

# Walking the Strategic Talk. A Progressive EU Foreign Policy Agenda Conference Report

by Matteo Bonomi



Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
and International Cooperation

## ABSTRACT

The report summarises the results of the final conference of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) Watch project, which was held in Brussels on 9 October 2019. The event offered the opportunity to present a recent FEPS-IAI study and expound both progress and disappointments in implementation of the EUGS. The future of a progressive EU foreign policy agenda was discussed with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini as well as with experts, European and national institutional representatives, members of the European Parliament and decision-makers. The EUGS has provided a general blueprint for how the EU is to respond to today's challenges, serving also as the framework through which this strategic vision would be put in practice. Nevertheless, the strategic reflection on the future of the EU's international role is an unfinished job, and time is ripe for the EU to express its global agency more visibly and more effectively to citizens within and outside Europe.

*European Union | EUGS | PSDC | Western Balkans | Multilateralism*

**keywords**

## Walking the Strategic Talk. A Progressive EU Foreign Policy Agenda Conference Report

by Matteo Bonomi\*

Three years after the launch of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) and ahead of the 2019 institutional renewal of the EU, a clear and frank conversation aimed at expounding both progress and disappointments in implementation of the EUGS appears as urgent as ever. This was the objective of the discussion held in Brussels on 9 October,<sup>1</sup> closing the EUGS Watch project led by the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI). The conference offered the opportunity to discuss with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini and to gather the opinions of experts, European and national institutional representatives, members of the European Parliament and decision-makers, in order to assess the future of a progressive EU foreign policy agenda. The project as well as this final conference were supported by the European Parliament, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Compagnia di San Paolo – International Affairs Programme.

**László Andor**, Secretary General of FEPS, introduced the event, which reviewed and built upon the EUGS Watch project's final report.<sup>2</sup> **Vassilis Ntousas**, Senior International Relations Policy Advisor at FEPS, presented an overview of the findings of the report, including ten policy recommendations for the future EU foreign policy agenda. As we look forward to the next qualitative leap the Union needs to make to respond to a world that has become more tumultuous, the recent FEPS-IAI report draws from and expands on the findings of a year-long research project, in order to offer insights in three key areas: (1) outlining some of the

<sup>1</sup> For more details, see IAI website: <https://www.iai.it/en/node/10736>.

<sup>2</sup> Nicoletta Pirozzi and Vassilis Ntousas, *Walking the Strategic Talk. A Progressive EU Foreign Policy Agenda for the Future*, Brussels, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and Rome, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), May 2019, <https://www.iai.it/en/node/10311>.

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critical insecurity trends that have negatively impacted the EU's capacity to navigate through the emerging realities of diversified threats and multiplying conflicts, both within and beyond European borders; (2) briefly taking stock of some of the EU Global Strategy's greatest achievements and limitations in promoting a Europe that stands, speaks and acts together in its foreign policy; and (3) providing concrete recommendations in ten critical areas where the Union needs to walk the strategic talk embodied in the Global Strategy – more boldly, with more unity and in a more progressive direction.



Conference participants.

Among the main recommendations, it is worth underlining the need to *add flexibility to avoid institutional paralysis*, by introducing qualified majority voting on foreign policy matters and identifying options for differentiated cooperation and integration with candidate and partner countries. Moreover, the time has come to *get the European defence architecture right*, in particular by restructuring the current intergovernmental institutional framework with the creation of a Council of Defence Ministers chaired by the HR/VP and supported by the Steering Board of the European Defence Agency, while the European Commission should provide much-needed resources, and a defence committee in the European Parliament could exercise proper oversight on capability development and missions. In addition, the EU should *actively work to reform global governance and transform the multilateral system*, by improving all the elements that do not work through a functional yet principled approach, starting from those areas where Europe can set universal standards, e.g., climate and digital technologies.

In her keynote speech,<sup>3</sup> HR/VP **Federica Mogherini** highlighted that *the basic idea of EUGS has always been to move from vision to action, or "to walk the strategic talk"* – to use the language of the FEPS-IAI report. Still, today's challenges are multiple and evident. Whereas there is definitive need for a progressive foreign policy agenda, it appears, now more than ever, that the space for progressive ideas and multilateralism is shrinking, due to rivalry and competition between great powers. Therefore, it is imperative for the EU to offer a credible alternative to current trends. Against the temptations of looking backward at reactionary concepts or towards a purely conservative vision of international affairs, *a truly progressive foreign policy agenda should be about shaping a more cooperative international*

<sup>3</sup> See European External Action Service (EEAS), *Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Conference "Walking the Strategic Talk. A Progressive EU Foreign Policy Agenda for the Future"*, Brussels, 9 October 2019, <https://europa.eu/!un87yp>. A video of this speech is available in YouTube: *Legacy Speech by HR Federica Mogherini*, <https://youtu.be/hVyuHpCjR8A>.



Federica Mogherini.

governance. It should preserve the achievements of the past, but at the same time should always try to build on them and move one step forward. In other words, the HR/VP reaffirmed that *defence and transformation of the global system should go hand in hand and work together along flexible lines*, counteracting the emergence of different scenarios and framing opportunities that can occur.

This approach can be exemplified by HR/VP's commitment and action to preserve and transform multilateralism throughout her entire mandate, despite the radically different phases experienced by the international order during the last five years. At the beginning of her five years in office, in fact, EU external action was able to contribute to an expansionary phase of multilateralism. Back in 2015 and 2016, the EU helped in building a new wave of multilateral agreements such as the Paris agreement on climate change, the Sustainable Development Goals under the UN umbrella and the nuclear deal with Iran. Within such a context, the EU tried to use the opportunity that was opened with the Iranian deal, and also to set up a new regional and global environment to address the Syrian crisis. Just a few days after the agreement with Iran was reached, the international Syrian support group was established with a fundamental contribution from the EU. This was notable for being the first time ever that the international community was able to gather all relevant actors and regional players on the Syrian front at the same table. However, after this phase of expansion, a contraction phase of multilateralism has followed. In this second phase, it was natural for Europeans to work to preserve their achievements with great investments into saving cooperation with partners and preserving the UN system that was going through a very serious crisis.

Against this backdrop, the HR/VP gave the example of *four progressive ideas that have shaped the EU's approach to global governance*:

First, *always trying to open new space for multilateral dialogue*, even when dialogue and cooperation seem to be impossible. This is what the EU has done, for instance, with the international contact group for Venezuela, but also for Afghanistan and Libya.

Second, *holding a partnership approach*. Clearly there is need for a true partnership with Africa. The EU has finally moved from the idea of working *for* Africa to one of working *with* Africa. This has helped build trust and respect, move away from the donor-recipient approach, and recognise a true political partnership with Africa. This has happened in all fields – not only in humanitarian aid, development cooperation and migration, but also in new sectors including the digital realm, women's empowerment, youth and the environment. This is the result of work



the EU has done with the African Union but also bilaterally with single countries and through the trilateral format among the African Union, the EU and the UN. The same logic has been applied to other partnerships in Southeast Asia and South America. A progressive foreign policy is about building partnerships and coalitions with those who share our values and our interests. In line with the Global Strategy, investing in the strength of your friends, partners and neighbours is also a way of strengthening yourself. This has never been more evident than in the world of today.



Federica Mogherini.

Third, a progressive foreign policy is about *joining our interests and our values*. Progressive EU values do not at all contradict EU strategic interests. On the contrary, they serve and support each other. Protecting human rights is – obviously – the key value for the EU, and it is also essential for sustainable peace and security. The concept of sustainable security is indeed probably the best example of how values and interests can be joined. Civil society, environment, education and women's rights should remain at the core of EU policy – not only because this is right, but also because it is what works better to achieve sustainable development and security.

Finally, there is the need for a *progressive foreign policy that is inclusive toward every sector of society*, beyond restricted groups of diplomats and foreign policy experts. Inclusivity and representativeness not only make decisions more democratic, but facilitate implementation of any agreement to better stand the test of time. Multilateralism is about bringing more voices to the table, and this ought to happen beyond governments, institutions and international organisations. For the reality on the ground to change, there is no need for two strong men to shake hands and sign an agreement, but for the plurality of actors in society to be involved. What we need is a *fully participatory diplomacy*.

Today there is no bigger global actor than the EU to stand for and promote progressive and multilateral global policy of this sort. A more cooperative global governance needs the EU to take responsibility as a global power and as a point of reference. This is also part of the EU's strategic autonomy, which requires the ability to act when it comes to military action – when necessary and always in a multilateral framework. But it goes beyond military action; it is also about the EU's ability to shape the rules of the international economic system, with an independent and principled trade policy. It is about raising international standards in all fields, from labour to data protection. It is about having a strong euro. These are all issues that are not traditionally foreign policy issues per se, but in the world of today no issue is

purely domestic and everything has a global projection that can be used by the EU to build a more recognisable and even more assertive role in the world. No European nation state can do it alone. Perhaps this was not the case five years ago, but it is self-evident today. *Together, as the EU, we have the power to be a global shaper.*



From left to right: Nicoletta Pirozzi, Michael Peel, Florence Gaub, Hervé Delphin, Nathalie Tocci.

The second part of the conference offered the opportunity to discuss the impact of the EUGS and the future of EU foreign policy with **Nathalie Tocci**, Director of the IAI, **Florence Gaub**, Deputy Director of the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), **Hervé Delphin**, Head of the Strategic Policy Planning Division at the European External Action Service (EEAS) and **Michael Peel**, European diplomatic correspondent for the Financial Times. The panel was chaired by **Nicoletta Pirozzi**, Head of the "EU Politics and Institutions" Programme and Institutional Relations Manager at IAI.

Regarding the *achievements of the EUGS*, four points clearly emerged:

The first, perhaps most obvious, achievement of the EUGS is in the area of *security and defence policy*. The long list of initiatives, starting from the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and the European Defence Fund (EDF), that have been put in place over the last three years may sound obscure, even irrelevant, to many outside observers. However, considering Europe's history and how difficult it has been to make even the tiniest move on defence, these have been historical steps towards building an EU defence architecture.

The second main area of achievement has to do with the *method of work*. The outgoing HR/VP emphasised strongly her role as Vice-President of the Commission. When she started office, these two heads did not work well together. Nowadays, the so called "joint approach" to foreign policy embedded in the double-hatted HR/VP and in the cooperation between institutions in Brussels plays a far greater role in how foreign policy is made within the EU.

The third area where achievements have been made is in *finding ways to combine principles and pragmatism*. In this context, the work that has been done in resilience building in the EU's neighbourhood, from Ukraine to Africa, must be recalled.

The fourth area of progress concerns the debate about *strategic autonomy*. If we look at where Europeans were just five years ago, the kind of conversation about strategic autonomy that we have today is revolutionary. The EUGS was able to capture world dynamics and conceptualise them in a new strategic approach for the EU. This evolution was triggered by the realisation that a series of events was curving the EU's capacity to act, including Chinese economic activism, Russia's

interference through cyber and hybrid threats in EU territory, or indeed uneven and unpredictable trajectories in transatlantic relations. All this created the conditions for this conversation on strategic autonomy to start.

Obviously, *there is a lot more to be done*. In the area of security and defence, the very first priority should be *putting our money where our mouth is*. This means, in the context of the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), putting 13 billion euro into funds for defence and another 6.5 billion euro into military mobility, as well as increasing the foreign policy budget by 30 per cent, Brexit notwithstanding. This is necessary, since foreign policy requires a lot of resources. We have to make sure that all the different bits and bobs that we have put in place actually work coherently. Most importantly, we really have to *make EU action in peace and security matters more visible*. This is one line where we have an incredible access to credit with the European public, which wants to see more European defence. That credit line will not be open forever.

