

Response to call for evidence House of Lords EU External Affairs Sub-Committee by Dr Federica Bicchi, Dr Nicola Chelotti, Dr Spyros Economides, and Professor Karen E Smith, 29 September 2015

The Strategic Review of the EU's Foreign and Security Policy

This written evidence is submitted by Dr Federica Bicchi, Dr Nicola Chelotti, Dr Spyros Economides and Professor Karen E. Smith in a personal capacity. We are all members of the European Foreign Policy Unit (EFPU), which is based in the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. EFPU acts as a focus for research and teaching on issues relating to European foreign policy. EFPU members are currently researching and writing on topics such as the EU's policies towards the Mediterranean region and south-eastern Europe, EU-UN relations, European diplomacy, the European External Action Service, and Security and Defence Policy. EFPU publishes working papers, and has organised conferences on European foreign policy (see <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/internationalRelations/centresandunits/EFPU/EFPUhome.aspx>).

As a preface to our responses to the specific questions posed by the Sub-Committee, we put forward our understanding of what a 'foreign and security policy strategy' should entail. Underlying any such strategy should be a clear idea of the end results the EU desires, along with a plan to achieve those. This involves the following steps:

- Agreement on the shared interests and values of the EU and its member states in the field of foreign and security policy;
- Agreement on a set of objectives derived from the shared interests and values;
- Given finite resources, prioritisation of those objectives, which in turn entails hard choices about which are to prevail;
- Assessment of the instruments and resources that are necessary to achieve those objectives within a specified time frame, decisions on directing the necessary resources to the fulfilment of the prioritised objectives and specific instruments and institutional actors devoted to implement the decisions adopted;
- A feedback loop, with regular monitoring and assessment of progress made in implementation and achieving objectives, and adjustment of priorities and resources as considered necessary.

Is the High Representative's report the right basis on which to draft the strategy proper?

We would argue that the report, while an important starting point, could have focused much more on the need to define clear goals and achieve the necessary match between ends and means in EU foreign and security policy. In addition, we think the report:

- pays too little attention to the persisting impact of the economic crisis in Europe;
- pays too little attention to implementation, a major challenge for the EU's foreign and security policy;
- does not adequately specify who the EU's neighbours are (for example, the countries of North Africa and the Middle East are neighbours, as are the countries of the Western Balkans);
- assumes that China's economic and political power will continue to grow (but it may not);
- could nonetheless stress that the diffusion of power in international relations will mean that EU member states will be better able to pursue and protect their interests and values if they work together;
- does not critically assess the extent to which the EU is really a 'global power' (in all areas, not just trade and other economic fields)
- does not assess how 'strategic partnerships' should be utilised in the pursuit of a clearer strategy;
- does not consider whether 'regional' 'geopolitics' should be the focus of EU foreign and security policy.

What are the EU's strategic interests? Do they coincide with the UK's strategic interests?

A list of the EU's strategic interests should arguably include:

- driving instead of reacting to changes, especially in terms of connectivity, flows and networks;
- maintaining stability in Europe and at the European borders, which includes finding a better way to relate to its neighbours;
- managing Europe's relative decline;
- supporting international law and multilateralism.

The UK's strategic interests are identical; there is no conflict between these wider European interests and British interests. Furthermore, outside of the EU, the UK would find it extremely challenging to protect its interests in a world that is increasingly multipolar. Given the extent of the combined resources of the EU and its member states, only when they are united will the EU member states be able to protect and promote their shared interests.

Is EU a global power?

A global power is understood here to mean an international actor (most often a state, but possibly the EU as well) that can has the resources, political will and institutional ability to project and protect its interests at the global – and not just regional – level.¹ The extent to which the EU fulfils these conditions varies by issue area. Where the EU has strong internal competence with 'supranational' decision-making procedures (for example, the areas of trade policy or environmental policy), then it can more easily muster the institutional ability and political will necessary to protect and project its interests in multilateral and bilateral negotiations, within the context of the UN, and so on. In such areas, arguably the EU is a global power.

In addition, the EU has been a model worldwide for regional cooperation and integration, and for fostering reconciliation and peace-building among its member states (for which it was awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize). The difficulties that the EU has had in resolving the euro crisis, the Greek debt crisis, and the current 'migration crisis' have, however, dented international perceptions of the EU as a model, although it has shown a distinctive ability to undertake difficult political conversations between its member states (contrary e.g. to the silence of Arab countries in relation to the 'migration crisis').

With respect to those areas covered by the intergovernmental framework, such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the answer to the question is less clear-cut. Intergovernmental decision-making affects the resources, will and ability of the EU to project its interests at global level. Thus, for numerous reasons including lack of will and lack of resources, the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy has mainly produced relatively low-key and small civilian missions, mainly in its neighbourhood and in Africa. The EU has not, for example, boosted the UN's capacity to maintain international peace and security, and could not remotely match NATO's capabilities to defend Europe from security threats. In Asia, it is hardly a central or important political or security actor. As such, then, it is not a 'global power' in security and defence.

