated manner and there is insufficient coherence between action on the EU and the member-state level. In order to become a credible global actor, the EU needs to overcome this fragmentation and bring its various instruments and assets together in a coherent fashion.

Questions:

- *How can we ensure that emerging external challenges are approached in a comprehensive manner from the start, taking into account all dimensions of the EU's external action?*
- *How could we use the Lisbon structures better, to allow the EEAS to serve as a platform for coordination across the board of EU external policy and to strengthen its ability to take the lead in international negotiations?*
- *How can we enhance cooperation between the EEAS and the Commission?*
- *How can we strengthen member states' sense of ownership and promote systematic teamwork between the EEAS and national diplomacies at the central level as well as in multilateral institutions and at bilateral postings?*
- *In view of the paradigm shift in development policy, is there a need to fundamentally rethink the traditional separation between development and politics?*