Secondly, we need to *focus on the Western Balkans*. In the last five years, we have woken up to see a reality that is not characterised by an inexorable path toward Europeanisation, modernisation and democratisation. On the contrary, we realised that conflicts can reignite and reforms can actually reverse. And the world, including Russia, China and the Arab States, has not been sitting and watching. This is the moment for the EU to act and *offer concrete options to the states in the region*, particularly given the fragility of the achievements that have been made so far.

Thirdly, *multilateralism should be preserved and strengthened, inside and outside the EU*. At home, this means reviving multilateralism within the EU: empowering member states to act for the European Union, not only through the creation of contact groups but through the connection of such groups, which need to be varied in composition depending on issues and timing. Moreover, contact groups need to have an institutional link to the rest of the EU institutional structures, in order to include member states that could otherwise feel excluded. Externally, the EU should build on its good examples, such as the E3 on Iran or the contact group on Venezuela. The basic idea should be to forge multilateral coalitions and cash in on all the investment that has been put into building international relationships over the last five years.

Finally, *the conversation on strategic autonomy must continue*, in order to define what the EU wants to be. In fact, it would be a mistake to understand strategic autonomy as defence only. The whole debate about strategic autonomy has more



From left to right: László Andor, Maria João Rodrigues, Federica Mogherini, Nathalie Tocci, Nicoletta Pirozzi, Vassilis Ntousas.

to do with the coming of age of Europe as a strategic collective. Strategic autonomy has at least five ingredients, and defence is just one of them. There are also territorial components as well as the need for well-functioning core institutions, strengthened economic sovereignty, and the full availability of diplomatic means. Full strategic autonomy implies all these elements taken together, and there is clearly a lot of work that still has to be done.

The EUGS has provided a general blueprint for how Europe is to respond to today's challenges, serving also as the framework through which this strategic vision would be put in practice. Nevertheless, the strategic reflection on the future of the EU's international role is an unfinished job, and time is ripe for the EU to express its global agency more visibly and more effectively to citizens within and outside Europe.

*Updated 30 October 2019*



## Conference Programme

Brussels, 9 October 2019

### Introductory Remarks

**László Andor**, Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)

### Paper Presentation

*"5 Policy Recommendations for a Europe that Walks the Strategic Talk"*

**Vassilis Ntousas**, Senior International Relations Policy Advisor, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), Stavros Niarchos Foundation Academy Fellow, Chatham House

### Keynote Speech

**Federica Mogherini**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission

### Q&A

Moderator **László Andor**, Secretary General, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)

### Panel Discussion

*A Progressive EU Foreign Policy Agenda for the Future*

Chair **Nicoletta Pirozzi**, Head, EU, Politics and Institutions Programme and Institutional Relations Manager, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

Panelists **Nathalie Tocci**, Director, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)  
**Florence Gaub**, Deputy Director, EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)  
**Hervé Delphin**, Head of the Strategic Policy Planning Division, European External Action Service (EEAS)  
**Michael Peel**, European diplomatic correspondent for the Financial Times

## Walking the Strategic Talk. A Progressive EU Foreign Policy Agenda for the Future

### Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)

The Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) is a private, independent non-profit think tank, founded in 1965 on the initiative of Altiero Spinelli. IAI seeks to promote awareness of international politics and to contribute to the advancement of European integration and multilateral cooperation. Its focus embraces topics of strategic relevance such as European integration, security and defence, international economics and global governance, energy, climate and Italian foreign policy; as well as the dynamics of cooperation and conflict in key geographical regions such as the Mediterranean and Middle East, Asia, Eurasia, Africa and the Americas. IAI publishes an English-language quarterly (*The International Spectator*), an online webzine (*Affarinternazionali*), three book series (*Global Politics and Security*, *Quaderni IAI* and *IAI Research Studies*) and some papers' series related to IAI research projects (*Documenti IAI*, *IAI Papers*, etc.).

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- 19 | 17 Michele Nones, Paola Sartori e Andrea Aversano Stabile, *La difesa missilistica e l'Italia: vecchie minacce e nuove sfide per la sicurezza nazionale*
- 19 | 16 Filippo Cutrera, *Priorità italiane dopo 70 anni di Nato*
- 19 | 15 Andrea Lezzi, *Comunicazione social dei partiti e narrazione euroscettica nelle europee 2019*
- 19 | 14 Nicola Casarini and Lorenzo Mariani (eds), *Between "America First" and the "Chinese Dream": What the EU and Japan Can Do Together*
- 19 | 13 Sonia Lucarelli, Alessandro Marrone and Francesco N. Moro (eds), *Approaches to Regional Stability and the Outlook for NATO*
- 19 | 12 Andrea Aversano Stabile, *NATO's 70th Birthday: Family Matters at Stake*
- 19 | 11 Luca Barana, *EU-Turkey Cooperation on Migration Management: Going Beyond Ad-hoc Short-Termism*
- 19 | 10 Nico Frandi, *WTO and Geopolitical Changes. Multilateralism and Coalitions of Members among Crises, Adaptation to Change and Rebirth*



# WALKING THE STRATEGIC TALK

*by Nicoletta Pirozzi and Vassilis Ntousas*

A PROGRESSIVE  
EU FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA  
FOR THE FUTURE









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# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CARD</b>	Coordinated Annual Review on Defence
<b>CDP</b>	Capability Development Plan
<b>CSDP</b>	Common Security and Defence Policy
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>EDA</b>	European Defence Agency
<b>EDF</b>	European Defence Fund
<b>EEAS</b>	European External Action Service
<b>EPF</b>	European Peace Facility
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUGS</b>	European Union Global Strategy
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HRVP</b>	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission
<b>JCPOA</b>	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
<b>MFF</b>	Multiannual Financial Framework
<b>NATO</b>	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
<b>NDICI</b>	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
<b>IGAD</b>	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>PESCO</b>	Permanent Structured Cooperation
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SSR</b>	Security Sector Reform
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years the international environment has experienced a much higher degree of turbulence than in the past few decades. From the spectacular renaissance of great power competition to the growing winds blowing towards nationalism and authoritarianism, this has been an era of extreme fluidity and rancour.

The European Union (EU) has not been immune to most of these challenges. Yet, for years, the pace and extensity of external change outstripped the steps that were taken towards enhancing and strengthening the EU's capacity to respond effectively to the (f)actors affecting its principles and interests. The EU's external action all too often proved despondent, fragmented and out-of-sync with the realities that Europe was facing, hampered by an uneven process of differentiation, an internationalisation of many external insecurities, an externalisation of its internal deadlocks and a milieu of unfavourable global dynamics.

The unveiling of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) in 2016 by Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP), constituted a tremendously significant effort to rectify this. As a strategic document, the EUGS provided a general blueprint as to how Europe is to respond to these challenges, serving also as the framework through which this strategic vision would be put in practice.

Now, with the Strategy's limitations evident after three years of implementation, but also with its achievements well documented, the EUGS can be acknowledged to have offered a roadmap of progress, unevenly but steadily, followed through.

The EUGS marked a paradigm shift, particularly with reference to the growing importance of the nexus between internal and external security, providing an important contribution towards the adaptation of the EU's understanding of security to the emerging realities of the threat landscape encircling or engulfing Europe. Despite the progress achieved here, which was particularly pertinent in terms of the civilian dimension of EU security and defence policy, and in the Union's efforts at addressing key hybrid threats, operationalisation obstacles have persisted in the form of diverse mentalities, as well as

competing priorities, that in turn led to an unbalanced allocation of policy attention and resources.

The Global Strategy has also provided a notable boost to the implementation of an integrated EU approach to conflict and crises, in particular by recognising the need to develop a full spectrum of capabilities and by triggering significant progress in the field of defence to transform the Union from a "military dwarf" to a reliable security actor. At the same time, however, and despite the impetus provided by the Strategy, the EU's track record has been inconsistent in this domain, mainly due to its internal divergences and the lack of a coherent policy design and implementation strategy.

A similar level of unevenness has characterised the EU's policy performance in upholding multilateralism and reforming global governance. The experience of the last three years has certainly validated the Strategy's strong focus on multilateralism and global governance, due to the fact that the strain placed on the system as currently functioning has been delivered not only by some of its known antagonists but also by hitherto champions of it. Nonetheless, the ambition described in the document has not translated in a symmetrical manner into the level and urgency of action envisioned, with the EU often found lacking in its practical defence of multilateralism in several policy areas.

Finally, the Strategy's call to make the EU's external action more joined-up has also met with mixed results. The Strategy has correctly pointed out the different strands of an effective joined-up approach, focusing on policy coherence, flexible funding and communication consistency. Policy, financial and institutional seeds have been planted to make the EU speak and act unitarily on the world stage, but their blooming has depended and will continue to depend for the foreseeable future on the level of commitment of the institutions in Brussels and Member States to act as strategically advised by the EUGS: overcoming the silo mentality and avoiding internal competition.

In light of the above, the need for credible steps towards bucking many of the negative trends currently unfolding is not a thought experiment. Rather, it is an urgent neces-



sity, not least because there is a profound Realpolitik element to it. Europe not only risks becoming a more irrelevant international actor, it crucially risks losing much of its capacity even to have a seat at the table, being increasingly squeezed between global giants.

The changes that are needed to rectify this are not simple, but multi-layered and multi-directional.

This report, the result of a one-year study, provides 10 concrete policy recommendations, delineating a progressive to-do list in order for the EU to finally walk the strategic talk embodied in the EU Global Strategy, transforming itself from a regional actor in search of a global reach, to a global actor enjoying the confidence, coherence, capability and ambition the Union needs and deserves.

### **1. Adding flexibility into a coherent foreign policy mix**

In order to avoid lengthy periods of institutional paralysis, qualified majority voting needs to be now introduced in matters relating to foreign and security policy, starting with decisions related to human rights and civilian missions. Furthermore, models based on flexible integration and cooperation should be also applied to foreign and security policy. In parallel, it is also necessary to find institutional solutions that make differentiated integration sustainable in terms of governance and accountable to the European citizens.

### **2. Balancing strategic autonomy and global agency**

It is imperative to conceptualise a much broader definition of strategic autonomy than just its undeniable link to security and defence. Strategic autonomy cannot be disconnected from a broader foreign policy strategy and it should therefore extend to and encompass other areas, such as trade, economics, energy and digital policy. In order to exercise its autonomy the EU should be able to preserve its unity and to strike a balance between the autonomous articulation of its agency in various policy domains at the international level, its engagement with strategic partners, and its commitments in the context of global governance arrangements.

### **3. Transforming, not just defending, multilateralism**

The EU has to strengthen the resilience of multilateralism and this entails asserting a stronger agency vis-à-vis its strategic partners in its effort to defend the system. Defending multilateralism does not mean upholding all the pathologies of the existing system; instead, it means actively working to transform this system, by improving all the elements that do not function. In order to be effective in the reform of global governance, a functional yet principled approach to multilateralism might be beneficial, starting from those areas where Europe can set universal standards, e.g. climate and digital.

### **4. Relaunching peacebuilding**

The EU needs to be able to face existing security challenges by designing and implementing a more effective peacebuilding strategy and developing an integrated approach to crises. Three elements are necessary in this regard: an enhanced inter-agency coordination, a more flexible set of financial instruments and the creation of integrated civil–military chains of command for EU missions. Moreover, the professionalisation, availability and interoperability of personnel to be deployed should be promoted through pooling and sharing of training and recruitment. The EU must also recognise that other regional actors might be better placed and/or equipped to deal with particular conflicts or crises, thus elevating its level of strategic choice.