Should EU focus resources on neighbourhood?

It is imperative that the EU re-focus resources on its neighbourhood, understood here to include the countries of the western Balkans and Turkey (so pre-accession countries), the sixteen countries included in the EU's European Neighbourhood Policy, and the neighbours of the neighbours such as Russia, Iran, Iraq, and countries in the Sahel region and the Gulf Cooperation Council. The EU is now surrounded by an 'arc of crisis', and the effects on the EU itself have been dramatic. The conflicts in the region have created serious security threats (terrorist groups in particular) and the current refugee crisis, one of the largest in post-war history. The EU has a clear security interest to try to resolve those conflicts and ensure security in its neighbourhood. Furthermore, many of the countries where populations are most at risk of atrocities are in

¹ Based on the definition of a 'pole' in Luk Van Langenhove, *The EU as a Global Actor in a Multipolar World and Multilateral 2.0 Environment*, Egmont Paper 36 (Brussels: Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, March 2010).

the EU's periphery (Syria; Sudan; South Sudan; Central Africa Republic; Iraq; Libya) so in addition to the security imperatives, there is also arguably a moral and legal imperative for the EU to try to stop and prevent atrocities. The need for EU engagement is thus clear, and the EU will not have credibility as a 'global actor' if it does not seriously try to address the multiple, multi-faceted challenges in its own neighbourhood.

There is considerable scope for re-focusing resources. For example: in 2013, the EU gave aid to almost 150 countries; it conducts regular political dialogues with almost every country on earth; the EU (the Foreign Affairs Council; the EEAS; the High Representative) issues hundreds of foreign policy statements each year on issues ranging from human rights in Guatemala to the Iranian nuclear issue. Engaging in all of these activities inevitably dissipates the attention and resources of the EU. If there were a sustained re-focussing of resources and attention on the wider neighbourhood, then the EU could bring to bear considerable power and leverage which could enable it to contribute more adequately to addressing the crises on its borders.

The disadvantages of a privileged focus on the neighbourhood are twofold, but both worth paying for. First, in the current economic climate, such a strategy would divert resources from other dossiers. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it would dent discourses about Europe as a global power in the short to mid-term. It would become more difficult to sustain a European position on development if aid to developing countries were to be severely cut. In the mid to long term, this strategy could however provide a more solid basis for global claims and show how Europe can be a source of stability also for non-members. Second, and more importantly, member states are deeply divided about how to address the EU neighbourhood and to respond to a variety of challenges including Russia's foreign policy stance, migration in the Mediterranean, and economic development in neighbouring countries. A foreign policy strategy centred on the neighbourhood would entail a lot of work to identify common goals and all member states would have to commit firmly to those goals if they are to succeed. The current discussion on migration is exemplary of the problems a focus on the neighbourhood entails.

What are the EU's interests in the MENA region? How effective have the EU and Member States been in promoting them?

The EU's interests in the MENA region remain to create an area of shared prosperity, peace and security. However, the neighbourhood is less stable, considerably less secure and facing a more profound economic crisis than when the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched.² This is not because of the EU, as the instability in the area has very deep roots. However, the EU has been unable to make a real difference and lacks a political vision. Current instruments are clearly inadequate and the ENP is under revision.

In the short term, the main imperative is peace and security. This entails finding a solution to the conflict in Syria and the instability in Libya, as well as addressing the erosion of state control in other, large parts of the area (Sahel, Sinai, Lebanon). Moreover, if the Palestinian Authority were to stop cooperating with Israel, this would create a 'perfect storm' with the potential to unleash a regional war. The challenge is how to strengthen states and promote peace without strengthening authoritarian regimes, an issue on which member states have different views and this have led countries such as the UK and France to operate outside the EU framework in the case of Libya, although not with the hoped-for result.

In the long term, the objective must be shared prosperity. Peace and security are not sustainable if there is no shared prosperity. Since the Arab spring, the EU has emphasised 'sustainable development,' which means including all areas of the Southern Mediterranean countries into developmental plans. This should be expanded to 'shared development,' as in Euro-Mediterranean development, and must see the EU make more concessions, especially in the field of agriculture. Southern European countries are opposed to this, but their argument is very narrow. Instead, agriculture and shared prosperity are crucial to provide a positive

² Committee on Foreign Affairs / European Parliament, *Report on the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, 19 June 2015 (2015/2002(INI))

path for youth in the periphery that risk otherwise being lured into extremism just for lack of alternatives. Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade negotiations, on the contrary, are premature.

