

TOWARDS AN EU GLOBAL STRATEGY: A Revolution for External Action?

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Today it is difficult to imagine the Europe envisaged in the often quoted opening sentence of the 2003 European Security Strategy by Javier Solana: "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free." This quote sounds cynical in today's context, when the European Union (EU)'s geopolitical situation has changed dramatically due to both domestic and external factors. The EU has faced the accession of thirteen new Member States, an economic crisis in the Eurozone and the rise of right-wing populist parties in several European countries. External dynamics are also challenging the EU's world order, such as Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, the growing stream of migrants from North Africa and Asia and the rising tide of violence from the Islamic State in the Middle East. Against this backdrop, Europe is no longer secure and there is a necessity to re-evaluate the European Security Strategy.

In December 2013, EU leaders assigned this task to the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini. She presented the report on the EU's strategic priorities for foreign and security policy at the European Council meeting on 25th and 26th of June, 2015. However, due to the dramatic events in Greece and the refugee crisis overshadowing the summit, Mogherini's document gained very little attention. Nevertheless, Mogherini was given a mandate to "continue the process of strategic reflection with a view to preparing an EU global strategy on foreign and security policy in close cooperation with Member States, to be submitted to the European Council by June 2016."

Since national governments are still crucial actors in EU foreign policy decision-making, their ownership regarding the review process is particularly important. The real litmus test for Mogherini and the European

External Action Service (EEAS) will be to encourage member states to act as constructive contributors to the drafting process, despite their immense foreign policy differences. The Hertie School of Governance, within the framework of the Dahrendorf Forum, organized an expert roundtable in July 2015 with officials from the EEAS, the German Federal Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and the German Parliament. This policy brief summarizes the key issues of the debate and the most relevant policy recommendations.

NEED FOR LONG-TERM RISK AND THREAT ASSESSMENT

Some of the key threats mentioned in the 2003 European Security Strategy and in the implementation report presented by Solana in 2008 have become increasingly significant. All have become more complex and there is a wide range of new challenges, such as hybrid wars and violation of

international law by countries which were, until recently, trusted partners. Therefore the prerequisite for a stronger European presence on the international stage is not only a review of the currently detectable risks and threats for Europe, but also a long-term assessment of challenges that might occur in the future.

Strategic thinking in European foreign policy should include the development of alternative futures for the relationship between the EU, its border regions and the core regions of the world economy in order to effectively detect future chances and risks at an early stage.

PRIORITIZE CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Undoubtedly, the crises in the world have multiplied and their sources and scope have become more complex. The EU has to manage crises both inside and outside Europe, focusing

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on strengthening its capacities in this area. In order to address various types of conflicts (terrorists attacks, financial crisis, natural disasters, use of biological and chemical weapons, religious violence in Europe, global migration crisis etc.), the EU has to enhance its ability in combining civilian and military aspects of crisis management. The Union furthermore has to reach for both the supranational mechanisms at EU level and national tools at the disposal of the Member States. The coordination of these various instruments and their implementation remains the hardest nut to crack.

Moreover, the Union should regularly collaborate with various partners across geographical boundaries as the transboundary crises require a corresponding approach in crisis management.

NEED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENTS AND POTENTIALLY MORE FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The EU Global Strategy should reconsider the instruments and financial resources at its disposal for responding to global crises. Since the security environment has changed dramatically in recent times, a process of improving existing instruments has to start. Additionally, the EU has to evaluate current financial resources at its disposal when it comes to external action. There is a need for a larger presence of EU personnel in EU delegations in order to be present on the ground to act in time of crisis. However, the budget neutrality rule regarding the establishment and

functioning of the EEAS does not leave much space for any action in this area. Moreover, the current decrease in the EU budget for global activities – from 6.4% of the EU total budget in 2013 to 5.83% in 2014 and to an expected 5.77% for 2015 – goes against the rapid rise of challenges for the Union on the international stage and should thus be reconsidered by the Member States.

COOPERATE WITH THE MEMBER STATES

The review process must consider the strategic orientation of the Member States in order to ensure not only coherence between national priorities of Member States but also the national government's commitment to the new EU Global Strategy. A prime example is the German Weißbuch, which is the supreme guideline document for security and defense policy in Germany, last published in 2006. The German defence ministry is now developing a new document based on the changed security environment over the last decade. As both documents, the EU Global Strategy and the Weißbuch, are elaborated in the same time frame and will be published in summer 2016, there should be a strong link between the European External Action Service and the German Ministry of Defence. Collaboration and coherence are indispensable in this regard.

LISTEN TO THE PEOPLE: COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EU citizens have been in favor of a common security and defence policy

since 2002, when approval ratings reached over 70 % (Eurobarometer 2002, 2003). Despite internal turbulences, this has not changed. The results of the recent poll still show strong majorities for joint EU action in terms of security and defense (over 70%) and common foreign policy (over 60%) (Eurobarometer 2013, 2014, 2015).

Thus, the EU should focus on following these explicit sentiments, especially in these troubled times. Potential objectives should be to achieve greater supranational competences, or to implement other joint action mechanisms, such as permanent structured cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS

It would have been a mistake to expect the new EU Global Strategy to be a remedy for all the ills of the EU's foreign policy. If Mogherini and her team manage to make an assessment of the Member States' divergent interests and accommodate them by developing a comprehensive picture of European global priorities, and modes of working, this will be a step forward to the strategic orientation of a bolder and more active EU foreign policy. However, the presence of a strategy does not necessarily lead to its implementation. Without a shared will for common action amongst the numerous stakeholders, the strategy will be just another document without any political relevance.

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