### **5. Getting the European defence architecture right**

The basis of any defence cooperation at the EU level must be the capability needs of the Member States and of the Union. A way to ensure this is to adopt the Capability Development Plan (complemented by the Overarching Strategic Research Agenda) as the basis for national and cooperative R&D efforts. From an institutional standpoint, the current intergovernmental institutional framework should be restructured, with the creation of a Council of Defence Ministers chaired by the HRVP and supported by the Steering Board of the European Defence Agency. The European Commission should provide much-needed

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resources, while a defence committee in the European Parliament could exercise proper oversight on capability development and missions.

### **6. *Financing our ambition***

In order to be a credible actor in its foreign policy, the EU must be ready to adequately fund its ambitions. The European Commission proposal to increase investment in EU external action up to 26% and the overall budget for security and defence to €27.5 billion should be confirmed, as should be the partial political agreement reached by the EU institutions on a €13 billion European Defence Fund. In addition, the HRVP proposal to establish the European Peace Facility should be seriously considered and the proposal of the European Commission to establish a new single Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument with a €90 billion budget should be supported and expanded upon.

### **7. *De-securitising and managing migration***

In order to change the misconception that Europe is under siege by refugees or migrants, the migration dossier should be restored to its accurate dimension. A better management of migration flows can be achieved, but only if such a policy has a solid base in protection, mutual trust and solidarity, together with a sound orientation towards development. The securitisation and externalisation trends of migration policy must also be reversed. A prerequisite for all this to materialise is the EU assuming its own responsibility by redesigning both the fundamentals and the specifics of its migration and asylum policy internally, without further postponing the reform of the Dublin regulation.

### **8. *Elevating Africa from a neighbour to a true partner***

The African continent should figure among the top priorities of the EU's foreign policy agenda for the next decades. In line with the principled pragmatism credo stipulated in the EUGS, the priority actions should be anchored in an African vision as presented in the Agenda 2063 adopted by the African Union in 2015, but at the same time linked to the EU's strategic interests through a joint and inclu-

sive process. Empowering youth and advancing women's participation are among the initiatives that should be further promoted. The EU should also adopt an integrated approach to natural resources and address the question of sustainable development in low-income countries by promoting stronger interconnections – possibly through digital platforms – between the education and labour sectors.

### **9. *Preserving the legacy of the EU Global Strategy***

The global flux within which the EU finds itself makes the need to preserve the EU Global Strategy's legacy and some of its constructive, innovative elements abundantly clear. The EU simply does not have the luxury to start from scratch and assume a tabula rasa approach beyond the end of the current Commission mandate. This need for continuity concerns not only the Strategy's content and innovation, but also the institutional culture it introduced. Europe cannot wait a further 13 years for another strategic document of this kind. Therefore, having an exercise of this magnitude and scope under every HRVP is also necessary.

### **10. *Strengthening the European project***

Europe is what is says on the tin: Member States cannot choose what they like and implement it, while discarding what does not suit them. This is why the EU institutions need to continue standing firm on violations of the Union's fundamental principles within European borders, using the full panoply of tools and mechanisms available. A vocal and actionable unity is a prerequisite for more consistency between domestic and international policies and politics. In this spirit, strengthening the European project, its underlying ethos of compromise, and its component values, is necessary for making the EUGS a more actionable reality. This would also allow Europe to walk the strategic talk in designing and implementing a better foreign policy for the future, more boldly, with greater unity, with a more confident stride – and of course or rather therefore, in a more progressive direction.

# INTRODUCTION

## The world is changing.

In recent years the international environment has experienced a much higher degree of turbulence than in the past few decades. From the spectacular renaissance of great power competition to the continuing challenges to the parameters of established patterns of regional cooperation and enmity, and from the growing winds blowing towards nationalism and authoritarianism, to the emerging negative global megatrends aided by an asymmetric globalisation, this has been an era of extreme fluidity and rancour.

The European Union (EU) has not been immune to most of these challenges. Dealing with a security environment of increasing complexity and cascading risks, suffering from the blind barbarity of terrorism on home soil, and experiencing first-hand the deleterious nature of the rising spectre of populism and illiberalism even within its borders, the EU's foreign policy has attempted time and again to upgrade itself in order to deliver on its commitment towards making our Union stronger, more stable and more secure.

Yet, for years, the pace and extent of external change has outstripped the steps taken towards enhancing and strengthening the EU's instruments and capabilities. This in turn has inhibited the EU's capacity to respond effectively to the factors affecting its principles and interests, at a transnational, regional and national level. Hampered by institutional limitations, insufficient unity, incompatibility amongst its Member States' preferences or simple political inertia, the EU's external action all too often proved despondent, fragmented and out-of-sync with the realities that Europe was facing.

The EU Global Strategy (EUGS),<sup>1</sup> released in 2016 by Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP), provided a very welcome break from the past in this regard.

The document started with the recognition that we live in a tremendously different environment to the one proposed in the opening line of the 2003 European Security Strategy, which described Europe as never having been “so prosperous, so secure nor so free”.<sup>2</sup> Defying expectations as it was unveiled only days after the United Kingdom's (UK) traumatic vote to leave the EU, the EUGS presented both the crystallisation of the deep-seated

realisation of how transnational and transversal the problems facing the Union are, but also a general, strategic blueprint as to how Europe is to respond to these challenges.

Now, following three years of the Strategy's implementation, and ahead of the 2019 institutional renewal of the EU, the areas of both substantial progress and considerable disappointment when assessing the performance of the EU's external action under the influence of the EUGS are becoming clearer.

As we look towards the next qualitative leap the Union needs to make to respond to a world that has become more tumultuous, this report draws from and expands on the findings of a year-long research project to offer some

insights in three key areas:

1. Outlining some of the critical insecurity trends that have negatively impacted the EU's capacity to navigate through the emerging realities of diversified threats and multiplying conflicts, both within and beyond European borders;
2. Briefly taking stock of some of the EU Global Strategy's greatest achievements and limitations in promoting a Europe that stands, speaks and acts together in its foreign policy; and
3. Providing concrete recommendations in 10 critical areas where the Union needs to walk the strategic talk embodied in the Global Strategy – more boldly, with more unity and towards a more progressive direction.

<sup>1</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, Brussels, 24 June 2016, [https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/regions/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_o.pdf](https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/regions/files/eugs_review_web_o.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Council of the European Union, *A Secure Europe in a better world. European Security Strategy*, Brussels, 12 December 2003, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/30823/qc7809568enc.pdf>



# THE INSECURITY TRENDS



In her strategic reflection report, dated June 2015, the HRVP Federica Mogherini addressed the theme of “The European Union in a Changing Global Environment”,<sup>3</sup> making direct reference to “a more connected, contested and complex world” underpinning these changes. This tripartite description, which in many ways accurately captures the essence of the unfolding global dynamics, is also mentioned in the EUGS, forming the backdrop of several aspects of the analysis included in the document.

This level of ever-connectedness, contestation and complexity described both in the 2015 report, which preceded the unveiling of the EUGS in June 2016, and in the EUGS itself, holds even truer today. In fact, if we analyse most major trends and variables mentioned in both documents – such as climate change, demography and mobility, economic and political power shifts, energy dependence and the growth in information technology – with the time horizon of the next 15–20 years in mind, we realise that they

are potentially even more tightly connected to a number of security challenges that will affect and change the global landscape profoundly.

Against this background, the EU finds itself in a condition of extreme vulnerability. Today’s EU is deep in the throes of a Janus-faced, two-level crisis: a general crisis that has impacted the rules-based international order and especially liberal democracies across the world, and a more specific one that relates to the EU’s own identity and process of integration, exacerbated by Brexit and the threats to its founding principle of the rule of law emanating from within its borders. This dual crisis has shown time and again its potential to jeopardise both the internal endurance of the Union and its projection at the international level.

Four specific factors have played a particularly important role in upending the EU’s international role, mission and performance:

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<sup>3</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *The European Union in a Changing Global Environment: A More Connected, Contested and Complex World*, Brussels, 30 June 2015, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2422/global-strategy-steer-eu-external-action-increasingly-connected-contested-and-complex-world\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/2422/global-strategy-steer-eu-external-action-increasingly-connected-contested-and-complex-world_en)



## 1. Differentiated (dis)integration

A certain degree of differentiation has been part of the process of European integration since its very origins. Enhanced cooperation has been used for patents, divorce law, the European Public Prosecutor and property regime rules, and is on the way for a potential financial transaction tax and supercomputing. A few countries have negotiated a permanent opt-out from EU legislation (for example, Denmark has opted out of the euro and the Schengen system), while transitional measures have been applied to new Member States. The Eurozone and the Schengen areas have further consolidated this trend through long-term projects of differentiated integration among European states. In December 2017, a Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) was launched by the EU in the defence sector, allowing groups of able and willing Member States to join forces through new and flexible agreements. However, the proliferation of differentiation, combined with new internal challenges and the increasingly unstable international context, has exposed the EU to a risk of disintegration.

Brexit – of course depending on when (and if) it happens – is probably the most illustrative example of this dynamic link between differentiation and disintegration. As a process itself, it might have not led to a domino effect as initially feared, but its implications will largely depend on transition arrangements and the shape of the final deal defining the bilateral relationship between the UK and the EU. Beyond the specifics of what this particular act of rupture of a Member State from the Union will entail for either side, the prospective exit of one of the largest countries in Europe is more likely than not to have ripple effects in various directions: internally, it might encourage either further cooperation or cherry-picking by Member States; externally, it might have broader repercussions for differentiated cooperation between the EU and non-Member States, including the elaboration of new forms of association, short of full membership.

Brexit might represent the impact of the EU's centrifugal forces in the most tangible manner, but these processes have also manifested themselves in several other policy areas, resulting in increased fragmentation among Member States.

The financial crisis and its aftermath, for instance, exposed deep intra-EU divides, with the current members of the Eurozone still not able to bridge their fundamental differences over their policy preferences, with those in the North

prioritising national 'risk reduction', and those in the South advocating in favour of further European-wide 'risk sharing'. The negative repercussions of these fissures and the institutional idleness that they caused have been particularly acute for some Member States, especially those most affected by the crisis, but they have also exacerbated a climate of distrust among Member States in general, further endangering the symbolic glue that keeps the Union together.

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The migration 'crisis' also demonstrated new depths to this absence of trust, as it was exploited by nationalistic political forces and governments that were averse to the very idea of burden sharing and solidarity, notably those of Austria and of most members of the Visegrád group. This was inextricably linked to a modus operandi among some EU Member States that is based on the concept of differentiated vulnerability. It is of course vastly different to experience any crisis through one's TV screen than experiencing it through one's window, but “the experience of the past few years has shown that the manner in which each crisis is perceived in each Member State is directly related to the sense of urgency or luxury each society or political leadership has”.<sup>4</sup> Undermining solidarity, a bedrock for any credible EU common policy, or rather relegating it from an automatic response to an à la carte instrument, has been another symptom of this process of differentiated disintegration.

While political fluidity and turmoil might present opportu-

<sup>4</sup> Vassilis Ntousas, *Better, Faster, Stronger, Together*, FEPS Policy Brief, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Brussels, 22 June 2017, <https://www.feps-europe.eu/resources/publications/508-better-faster-stronger-together.html>

# THE INSECURITY TRENDS

nities for a leap forward in integration, they have also made the unravelling of the EU a very feasible scenario. The question then arises about whether the proliferation of mechanisms of differentiation over time has contributed to the EU's fragility or, on the contrary, enhanced its resilience by introducing a useful degree of flexibility in the complex EU machinery. This leads to the related question of how much and what form of differentiation propels European integration forward – as a whole and in specific policy areas – and under what conditions differentiation should be avoided to prevent incoherence, political tensions and potential disintegration. And as with so many other issues, foreign policy has also been a domain where this urgent question has produced no credible answer, impeding the EU's capacity to design and implement an agile policy, well suited to the demands of today and tomorrow.