Member states and the EU have been calling for a policy to address the ‘root causes’ of insecurity and to offer ‘tailor made responses’ to the countries in the region. What would that involve? Does the EU have the foreign policy toolkit to deliver on this policy?

The EU has for some time sought to implement a ‘comprehensive approach’ to development and security, which address the full cycle of conflict policy from early warning through to post-conflict peacebuilding, as well as drawing from the whole spectrum of EU instruments, from economic to military. In theory, the EU has a wide range of instruments that can deliver on such an approach – more and better than most actors in international politics, including NATO. Challenges to implementing the comprehensive approach so far include those of: coordination across policy areas (foreign policy; migration policy; trade policy; defence policy; and so on), the relevant EU bureaucracies and the member states; prioritisation and consequent implications for re-focussing of resources; the tendency for crisis management to crowd out prevention; effective engagement with other international actors. Despite this, the potential of the EU to address root causes of insecurity is vast, and arguably larger than most other international actors. The recent re-thinking of the Security Strategy and of the ENP is going in the direction of making a better use of all EU instruments. One case where the EU has arguably been able to tackle a complex crisis in a multifaceted manner is the fight against piracy in the horn of Africa, where a variety of instruments (naval operation, legal action, development assistance) have been employed.

How can EU most effectively maximise its power – both hard and soft – in international affairs?

Soft power is arguably key here. As originally conceived by Joseph Nye,³ soft power is the power of attraction, and emanates from the attractiveness of a state’s (or the EU’s) culture, political values and foreign policies. It is different to what Nye calls ‘command power’, or the use of coercion or inducement. Soft power encourages others to do what you want them to do, because they want to follow your example, and is therefore a less costly way of attaining desired outcomes than the use of command power.

As Smith has argued elsewhere,⁴ the EU is a powerful model for the rest of the world: neighbouring countries wish to accede to it rather than balance or resist it, and other regional groupings around the world seek to emulate it. EU foreign policies in support of international law and multilateralism generate good will. The EU’s member states are all relatively rich democracies, with high levels of human rights protection and active civil societies, and a magnificent cultural heritage. The EU, in other words, benefits from considerable soft power – despite the euro crisis, which has damaged the EU’s standing and credibility in the eyes of many observers around the world. The current internal contestation of the EU (in many EU member states) is damaging to its influence abroad as the EU’s attractiveness to outsiders reflects its attractiveness to insiders.

The EU has considerable command power resources at its disposal, though as argued above, these could be better focused and prioritised. These include its large aid budget, trading power, CSDP capabilities, and diplomatic networks. The way the EU’s command power is used can damage EU soft power: for example, when conditionality is not credible because the EU does not use it against autocratic regimes, or when the EU appears to be making demands on third countries solely to satisfy its own interests (such as preventing asylum seekers from reaching its shores).

Is EU an effective multilateral player?

³ Joseph S Nye, Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

⁴ Karen E. Smith, 'Is the European Union's Soft Power in Decline?', *Current History*, vol. 113, no. 741, March 2014.

'Effective' here is taken to mean the EU's ability to reach its goals and promote its interests in multilateral fora. This varies according to the issue area. In the area of trade, for example, the EU is able to promote its interests, though the growth of other trading powers is challenging. In the area of environmental policy and specifically climate change policy, the EU has been less able to counter the opposition and resistance of key players, though its internal goals and policies in this area constitute a standard by which other international actors are measured. In the area of international human rights protection, the EU has also found it difficult to counter resistance to its views in fora such as the UN Human Rights Council.

The limitations to EU effectiveness as a multilateral player are both internal and external. Although its negotiating capacity has improved over time (particularly with improvements made since the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty), 'outreach' – engaging with non-EU states – can still be a struggle: so much time can be spent reaching internal EU agreements that engagement with outsiders is limited. In other cases, like the Middle East Peace Process, 'outreach' (in this case keeping the United States involved) can become more important than impact. Furthermore, any EU position is inherently rigid, because revising it would mean re-opening the internal bargains that produced it – though again since the Lisbon Treaty the EU delegations in New York and Geneva have a bit more flexibility now in negotiations with outsiders. The external limits to EU effectiveness are primarily posed by the fact that multilateral settings provide all actors with a voice. 'Rising powers' are increasingly successful in demanding more representation and voting power in key institutions (such as the IMF), which will inevitably mean European/EU representation is relatively less important, and therefore the EU will need to be more persuasive and flexible if it wishes to achieve its objectives in multilateral settings.

How can the interests of Member States be more effectively translated into EU action?

How can the links between national capitals and the EU be strengthened in external affairs?