## 2. Internalisation of external insecurity

With fragmentation getting in the way of injecting unity and coherence into the EU's external action, a parallel process of feeling disproportionately affected by external developments has inhibited even further a push by the EU to pursue a unified foreign policy.

Simply put, Europe has perhaps felt much more insecure over the past few years than in the previous two decades. Major risks along all of the Union's borders – from the East to the South – have played their considerable part in this regard. Moreover, the shock of several terrorist attacks on home soil combined with the political exploitation of unprecedented flows of immigrants, coming from the African countries and the Middle East through the Eastern and the Mediterranean routes, has heightened

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***While political fluidity and turmoil might present opportunities for a leap forward in integration, they have also made the unravelling of the EU a very feasible scenario***

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the threat perception in the minds of many European citizens.

The gradual shift in the international strategic balance is another important factor to be taken into consideration. The Obama administration's pivot to the Pacific away from the Atlantic led to a policy posture of 'leading from behind' when crises occurred in the EU's neighbourhood, and this was increasingly combined with regular requests to the EU to act as a security provider (i.e., in Libya, in the Balkans and in Ukraine). As the weight of the world has been moving towards the East, President Trump's "America first" credo has often questioned the principle of collective defence – the strategic *raison d'être* of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) – “in favour of the populist bravado of securing a better deal from European allies”.<sup>5</sup>

This approach of the new United States (US) administration questioning the main pillar of the transatlantic security system and placing a huge strain on the post-World War structures designed to sustain it might not have amounted to much change to the US commitment to the North Atlantic Alliance so far. Nevertheless, this new, more ambivalent policy course set by the US has shaken up many European certainties, not least in the area of military expenditure, where European allies are constantly reminded of their pledge to spend at least 2% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on defence.

Real or constructed, the combination of these developments has left its mark on Europe's public psyche. According to the latest Eurobarometer surveys, “the fall over the past two years in the proportion of respondents who think that the EU is a secure place to live in is significant”.<sup>6</sup> More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents

5 Vassilis Ntousas, “Dealing with the ‘Surreal Estate’ President: Trump and the Future of European Union”, in Ian Kearns and Kate Murray (eds.), *The Age of Trump: Foreign Policy Challenges for the Left*, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) and The Fabian Society, Brussels, 26 April 2017, p. 11, [https://fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/FABJ5177\\_Age\\_of\\_Trump\\_text\\_050417\\_web-2.pdf](https://fabians.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/FABJ5177_Age_of_Trump_text_050417_web-2.pdf)

6 European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, “Europeans’ Attitudes towards Security”, in *Special Eurobarometer*, No. 464b, December 2017, p.

called for more EU intervention in the counterterrorism policy area in the last Eurobarometer.<sup>7</sup> As for migration, the perception of insecurity persists among European citizens even if the data clearly show that in 2018, the number of detections of illegal border crossings reached its lowest level in five years. The total figure fell 27% from the previous year to 150,114 and was 92% below the peak of the migratory flows in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

And yet, as the insecurity felt within Europe has gone up (and the division between internal and external security policies has become far more blurred), EU Member States were less willing to invest in their defence, or to elevate foreign policy at-large as a budget priority. This is partly attributable to the financial crisis, which lowered the levels of resources governments were eager to devote to their foreign, security and defence policies, but it is also due to the aforementioned political machinations in many Member States, which led the ‘crisis’ lens in the migration issue to seriously distort most foreign policy considerations at the national (and in certain cases EU) level.

Within this framework, the tendency in the EU was to adapt goals to means. Twenty-five years ago, Europeans contributed the bulk of troops to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping. Today, all European countries combined account for only about 7% of Blue Helmets deployed around the world.<sup>9</sup> After two years of a continuous nominal increase from 2005 to 2007, the total defence expenditure of EU countries declined for six consecutive years, largely due to the effects of the 2008 financial crisis.<sup>10</sup> Within NATO, non-US Allies together spend less than half

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decades***

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of what the US spends on defence and since 2008, defence spending by most non-US Allies has declined steadily.<sup>11</sup>

Within this framework, the EU has often failed to balance between the demands of objective security concerns, its tendency towards fiscal consolidation and public spending cuts, and the many political games that took place over resource reallocation among policy areas. The internalisation of external insecurity on the part of the Union has proven that less is not always more and that crisis mode is not always the optimum way of charting a results-oriented foreign policy.

### **3. Externalisation of internal deadlock**

The Union’s not too infrequent failure to ensure the necessary unity and coherence among its Member States and institutions has in turn led to many internal dysfunctional standoffs. Combined with the inability to identify policy priorities and mobilise the necessary political and actual capital towards a genuinely European foreign policy, this has meant that the EU often externalised its internal deadlock by remaining an ineffective or idle bystander to international developments.

This has resulted in a number of negative externalities, which have been especially felt in the Union’s neighbourhood.

In Libya, “the EU’s lack of unity over the political transition [. . .] continues to undermine the [Union’s] political and economic leverage over Libyan actors and their foreign

45. <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/SPECIAL/search/464b/surveyKy/1569>

7 Philipp Schulmeister (ed.), “Delivering on Europe. Citizens’ Views on Current and Future EU Action”, in *European Parliament Eurobarometer Surveys*, No. 89.2, May 2018, p. 39, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2018/oneyearbefore2019/eb89\\_one\\_year\\_before\\_2019\\_eurobarometer\\_en\\_opt.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2018/oneyearbefore2019/eb89_one_year_before_2019_eurobarometer_en_opt.pdf)

8 Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2019*, Risk Analysis Unit, Warsaw, February 2019, p. 6, [https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Risk\\_Analysis/Risk\\_Analysis\\_for\\_2019.pdf](https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis/Risk_Analysis_for_2019.pdf)

9 Mark Leon Goldberg, *Ambassador Power to Europeans: Come Back to UN Peacekeeping!*, UN Dispatch: United Nations News & Commentary, 9 March 2015, <https://www.undispatch.com/ambassador-power-europeans-come-back-un-peacekeeping/>

10 European Defence Agency (EDA), *Defence Data 2006-2016*, Brussels, 2017, p. 10, <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/eda-defence-data-2006-2016>

11 GlobalSecurity.org, *NATO: Defense Spending*, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/nato-spending.htm>

sponsors, leaving [the country] in a dangerous stalemate that only furthers the security risks for Europe”<sup>12</sup> In fact, the division among EU Member States, including the confrontation between Italy and France, has hampered the design and implementation of an effective strategy for the resolution of the crisis and the mitigation of its consequences in terms of smuggling of migrants through the Central Mediterranean route.

Owing to its internal disputes among national governments over burden-sharing, the EU has also adopted on occasions an externalisation strategy for the management of problems that mainly relies not on its own capacities, but those of its neighbours. The example of the EU’s policy approach of ‘outsourcing’ to an extent some key aspects of its migration management, both to its south and its east, is indicative of this trend and has met with mixed results. “In particular, abuses in Libyan detention centres and the continuing high death toll in the Mediterranean cast a shadow over the EU’s attempts to improve societal resilience in the neighbourhood and over its promotion of human rights”<sup>13</sup> while the 2016 EU–Turkey Statement has been sharply criticised both for its questionable effectiveness and for its grim record in humanitarian terms.

Looking beyond Libya, the EU was broadly absent and/or side-lined in a number of other cases, such as the Qatar crisis or the Syrian conflict. “Europe has also failed to coordinate a united EU stance on the war in Yemen, to forcibly criticise Saudi Arabia’s mass arrests of activists or to limit European arms sales to Riyadh, notwithstanding the approval of a non-binding resolution by the EU parliament on 25 October 2018 in the wake of the brutal murder of Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul”<sup>14</sup>

In the Western Balkans, the absence of a credible enlargement perspective, coupled with socio-economic hardship, undermined the effectiveness of EU initiatives.

As increasing numbers of people left the region because of high unemployment rates and low salaries, several political leaders channelled popular discontent into nationalism. Moreover, the terrorist threat remained high in the region due to the return of foreign terrorist fighters and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.<sup>15</sup>

Examples of this externalisation of its internal deadlock are many and the paradox is that they mostly concern areas where the EU’s vital interests have been under direct challenge and its principles as a soft-power, normative international actor have been in great jeopardy. This does not mean that all EU external action has been impeded, as witnessed by a series of important events showcasing unity of purpose and action, such as Iran’s nuclear accord or the sanctions against Russia. The point here is rather that these notable exceptions run the risk of being lost against the larger backdrop of an otherwise suboptimal foreign policy performance in countries, areas and crises that matter. As exceptions to the rule, they also validate the need for a Europe that speaks and acts in a more concerted manner.

#### 4. The global slack

A fourth and final layer of analysis has been that of the more structural dynamics in motion at the global level that have diluted the impact and the reach of EU foreign policy. Europe’s voice is less than what it once was and what it could now be, not just due to internal divides, insecurity and political inertia, but also due to the shifting parameters of the global order.

An integral part of what the EU has traditionally been about and stood for is now under increasing strain from the rise in populism, protectionism, extremism, nativism and anti-intellectualism, the drift towards illiberalism and the new era of geopolitical and great power competition we have entered. Multilateralism, the rules-based interna-

<sup>12</sup> Andrea Dessi, “The EU Global Strategy and the MENA Region: In Search of Resilience”, in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 6, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, November 2018, p. 3, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_6.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_6.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, “Is the EU Lost at Sea? The EUGS and the Implementation of a Joined-Up Approach to Migration”, in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 5, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, November 2018, p. 4, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_5.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_5.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Dessi, “The EU Global Strategy and the MENA Region”, *cit.*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, “Happy Birthday to the EUGS? The EU and the Western Balkans Two Years On”, in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 4, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, July 2018, p. 3, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_4.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_4.pdf)



tional order and the established system of global governance, along with the plethora of processes, institutions and norms underpinning them, are continuously challenged by these processes.

Crucially, some of these challenges are coming not only from the outside but from within the group of hitherto defenders of this system, and the actions undertaken by the current US administration encapsulate this in the clearest manner. President Trump, with his dismissiveness towards allies, repudiation of multilateralism in favour of bilateral deals, heavy reliance on a strongman mentality and his blunt quid pro quo logic, has served to undermine the rules-based international order in a number of ways. This has been done not only by working to puncture this system through emboldening other countries to follow his example, but also by creating a destabilising vacuum of leadership, which has certainly increased the appetite of other players to fill the void and engage in regional or global parallel order-shaping.

This latter point needs to be underlined, because the advent of Trump might have redrawn the political boundaries when it comes to multilateralism, but many of the dynamics he helped amplify long preceded him. Indeed, the crisis of multilateralism started long before 2016, owing its existence largely to two factors: first, primarily the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) becoming more vocal against the current global world order and multilateral institutions; and secondly, the failure of this order, as encapsulated in the post–World War II multilateral system, to address the asymmetries created by a number of processes pertaining to globalisation.

As we look to the future, this crucial point is worth keeping in mind, as “the Trump administration understandably

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***Europe has often  
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takes a lot of the blame, but the challenge to the international liberal order and particularly the status quo cherished by the EU is broader”.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, many non-Western powers, including most of the countries mentioned above, have offered alternative visions about global problem-solving, including global governance reform.

Regarded by many as a moral centre of multilateralism at the global level, with a degree of integration that remains unattained in any other regional context, the EU has struggled to pursue a consistently effective policy in preserving and renewing multilateralism. At times not fully realising the pressure applied by these structural processes (as in the case of China, for example), at times realising it but failing to act due to its interconnected inner challenges (take the case of the UN Security Council reform as indicative) and at times (re)acting in a way that is not consistent with the combined weight it can pull in international affairs (such as in the crises in Libya or Syria), Europe has often found itself not at the forefront but lagging behind, fighting to be heard in this increasingly multi-polar, decreasingly multilateral world.

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<sup>16</sup> Hylke Dijkstra, “Supporting Global Governance: A Rules-Based Approach for a Postliberal Order?”, in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 10, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, March 2019, p. 3, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_10.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_10.pdf)

# THE EU'S RESPONSE: THE EU GLOBAL STRATEGY AND BEYOND

European Union  
Européenne



At a first glance, the post-Lisbon EU in many cases gave the impression that it is incapable, or at least unwilling, to conduct a strategic reflection on the challenges encircling or engulfing Europe, appearing to opt for 'business as usual' instead. This impression was readily reinforced by the inability of the Union to elaborate timely and effective strategies to respond to a number of crises, for the reasons explained in the previous section.

On 28 June 2016, this was reversed. Following a long consultation process and building on the lessons learnt in previous years, the HRVP presented the EU Global Strategy, entitled "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe", to the EU Heads of State and Government. This strategic document came almost 13 years after the first and only overall strategic document of the EU – Javier Solana's

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***The EUGS seemed to reflect the growing understanding that foreign policy was no longer the privileged domain of EU elites, but an increasing concern for ordinary European citizens as well***  
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2003 European Security Strategy – and a few days after the British referendum and the traumatic vote in favour of Brexit. Time was mature to present a comprehensive document offering not just a vision, but specific actions as well, focusing on the EU's place in the world and its identity as a foreign and security policy actor, in line with the very different context outside and inside the Union.

The EUGS seemed to reflect the growing understanding that foreign policy was no longer the privileged domain of EU elites, but an increasing concern for ordinary European citizens as well. Reacting to this, the EU also appeared cognisant of the concurrent need both to articulate a strategic analysis of the world and to elaborate a vision of how to re-order its own apparatus and methods, while looking to the future.



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***The EUGS marked a paradigm shift, particularly with reference to the growing importance of the nexus between internal and external security***

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Serving these objectives, the Strategy introduced a number of conceptual innovations to the EU's foreign, security and defence policy lexicon, and acted as the framework through which these innovations would be put into practice. The introduction of the notion of “principled pragmatism” as one of the guiding principles of the Strategy was one of the most significant of these innovations. Here, the intention was to do away with some of the most enduring dichotomies in EU policy, modelling strategic thinking and acting not on lofty but often unrealistic expectations of the EU being ever-present and omnipotent, but on careful analysis of how to promote the Union's values and interests more efficiently. Similarly, emerging as the leitmotif of the EUGS, the goal of fostering state and societal resilience was also key amongst the Strategy's innovative elements, framed both as a means for the EU to enhance prevention and early warning and as a long-term investment in good governance, stability and prosperity.<sup>17</sup>

In all of these aspects, it has been important to test the Strategy's intentions and innovations against implementation. After almost three years since the Strategy's release, we have selected four main axes around which some of its most indicative achievements and limitations are analysed and assessed.<sup>18</sup>

## **1. Linking internal and external security**

The EUGS marked a paradigm shift, particularly with reference to the growing importance of the nexus between internal and external security. The document started from the recognition that “internal and external security are ever more intertwined: our security at home depends on

peace beyond our borders”<sup>19</sup> and then injected the need to address this across almost all policy domains mentioned in the Strategy. This connection between the internal and external aspects of security is not a new concept, but the evolution of the international context, notably the phenomena of irregular migration, terrorism, transnational crime and cyber-crime, amongst many, have made it more tangible and relevant for the EU. As a consequence, the EU's security and defence doctrine had to be adapted to respond to a number of new, non-traditional and hybrid threats.

There have been many areas where this need for adaptation was visible, but this has been particularly pertinent to the civilian dimension. Civilian capabilities are often perceived as the most suited to address complex threats, which combine immediate security concerns as well as the root causes of instability that are social and humanitarian in nature. As a result, civilian interventions have been traditionally used by the EU to support a number of important processes, such as democratisation support, establishment of the rule of law, respect of human rights, participation of civil societies and the settlement of viable administrations. The EUGS Implementation Plan on Security and Defence adopted in November 2016 has recognised the need to re-assess which kinds of civilian expertise are needed in light of current challenges, and has identified options for faster, more flexible and better targeted actions in civilian crisis management.<sup>20</sup>

If the first year of the EUGS implementation was devoted to deepening defence cooperation, the balance clearly shifted to the civilian side in 2018. Indeed, pursuant to the momentum provided by the EUGS, the strategic guide-

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the concept of resilience see: Silvia Colombo, Andrea Dessì and Vasilis Ntousas (eds.), *The EU, Resilience and the MENA Region*, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, December 2017, [https://www.feps-europe.eu/Assets/Publications/PostFiles/602\\_1.pdf](https://www.feps-europe.eu/Assets/Publications/PostFiles/602_1.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> For a more comprehensive analysis of the performance of the EUGS in several key policy areas, please consult the papers of the *EU Global Strategy Watch*, the project this report forms the concluding part of. A full list of these papers can be found at: <https://www.feps-europe.eu/articles/36-project/59-eu-global-strategy-eugs-watch.html> and <https://www.iai.it/en/ricerche/eu-global-strategy-eugs-watch>

<sup>19</sup> EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, cit., p. 7

<sup>20</sup> High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP), *Implementation Plan on Security and Defence*, Brussels, 14 November 2016, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs\\_implementation\\_plan\\_st14392.en16\\_o.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eugs_implementation_plan_st14392.en16_o.pdf)



## THE EU'S RESPONSE: THE EU GLOBAL STRATEGY AND BEYOND

lines of the civilian dimension of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) have been updated both in the form of the Civilian Compact, a milestone document adopted in November 2018, and in the process of the Compact's implementation. In addition to existing capacity-building and security sector reform (SSR), civilian CSDP is now met with a raised bar of ambition, expected to implement tasks related "to irregular migration, hybrid threats, cyber security, terrorism and radicalisation, organised crime, border management and maritime security, as well as preventing and countering violent extremism, also taking into account the need to preserve and protect cultural heritage".<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, discussion on the strengthened link between internal and external security challenges that is described in the EUGS, and that has been taken up by the EU with actions vis-à-vis the Civilian Compact, has revealed an all too prominent focus on migration. This emulated the same emerging tendency to securitise the migration issue that some national governments have demonstrated in their domestic migration policies and in their relationships with third countries of origin and transit. Relatedly, the preponderant influence of internal security priorities on the EU's foreign policy agenda may have also had a potential negative impact in the Compact's implementation phase, as stabilisation efforts and capacity-building tasks carried out by CSDP missions were narrowed down almost exclusively to migration management.<sup>22</sup>

The civilian dimension of CSDP has been an important but not the only policy area where the intensifying nexus between external and internal security, and the need for more effective responses through better coordination between the external and internal policy sectors, has been evident.

This has also emerged as a vital aspect in addressing key hybrid threats such as cyberwarfare, which are described

by the EUGS as a key strategic challenge for European security.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the Strategy acknowledges the dynamic nature and expansive impact of these threats in today's fiercely contested information environment, where the viral power of social media and the echo chambers that digital liked-minded communities often operate within are frequently exploited, amplifying misinformation and furthering the reach of foreign interference in domestic affairs.

In the framework of the Strategy's implementation, and aimed at raising Europe's digital defences and resilience, the EU sought to counter these threats through a series of important initiatives, including the revision of its cybersecurity strategy, the launch of two projects in the framework of PESCO and the reinforcement of EU–NATO cooperation against hybrid threats. These threats have been afforded this added attention, not least because they were rightly identified as being particularly relevant in the articulation of the Union's relationship with one of the most important global actors, the Russian Federation. Nonetheless, "as the continuation and extension of Russian hybrid warfare in recent years demonstrates, the Strategy's implementation has been less than effective".<sup>24</sup> This has been mainly due to institutional and financial fragmentation, the lack of a sustained focus on this area, well as the limited resources allocated to this end, especially if compared to the Kremlin's investments.

Overall, the EUGS has provided an important contribution to the evolution of the concept of security and adapted it to the new realities of the threat landscape. If there are encouraging signs that point in the direction of an increasingly holistic security thinking within the EU, operationalisation obstacles persist in the form of different mentalities and priorities between internal and external security actors, as well as competing priorities that lead to an unbalanced allocation of policy attention and resources. Migration and cyber-security are probably the

21 Council of the European Union, *Conclusions of the Council on the Establishment of a Civilian CSDP Compact*, Brussels, 19 November 2018, p. 4, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37027/st14305-en18.pdf>

22 Nicoletta Pirozzi, *The Civilian CSDP Compact: A Success Story for the EU's Crisis Management Cinderella?*, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), Paris, 2 October 2018, [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%209\\_Civilian%20CSDP.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%209_Civilian%20CSDP.pdf)

23 EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, cit., p. 21–22.

24 Maria Giulia Amadio Viceré, "The EUGS and Russian Hybrid Warfare: Effective Implementation But Insufficient Results", in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 11, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, March 2019, p. 5, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_11.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_11.pdf)

most sensitive fields in which the possibility to establish a shared strategic approach needs to be tested, and the road to the implementation of such an approach has just begun.

## **2. Achieving an integrated approach to conflicts and crises**

Among the other priorities of the EU's external action, the Strategy also includes the objective of achieving an "integrated approach" to conflicts and crises. Such a truly integrated approach is acknowledged to require deepening and widening cooperation far beyond the "use of all available policies and instruments aimed at conflict prevention, management and resolution".<sup>25</sup> As such, it is expected to involve a number of multi-phased, multi-level and multi-lateral actions, as identified in the Strategy.<sup>26</sup>

As the EUGS explains, the aim is that the "EU will act at all stages of the conflict cycle, investing in prevention, resolution and stabilisation and avoiding premature disengagement when a new crisis erupts elsewhere".<sup>27</sup> The intention is to make the EU's responses to conflict encompass different policy phases, such as planning and implementation, and to advance a number of essential cross-cutting issues, such as the evolution from early warning to early action.

In the EUGS, this goes in parallel with two main axioms: first, the muscular re-affirmation of the need to relaunch EU defence cooperation; and secondly, the commitment to pursue a multilateral approach "engaging all players present in a conflict and necessary for its resolution".<sup>28</sup>

The first axiom has been addressed mainly through the launch of the PESCO, the setup of a coordinated annual review on defence (CARD) and the creation of an EU-funded European Defence Fund (EDF). Attempting to correct the often uneven, underfunded and nationally myopic process afflicting much of defence policy design and implementation, progress in this domain has been for

the most part rightfully hailed as historic. After all, defence cooperation had, up until a few years ago, remained one of the most taboo-like policy domains for European integration; initiatives such as the 2009 EU Defence Package on defence procurement and defence transfers were needles in an otherwise profoundly intergovernmental haystack.

### **The PESCO package: a game-changer for EU defence**

The package of separate but interrelated measures, launched in the last two years, in the field of defence represents a qualitative leap forward in the EU integration process. Through PESCO, participating countries have agreed not only to comply with a series of binding commitments in terms of investments, but also to progressively integrate their respective national planning processes. Concretely, this means the beginning of joint planning, developing and purchasing military assets.

Underpinning these efforts is the Capability Development Plan, agreed by Member States with the support of the European Defence Agency, which has defined common priorities in terms of developing military capabilities. In addition, the creation of CARD has meant that the results achieved and those still to be reached will be verified every two years, in parallel to a process of identification of the possibility of future cooperative development projects. The European institutions will financially support this project through the EDF, with a proposed budget of €13 billion for 2021–27.