Despite the intergovernmental system of EU foreign and defence policy, which can potentially block decision-making, national diplomats based in Brussels are usually extremely good in striking fair balances between the interests of the national capitals and an effective operation of the EU machinery. They play a major part in making the whole system work smoothly: they understand what needs to be done to promote national interests while following, at the same time, the consensual norms in Brussels. Here, the links between national capitals and their Permanent Representations are crucial: the national capital needs to give clear directions, while also allowing some flexibility to their representatives. In these aspects of the negotiations process, there is the potential to influence EU policies. Some countries (including the UK) sometimes give rather rigid instructions to their negotiators: this can be counter-productive and make member states' initiatives less effective.

Building good connections with the EEAS is important aspect if the interests of the member states are to be translated into EU action. One example: EU foreign policy is constructed on the basis of papers prepared and circulated by the EEAS. In these papers, they write down options, exclude alternatives, etc. All this work forms the basis of the discussions in which national delegations engage. In order to build solid ties with the EEAS, credibility, flexibility and a cooperative spirit can be important assets.

How would you assess the diplomatic and intelligence capacities of the EU and Member States? Does the Union have the expertise and capacity within its institutions and national foreign services to respond to a more complex and complicated security environment?

This is a vital point. If Europe is to be relevant in the future international context, it is because it has better ideas, and better ideas necessarily rely on information and political analysis. To do so, member states and the EU need to strengthen cooperation and see the use of more resources as an investment in the future. While taken together the EU and member states have the necessary expertise and capacity, their cooperation is limited and dramatically under-resourced. Member states, especially smaller ones, tend to

rely on the EU for the provision of political analysis and intelligence (based on the elaboration mainly of open sources). The creation of the EEAS⁵ and the strengthening of EU Delegations in non-EU countries have helped the EU to develop its political analysis skills, but a clearer plan and more resources are needed to make this flow of information more substantial and valuable (e.g. security experts in EU Delegation, clearer and stronger relations between crises rooms including outside the EU, common training, etc.). Larger member states (including and especially the UK) have often been tempted not to engage in conversations that would entail sharing information. However, this limits synergies on vital dossiers such as counter-terrorism, country analysis, scenario developments for regions at risk, etc. and it further curtails the UK's capacity to influence the direction of the other 27 member states' foreign policies.

Is the practice of ad-hoc groupings of Member states a useful template for future EU foreign policy? How could it be strengthened? What are the disadvantages of this approach?

Ad-hoc groupings are here to stay and they can be advantageous as long as they are linked to the EU. Several more or less formal groupings already exist, such as the Visegrad and Scandinavian groups. They can be faster, more effective ways of identifying options and responsibilities, and of involving non-EU members (such as the US, Switzerland, Norway, and so on) in diplomatic conversations. They work to the benefit of all EU member states when they are transparent and there is regular reporting within the EU framework to non-participants. If this is not the case, they can cause duplication of efforts and fragmentation.

How would you assess the flow of information between member states and between national capitals and the EU? What are the hurdles to deepening intelligence sharing within the Union?

The flow of information is largely a one-way street from the EU to member states, which means that it is mainly based on open-source information and the political analysis provided by EU officials. This is good, as it provides a common basis for discussion. However, the quality of the political analysis is limited by its open-source nature and depends largely on the quality of a small team of officials, which can vary from excellent to average according to the subject. Another aspect is that the amount of information available is very broad, and national and EU officials (both in Brussels and in third countries) are often unable to process it in-depth. Again, clearer plans, better organised structures and more resources would help in this direction.

Some of the hurdles to deeper intelligence-sharing are unavoidable, but not all. Intelligence sharing between 28 member states is a huge task and confidentiality is constantly at risk. A few changes could bring substantial improvement, though, such as the upgrading of key technical facilities for intelligence sharing, the quality of political reporting, the prioritisation of political analyses with high added value, the sharing of lessons learned across EU institutions and across the spectrum of EU foreign policy actors, to name but a few. The current reorganisation of the EEAS crisis management structure under the new Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and Crisis Response might provide some of the answers and should be supported.

How should the review address resourcing?

As indicated above, a strategy should indicate the level of resources necessary and available to achieve the prioritised objectives. This will illustrate resource constraints and thus that hard choices must be made, but also reveal the opportunities to refocus and maximise resources for the pursuit of priorities. In an ideal world, the EU's budget for 'global Europe' would be agreed in conjunction with a new strategy, thus allowing the EU to match resources to priorities more efficiently and effectively; the current situation is unsatisfactory as there is a mismatch between the setting of foreign policy priorities and the debates on the EU budget (and particularly on the 7-year financial frameworks).

⁵ Overall, after a slow start and despite the need for further improvements (also after and beyond the July 2013 review), the EEAS has established itself as a serious and competent actor in Brussels; and its work has been evaluated in a largely positive way by the member states, especially when compared to the six-month cycle of the Presidencies.