These initiatives – if carried out with commitment, coherence and, above all, guaranteeing the correct balance between the intergovernmental and the community dimensions – will allow European defence cooperation to make an unprecedented, yet much needed, leap forward in this policy domain, using tools already provided for in the Treaties.

25 High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP), *The EU Global Strategy: Year 1*, Brussels, 10 January 2017, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en/49750/The%20EU%20Global%20Strategy%20%E2%80%93%20Year%201](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/49750/The%20EU%20Global%20Strategy%20%E2%80%93%20Year%201)

26 EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, cit., p. 28-29

27 *Ibid.*, p. 28

28 *Ibid.*, p. 30

Serving to promote the second axiom in moving towards a more integrated approach, the EUGS also stressed that “broad, deep and durable regional and international partnerships” are essential to achieving sustainable peace.<sup>29</sup>

Here, the three years of the EUGS implementation have showcased that the Strategy’s rhetoric has not been sufficiently matched by reality. The EUGS has proven relatively undetermined at both the programmatic and the operational level when it comes to defining how the EU should relate to other international organisations and how it seeks to invest in them.<sup>30</sup> For instance, the EUGS provided a push for more inter-organisational EU–NATO cooperation,<sup>31</sup> which was marked by the 2016 and 2018 Joint Declarations<sup>32</sup> and led to common initiatives to address maritime security in the Mediterranean, to respond to hybrid threats and to support capacity-building of neighbours to the East and to the South. However, “it did not contribute to solving old and newer political tensions”, including the Greek–Turkish confrontation over Cyprus and the deterioration of the transatlantic bond.<sup>33</sup>

Even beyond the defence field, it does not appear that the EUGS has provided real additional momentum at the programmatic level for revitalising EU–UN

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***The EUGS has provided a notable boost to the implementation of an integrated approach to conflict and crises, in particular by recognising the necessity to develop a full spectrum of capabilities and by triggering significant progress in the field of defence to transform the EU from a ‘military dwarf’ to a reliable security actor***  
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relations.<sup>34</sup> Operationally, there were no major steps forward in terms of EU contributions to UN peacekeeping, either in the form of increased numbers of European boots on the ground in UN missions or in the deployment of bridging forces for UN interventions, such as the EU Battlegroups. Politically, persistent divisions among EU Member States, combined with the uncertainties posed by the Brexit negotiations, have the potential to negatively affect the status and representation of the EU at the UN, and in particular within the UN Security Council.

Similarly to other policy aspects, the migration file has overshadowed the strategic discussions of the EU with other international organisations, such as that with the African Union concerning the need for a more integrated approach to conflicts in the African continent. This jeopardised the objective of fully implementing a joint partnership on security and development on the basis of shared priorities between the EU and its African partners. A noteworthy exception in the EU’s engagement with international organisations has been the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which has resurfaced as an important partner in East–West relations by virtue of the large-scale intervention in Ukraine.<sup>35</sup>

29 *Ibid.*, p. 29

30 Hylke Dijkstra, “Implementing the Integrated Approach: Investing in Other International Organisations”, in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 2, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, July 2018, p. 3, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_2.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_2.pdf)

31 Nicole Koenig, “The EU and NATO: A Partnership with a Glass Ceiling”, in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 8, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, November 2018, p. 4, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_8.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_8.pdf)

32 *EU–NATO Joint Declaration*, Warsaw, 8 July 2016, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/21481/nato-eu-declaration-8-july-en-final.pdf>; *Joint Declaration on EU–NATO Cooperation*, Brussels, 10 July 2018, [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36096/nato\\_eu\\_final\\_eng.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/36096/nato_eu_final_eng.pdf)

33 Koenig, “The EU and NATO”, *cit.*, p. 4

34 Dijkstra, “Implementing the Integrated Approach”, *cit.*, p. 4

35 *Ibid.*



Looking at the general picture, it appears that the EUGS has provided a notable boost to the implementation of an integrated approach to conflict and crises, in particular by recognising the necessity to develop a full spectrum of capabilities and by triggering significant progress in the field of defence to transform the EU from a 'military dwarf' to a reliable security actor. At the same time, however, the proliferation of security challenges and the availability of security actors that are better placed to carry out specific tasks might have forced the EU to look for strengthened partnerships with other organisations, based on shared assessments and joint initiatives, but the Union's track record has not been consistent. Indeed, despite some improvements, the EU's credibility and performance in achieving a more integrated approach to conflicts and crises is still questioned mainly due to its internal divergences and the lack of a coherent policy design and implementation strategy.

### **3. Upholding multilateralism and reforming global governance**

The EU's strong, unwavering commitment towards multilateralism has long been considered a key tenet of its foreign policy, as also indicated in the 2003 European Security Strategy. As a consequence, the EUGS signals the Union's determination to "promote a rules-based global order with multilateralism as its key principle", along with its commitment to reform, transform and further expand, rather than simply preserve, the existing system.<sup>36</sup>

In the part dedicated to "Global Governance in the 21st Century", the EUGS elaborates on what would be need-

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***The experience of the last three years has certainly validated the Strategy's strong focus on multilateralism and global governance, due to the fact that the strain placed on the system as currently functioning has come from not only some of its known antagonists but also from hitherto champions of it***

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ed to substantiate this vision. Indeed, in line with its declared commitment to defending a liberal world order based on rules-based global governance, the document tasks the EU with placing at the centre of its strategic attention actions in favour of a restored legitimacy and efficiency of multilateral fora, with a special role for the UN. The reasoning behind this is simple. A benign international environment based on the rule of law and the principle of multilateralism is at the heart of the EU's actorness worldwide. Therefore, the EU is to assume a key role in finding ways to carry out this objective, inter alia by establishing coalitions and building consensus to make international bodies more inclusive and representative.

Complementary to this, the existing tendency towards fragmentation and regionalisation is also not neglected, interpreted as an additional incentive for the creation of a more multi-level system of governance rather than a menace to multilateralism as such. In this perspective, the new strategy goes in the direction of the promotion of "Cooperative Regional Orders", a reinforced inter-regionalism and a gradual integration of other regional institutions and organisations in the global governance architecture.

In putting forward this level of analysis and call for action, the Strategy implicitly acknowledges that the current configuration of global governance is under intense scrutiny by a number of new actors that matter, who wish to see the system be changed, redesigned and/or abandoned altogether according to their interests and values.

<sup>36</sup> EEAS, Shared Vision, Common Action, cit., p. 8

## THE EU'S RESPONSE: THE EU GLOBAL STRATEGY AND BEYOND

The experience of the last three years has certainly validated the Strategy's strong focus on multilateralism and global governance, due to the fact that the strain placed on the system as currently functioning has come from not only some of its known antagonists but also from hitherto champions of it, such as the US. This fundamental shift has not only put the multilateral system under severe, perhaps unprecedented, pressure, it has also increased exponentially the significance of strong and unitary action by the EU.

A closer look at the implementation that followed the EUGS can indicate that Europe's response in this regard has been uneven. Examples of this are legion: for instance, in terms of climate diplomacy the EU might have worn the mantle of leadership in establishing new rules where there were none, but the collapse of a unified, positive response to the UN Global Compact on Migration has been disappointing at the very least.

One case in which the EU has stood firmly united in defence of a rules-based multilateral order, actively opposing relentless moves by Washington in the opposite direction, is the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran. While the US under Trump has unilaterally withdrawn from the nuclear accord and reinstated sanctions on Tehran, the EU has stuck with the agreement and Iran so far is also fulfilling its promises.<sup>37</sup> This has been a difficult exercise, exposing both the capacity of the EU to deliver even when under pressure, and the tremendous length, width and depth of these pressures, especially on a dossier that has been deemed by many the foreign policy success of the EU in the past four years. It follows that "should Europe fail to preserve the JCPOA following the US's withdrawal, the EU's credibility will be severely damaged, potentially even undermining the broader EUGS project and ambitions".<sup>38</sup>

### The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

Following a long and, at times, arduous process of negotiations that lasted almost two years, Iran and the P5+1/E3+3 powers (the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, China and Germany) announced in Vienna in July 2015 a long-term comprehensive agreement regarding the Iranian nuclear programme.

In the eyes of Europe (and of many others in the world), this agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, represented a historic turning point for the entire region of the Middle East. The EU and its High Representative played a decisive role in making sure an accord would be inked. The EU managed to successfully cultivate a level of trust that proved to be a critical factor in the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

Amidst several examples where the Union's leverage, responsiveness and unity in terms of its external action have proven sub-optimal, this agreement serves as a powerful reminder of the vital role the Union can play if it decides to collectively exert its full diplomatic gravitas and act in a concerted manner. As the nuclear accord's longevity is challenged by the decision of the Trump administration to withdraw, it is indeed worth remembering the importance this agreement carries as a tangible case study of safeguarding Europe's security and legitimacy. Defending its – perhaps – biggest foreign policy success of the past few years, the EU needs to continue playing its critical part, if the efforts to salvage the JCPOA are ultimately to be successful.

An additional area that stands out in terms of the EU's performance in upgrading its commitment to multilateralism into a proactive multilateral agenda has been that of trade. During a time when a growing number of countries have shown their readiness to engage in trade wars, raise trade barriers and tariffs, flex their mercantilist muscles and test their protectionist reflexes, the EU has managed to tangibly show its own distinctive vision. Indeed, one of

37 Dijkstra, "Supporting Global Governance", *cit.*, p. 4

38 Dessì, "The EU Global Strategy and the MENA Region", *cit.*, p. 6

Europe's key achievements of the last years is the negotiation and re-negotiation of a series of important bilateral trade agreements, i.e. with Japan, Canada, Singapore and Vietnam, and its ongoing negotiations with Australia, Mercosur and more. This, despite the considerable domestic political setbacks encountered – substantive concerns and objections were raised by citizens regarding some of these trade agreements, which in turn led to the adoption of a more open and transparent model in negotiation and drafting procedures. Nonetheless, while the EU has been relatively successful in keeping and showing its faith in international trade openness, “this emphasis on bilateral agreements rather than multilateral ones also highlights the challenges ahead for a truly international order based on the rule of law”.<sup>39</sup>

Here too, then, the ambition described in the EU Global Strategy has not evenly translated into the level and urgency of action envisioned.

Admittedly, the advent of Trump, Brexit and the like has made the already demanding task of upholding multilateralism and reforming global governance an almost Herculean one. Yet, while factoring this in, the EU has been found lacking in its practical defence of multilateralism. What is more, in a number of cases concerning institutional reform efforts, the EU has acted as “too much [of] a bystander, as the edifice of global governance is coming down”.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the most indicative example of this has been the EU's struggle to find common ground among its Member States at the UN Security Council, not least when it comes to the reform agenda question. Because even if the EU was instrumental in accomplishing a number of UN reforms mainly about management and delivery, it has unfortunately failed to put forward a unitary idea on a new agenda for global governance, plagued by the constellation of internal and external actors impeding swifter, more meaningful action, as explained in Section I.

#### **4. A joined-up Union**

A fourth and final strand of action included in the EUGS and analysed in this report is the Strategy's call to make the EU's external action more joined-up, referring to the idea that the full potential for EU foreign policy can only be realised if the Union works jointly across policy sectors, institutions and Member States.<sup>41</sup> Despite acknowledging the enormity of this task in addition to what has been already laid out above, this was seen as almost an existential objective, since building bridges across policy areas and breaking the silo mentality of fragmented policy design and implementation has been ever-elusive for the EU (foreign) policy apparatus.

Attempting to rectify years, if not decades, of institutional fragmentation has been rightly identified as a worthy policy aim, but its implementation has faced many obstacles, since this remains arguably one of the most controversial issues in policy debates.

Three policy examples can illustrate the asymmetrical progress that has been observed at the EU level in translating this specific aspect of the vision of the EUGS into action.

First, following the EUGS release, there simply has not been enough clarity as to how the discrepancy between different policy areas could be practically remedied and minimised. Looking at the interconnections between security and development cooperation, for example, the implementation of EU external action can easily create grey zones and ambiguities between the two fields. This has regrettably continued to create policy inconsistencies, despite the momentum given by the EUGS to bridge the existing policy gaps and areas of overlap, and the significant efforts undertaken –especially in Brussels – in this direction. For instance, this clearly emerged in the case of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, which was established before the release of the EUGS but whose implementation did not sufficiently benefit from the joined-up logic the Strategy has attempted to imbue

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<sup>39</sup> Dijkstra, “Supporting Global Governance”, *cit.*, p. 5

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1

<sup>41</sup> EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, *cit.*, p. 49



across the full spectrum of EU policies beyond European borders. On the contrary, the Fund's implementation "has confirmed the shift towards the securitisation of migration and a focus on European short-term interests without paying close attention to African needs, long-term challenges related to poverty eradication, human rights or political dialogue".<sup>42</sup>

Secondly, realising a joined-up Union is not an easy undertaking, and nor is it inexpensive. This is why the EUGS made logical connections to the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) architecture, calling for more flexibility and for a reduction of the number of instruments dedicated to the EU's external action.<sup>43</sup> Here, the sound reasoning behind these recommendations in the EUGS seems to have been embraced to a greater degree, becoming part of the consensus in terms of the negotiations over future funding allocation and management. In the proposed MFF for 2021–27, flexibility will probably be expanded in two ways: first, by reducing the number of headings under which programmes operate, through the creation of a new single Heading 6 "Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument", which will merge a large number of stand-alone EU external financing instruments into one, and secondly, by increasing the possibility of reallocating funds. Of course, much remains to be seen as to how this general aim will be operationalised since the MFF negotiations are ongoing. Indeed, while "this position seems consolidated, [. . .] it is still not certain that the ambitious scope of Heading

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***The EUGS has correctly pointed out the different strands of an effective joined-up approach, focusing on policy coherence, flexible funding and communication consistency***  
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6 will remain untouched through to the end of the negotiations".<sup>44</sup> But again, the uptake of the Strategy's actionable vision in terms of pursuing a more joined-up external policy-making in this particular regard seems to have advanced more than in other areas.

Thirdly, the need for an organic, joined-up external Union response concerns not only the policy-making, but the communication aspects of policy as well. In this sense, devising a coherent and effective communication strategy as part of a broader effort to enhance EU public diplomacy across different fields was another important component of the follow-up to the Strategy's initial drive. The aim has been to improve "the consistency and the speed of messaging on our values and actions", not least by offering "rapid, factual, rebuttals of disinformation".<sup>45</sup> The increasing attention paid to stronger cooperation

among the EU institutions – especially between the Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) –, the coordination role assumed by the StratCom Task Force, and the extensive communication undertaken by the EU delegations worldwide are positive examples of horizontal coordination for public diplomacy purposes. Nevertheless, discontinuities and inconsistencies can still be identified in the tailored-made design and dissemination of the message, as well as in the commitment of the Member States towards echoing and reaffirming this message through a common, united European voice.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Bernardo Venturi, *The EU and the Sahel: A Laboratory of Experimentation for the Security–Migration–Development Nexus*, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome, December 2017, <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiw1738.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, cit., p. 48

<sup>44</sup> Bernardo Venturi, "Toward the New Multiannual Financial Framework: Fuel for the EU Global Strategy and Development Cooperation?", in *EU Global Strategy Watch*, No. 12, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS)/Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Brussels and Rome, March 2019, p. 3, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs\\_watch\\_12.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eugs_watch_12.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> EEAS, *Shared Vision, Common Action*, cit., p. 23

<sup>46</sup> Amadio Viceré, "The EUGS and Russian Hybrid Warfare", cit., p. 5

Again, as an overall remark, the EUGS has correctly pointed out the different strands of an effective joined-up approach, focusing on policy coherence, flexible funding and communication consistency. Policy, financial and institutional seeds have been planted to make the EU speak and act unitarily on the world stage, but their blooming has depended and will continue to depend for the foreseeable future on the level of commitment of the institutions in Brussels and Member States to act as strategically advised by the EUGS: overcoming the silo mentality and avoiding internal competition.

# A PROGRESSIVE EU FOREIGN POLICY AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE



If the past few years have served to underline something, it is the simple fact that the trajectory of positive global progress is neither given nor irreversible. While this holds true for the world in general, it perhaps holds truer for the EU. The certainties, if not clichés, traditionally characterising EU foreign policy have been multiply challenged by the situation on the ground, both within and beyond European borders. They can therefore not be taken for granted as the de facto blueprint for action as the Union navigates the murky waters of international affairs; buzzwords such as ‘normative power’ risk becoming anachronistic, empty monikers, if not transformed and amplified with new meanings.

So far, the complexity of the milieu of domestic agitations and external pressures Europe is facing has not sufficed to make the necessity of a truly European foreign policy abundantly clear. In various EU capitals, it is still a deeply embedded belief that Brussels might be the preferred locus of power for coordination purposes, but the real politics on the ground concerning various ‘sensitive’ dossiers functions within the purview of Member States.

This is not just a reflection of the continuing appeal of intergovernmentalism or a sign of the inward-looking leadership that occupies the thinking of a number of Member State governments. It also reveals a lack of realisation of the depth and width of collective foreign policy output that the EU needs to provide, if it is to survive in an era of (naked) power competition. It also demonstrates the absence of empathy amongst Member States in terms of the compromises that will be needed to arrive there. In this regard, the EUGS was very instrumental in moving the needle towards the right direction, but it could not pull off the magic trick of solving every limitation in the EU’s foreign policy apparatus and praxis. In defence of the Strategy, this is something that its authors and initiators were deeply cognisant of, and therefore all those who thought the Strategy could play this comprehensive role were expressing merely a wish, and not an intention.

In terms of an analogy, this incompleteness of the Union’s foreign policy reflects many of the inadequacies of the climate change regime. The reason is simple.



For a Union treating foreign and security policy matters as the ultimate taboo for so long, reversing this trend presented itself as the ultimate collective action problem, often exposing the vast differences in capabilities and appetite amongst Member States to change the situation. This has been much like climate change, which similarly constitutes the ultimate collective action problem facing the international community, “with broadly distributed culpabilities and consequences that incentivise states to free-ride on the efforts of others”.<sup>47</sup> What is more, in both cases, providing precisely this more convincing collective response is plagued by a threat that appears too distant, and a problem that, even if collective action is decided upon, would be extremely difficult to solve.

Yet, also like climate change which is potentially the security issue of our times requiring urgent action, inaction is not an option as far as EU foreign policy is concerned.

Coming up with credible steps towards bucking many of the negative trends currently unfolding is not a thought experiment. Rather, it is an urgent necessity, not least because there is a profound Realpolitik element to it. For reasons explained above, Europe not only risks becoming a more irrelevant international actor, it – crucially – risks losing much of its capacity even to have a seat at the table, being increasingly squeezed between global giants.

The changes that are needed to rectify this are not simple, but multi-layered and multi-directional. This is an exercise that is as much about deepening and widening the EU’s foreign policy output as it is about strengthening the EU’s core project itself; a fragmented Europe is a frazzled Europe internationally. Further, while such an exercise must be forward-looking in its design of solutions, it must also ensure that these solutions are applicable to the problems of today – the season may be ripe for bold ideas, but any changes suggested will have to be almost instantly operationalisable.

Above all, these changes must be unashamedly progressive, for it is now crystal clear that ‘business as usual’ will not suffice to upgrade the EU’s foreign policy to the levels required.

Below are 10 concrete policy recommendations, delineating a progressive to-do list enabling the EU to finally walk the strategic talk embodied in the EU Global Strategy, transforming itself from a regional actor in search of a global reach, to a global actor enjoying the confidence, coherence, capability and ambition the Union needs and deserves.

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***These changes must be unashamedly progressive, for it is now crystal clear that ‘business as usual’ will not suffice to upgrade the EU’s foreign policy to the levels required***

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47 Stephen Minas and Vassilis Ntousas (eds.), “Introduction”, in *EU Climate Diplomacy in a Time of Disruption*, Routledge, 24 April 2018

## 1. Adding flexibility into a coherent foreign policy mix

A sense of urgency and historic responsibility will be a very important component of achieving a more effective EU. The challenges are too many for Europe not to have a strong voice at the international level; but for this voice to be credible and carry its full collective gravitas it needs to be backed up by capable institutions and mechanisms. After all, the vacuous rhetoric of and hollow calls for unity merely pave the way for further disunity and institutional inaction. At the same time, achieving bland and unchallenging common statements that carry no real meaning ends up reinforcing the idea that Europe can be easily ignored at the international level.

Unanimity has too often meant collective silence.

There are historical precedents for lengthy periods of institutional paralysis within the EU leading to innovations able to overcome the block, such as the time before the introduction of qualified majority voting in internal market affairs in the 1980s. Similarly, qualified majority voting needs to be now introduced in matters relating to foreign and security policy, starting with the decisions related to human rights and civilian missions, as advocated by President Juncker in his 2018 State of the Union speech.<sup>48</sup>

In parallel, though, this change needs to be backed up by proper compliance procedures. Examples like the relocation scheme for refugees have shown that there is a serious EU compliance problem that must be urgently addressed if we want to avoid disastrous consequences in terms of increasing fragmentation and instability, while safeguarding the EU integration project as such. Appropriate resources need to be allocated to ensure

an improved EU-level control on compliance, and appropriate mechanisms must be designed to act in case of non-compliance by Member States. Among these mechanisms, if it is hard to contemplate proper enforcement measures, specific forms of conditionality – for example in the allocation of EU funds under the next MFF – should be carefully considered.

Furthermore, in the same way that the EUGS injected a much needed dose of realism into a list of grand, yet often unattainable, policy goals, it is necessary to abandon high-sounding and utopian projects on EU integration. Instead it is advisable to introduce the possibility of aggregating the preferences of some Member States around issues that are of fundamental importance for European citizens, from immigration to security, with the aim of finding policy solutions that benefit everyone. Faced with new and deepening internal challenges and an increasingly unstable international context, models based on flexible integration and cooperation should be applied also to foreign and security policy areas.

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**Unanimity has  
too often meant  
collective silence**

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Differentiation seems to be the only antidote to the threat of fragmentation and even disintegration. It has already offered a solution for many key sectors within the Union where uniformity was not desirable or achievable, such as the Eurozone, the Schengen area and defence. The EU's concept of flexibility must assume now a different and more strategic meaning in its external action, for example by offering multiple models of cooperation between the EU and candidate, neighbouring or partner countries.

Obviously this raises important questions concerning the compatibility of flexible integration with preserving the political and legal unity of the Union.

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<sup>48</sup> Jean-Claude Juncker, *State of the Union 2018. The Hour of European Sovereignty*, 12 September 2018, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-speech\\_en\\_o.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/soteu2018-speech_en_o.pdf)

In light of this, it must be clear that rights are inextricably linked to responsibilities and a prospect of deeper integration is incompatible with free-riding and unequal burden-sharing. Concrete benchmarks would need to be achieved by vanguard groups of countries in the various differentiation projects, while transitional arrangements should be foreseen for others that might join at a later stage.

It is also necessary to find institutional solutions that make differentiated integration sustainable in terms of governance, firstly by safeguarding the role of EU institutions, and particularly that of the High Representative, both in the various differentiation projects and in the overarching architecture. Most of these developments might be realised within the existing legal framework, but in the medium to long term a revision of the Treaties might be necessary to incorporate the relevant changes into the EU legislation. Finally, democratic legitimacy and accountability must be preserved and safeguarded at all costs in a scenario of increased differentiation, through specific parliamentary mechanisms (ad hoc committees and/or enhanced forms of inter-parliamentary cooperation in specific areas) and real engagement with European citizens through consultation, information and dialogue.<sup>49</sup>

## **2. Balancing strategic autonomy and global agency**

Appearing as a basic element of the EUGS and given added impetus by the Brexit negotiations and President Trump's actions and rhetoric, strategic autonomy is a concept that has resurfaced in various policy debates in Europe.

Implementation of the concept has so far focused mainly on the military dimension, through updating the list of

the EU's military operations and connected capability requirements. There are already some good ideas and analyses as to how the concept is to be approached in this policy domain, and the point here is not to delve more deeply into the specifics of how this process could unfold, but rather to emphasise a number of important elements around strategic autonomy that will help the concept, as currently discussed at the EU and Member State level, become more replete with meaning and more reliably tied to a progressive policy direction.

Indeed, in elaborating such a fuller meaning, it is imperative to conceptualise a much broader definition of strategic autonomy than just its undeniable link to security and defence. Of course, a fundamental part of the EU's discussion around strategic autonomy needs to relate to this policy field; it is almost inescapable, not least because a big part of the challenges that Trump and Brexit have posed go against many of the security and defence guarantees or certainties of the EU. Nonetheless, the varied nature of the challenges confronting the EU strongly suggests that a move towards more independence from (or alternatively, less dependence on, which is what the concept is often associated with) needs a much wider milieu of application to gain relevance.

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**Strategic autonomy  
cannot be  
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In this sense, strategic autonomy cannot be disconnected from a broader foreign policy strategy. Therefore, in addition to security and defence, it should extend to and encompass other areas such as trade, economics, energy and digital policy. How can Europe become more autonomous security-wise in the absence of a well-functioning foreign direct investment screening mechanism, at least in cases of strategic infrastructure? How can Europe better defend its citizens, if it falls easy prey to cyber warfare and disinformation campaigns initiated by

49 Nicoletta Pirozzi, Pier Domenico Tortola and Lorenzo Vai, *Differentiated Integration: A Way Forward to Europe*, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome, [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eu6o\\_8.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/eu6o_8.pdf)



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other international actors? These are rhetorical questions of course, as it is obvious that pursuing the objective of greater autonomy can be a very short-lived exercise, if policy interlinkages are not actively found and promoted.

Advancing in this direction of greater strategic autonomy might be sensible and necessary for the Union, but it will not be easy.

First off, in order to exercise its autonomy, the EU should be able to preserve its unity, by deepening cooperation, integration, coherence and cohesion among its Member States. The aforementioned need to inject flexibility – to allow some coherent level of issue-based differentiation in the way decisions are taken, positions are formed and policies are implemented – stands alongside the necessity of maximising efforts to ensure an EU that is united in its external policies.

These should be seen as parallel, complementary processes.

There is as much a realistic need to make the overall architecture more flexible as there is to insert a greater degree of unity in many of its key parts and decisions; after all, better outcomes due to the former will encourage greater levels of the latter. In this sense, even if the constitutional reconfiguration of 2019 produces an EU that is less normatively convergent, it is easy to understand why pursuing this goal of strategic autonomy should be embraced by Member States. In our turbulent world, size matters, and there is ample evidence that the EU Member States need each other to deliver, especially on strategically relevant areas such as migration, diplomacy or energy. Put more bluntly, moving towards greater (collective) autonomy and doing so in a strategic, united manner is a dire Realpolitik necessity, as otherwise Europe risks becoming irrelevant at the international level.

Secondly, for the EU to be credible in its aim of strategic autonomy, it needs to be clear on what this aim is not

about: namely that striving to be autonomous does not and cannot mean being autarchic. In almost all its external endeavours, the EU does not presently have the capacity to act without resorting to dependencies on other international actors, and is not expected to acquire such capacity in the foreseeable future. Viewed via this lens, autonomy should not be perceived as a switch that the EU can turn on and off when it so wishes; rather it should be treated “as a spectrum reflecting favourable and unfavourable dependencies” that the EU is expected to manage.<sup>50</sup>

Thirdly, it follows that in order to chart its own course, the EU needs to strike a balance between the autonomous articulation of its agency in various policy domains at the international level, its engagement with strategic partners and its commitments in the context of global governance arrangements.

The example of the US is illustrative of the delicate balance that needs to be struck between these three elements. In dealing with the current precedent-breaking US administration, the EU must stay the course in upholding many of the institutions, settings, practices, rules and norms that President Trump seems to scorn – that is, multilateralism, collective solutions and the force of law, not the law of force. This does not mean that the EU should assume a policy of reflexive antithesis to President Trump's policies. On the contrary, the Union should continue engaging and discussing, but this engagement needs a different modus operandi, as the autopilot of transatlantic relations can no longer serve as the preferred mode. When ideas that are directly incompatible with the core of the EU's positions are put forward by the US, resistance must be consistent and principled. At the same time, the EU urgently needs to find and exploit whatever leverage it has to make sure the administration takes its concerns seriously. It has long been prepared to do this on trade issues, but that approach now needs to be extended to other policy areas, not least to foreign policy.

The same logic of careful balancing between dependen-

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<sup>50</sup> Even if focusing on defence, this piece provides an insightful explanation of the debates surrounding strategic autonomy: Daniel Flott, *Strategic Autonomy: Towards 'European Sovereignty' in Defence?*, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 30 November 2018, [https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2012\\_\\_Strategic%20Autonomy.pdf](https://www.iss.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EUISSFiles/Brief%2012__Strategic%20Autonomy.pdf)

cies needs to apply concerning other important international players, such as China and Russia. Especially with regard to the former, the EU has been quite reluctant to (re-)assert its own actorness in this partnership, leaving much of the real political games vis-à-vis Beijing to Member States. The extremely swift adoption (by European standards) of the foreign direct investment screening framework,<sup>51</sup> which mostly had China in mind considering its gargantuan Belt and Road initiative, and most recently the Joint Communication released by the European Commission and the HRVP and adopted by the European Council that went so far as to call China for the first time “a systemic rival promoting alternative models of governance”,<sup>52</sup> demonstrate the EU’s willingness to alter its policy posture in this domain.

Time will assess the efficiency of this approach, but it at least opens up an honest discussion between Brussels and the Member States over this very important issue. These are the kinds of question Europe will be asked to answer more often and more confidently in the future when balancing its strategic autonomy and its global agency.

### **3. Transforming, not just defending, multilateralism**

This has a clear connection with the ability of the EU to exert its gravitas and shape processes and outcomes in defending multilateralism. Doing so should be seen as almost a natural reflex for the EU, as “multilateralism is to the Union what air is to mankind: taken for granted when it is there, but gasping for survival when it starts thinning”.<sup>53</sup>

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Europe needs to  
assert stronger  
agency vis-à-vis its  
strategic partners  
in its effort to defend  
the system  
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Strengthening the resilience of multilateralism means first of all defending liberal cosmopolitan values. The globe’s multilateral institutions require active cultivation, and at a time when a dangerous mix of nationalism, authoritarianism and protectionism is undermining the system, Europe needs to lay out a liberal, cooperative vision as a counterpoint to these internal and external pejorative dynamics. This means upholding and strengthening the international rules-based order and its underlying norms, institutions and mechanisms. It also means promoting the very principles that form the nucleus of the European project, that is, an unwavering belief in democracy, the rule of law, equal rights, and so on.

It is easy to understand why actively promoting such a vision cannot be a spectator sport. This entails that Europe needs to assert stronger agency vis-à-vis its strategic partners in its effort to defend the system. Take trade policy for example – where the EU has exclusive competence – in relation to the Union’s policy posture towards the actions of the Trump administration, which has attempted time and again to upend the regime of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Here, Europe needs to heed the dark warnings and counter more decisively President Trump’s obstructionism in certain crucial respects, such as his refusal to allow the appointment of new judges adjudicating trade disputes, as otherwise we could be faced with the potential of having the entire system break down. As Joseph Stiglitz, the Nobel Laureate in economics, recently stipulated, as long as the White House is occupied by President Trump, “only the EU is capable of keeping the WTO’s rules-based trade regime alive”.<sup>54</sup> This is just one meaningful area where the

<sup>51</sup> Council of the European Union, *Council Greenlights Rules on Screening of Foreign Direct Investments*, 5 March 2019, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/03/05/council-greenlights-rules-on-screening-of-foreign-direct-investments/>

<sup>52</sup> European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP), *EU-China: A Strategic Outlook*, 12 March 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-eu-china-a-strategic-outlook.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Nathalie Tocci, “The Demise of the International Liberal Order and the Future of the European Project”, in *IAI Commentaries*, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome, November 2018, <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/jaicom1863.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz et al., *Rewriting the Rules of the European Economy*, Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS), Brussels, 2018, [https://www.feps-europe.eu/attachments/publications/book\\_stiglitz-web-pp.pdf](https://www.feps-europe.eu/attachments/publications/book_stiglitz-web-pp.pdf)

responsibility placed on the EU's shoulders to support the complex nature of our global multilateral institutional architecture grows more important by the day.

Defending multilateralism is crucial but two important qualifiers need to be mentioned here: first, that doing so does not mean defending all the pathologies of the existing system; and second, that, indeed, defending the principle of multilateralism also means a willingness to actively work to improve those elements of the system that do not work.

In order to be effective in the reform of global governance, in addition to promoting our values, a functional yet principled approach to multilateralism might be beneficial. This more functional engagement does not mean that the EU should dislocate its commitment to promoting its values; on the contrary, it means preserving in a smarter, more pragmatic way the system's very value-based foundations, and not allowing them to wither to the point of non-existence. Recognising that it cannot do everything, everywhere, the EU needs to disaggregate the aspects of the system worth defending and those worth transforming, and part of its action needs to be decided based on how much power the EU has in each policy domain. In particular, the EU needs to focus on areas where Europe can set universal standards, e.g. climate, digital, and so on. These areas can be the testing fields of a new scenario for global governance.

It is also clear that the institutions of global governance, and the rules underpinning them, cannot be reshaped and rewritten by the EU alone. Reflecting the internal trends of differentiated integration, there is the need to move towards a model of poly-governance, built from flexible, topic-focused coalitions of change with shared goals. The ultimate objective would be to respond more transparently, more quickly – and ultimately more collec-

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***Peacebuilding interventions cannot be designed and implemented in a way that underestimates the inextricable link between immediate security concerns and long-term development needs***  
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tively – to address global imbalances and improve lives. This exercise would be effective only if it incorporates other, non-governmental actors (i.e., social movements, cities, etc.) in ways that narrow the intrinsic legitimacy gap when addressing global problems.

Here too, Europe needs not only to lead but to lead by example. Doing so during an era of global turbulence will capture a great deal of attention and will command considerable weight when applied to institutional dynamics. Indeed, while it is a target that will be extremely difficult to operationalise for political and legal reasons, the EU should, for instance, slowly start to work out the mechanics of what a gradual transition towards a shared EU United Nations Security Council seat would look like. This might take years, if not decades, to happen, but initiating the discussion would be an important step

towards demonstrating the EU's commitment to not only defending multilateralism, but reshaping it in a more progressive direction.

#### **4. Relaunching peacebuilding**

Leading by example should not only concern institutional matters, it should touch upon the EU's actionable policy on the ground as well.

It is clear that the EU needs to be able to face the existing or emerging security challenges, particularly those originating in or arriving via its neighbourhood, by designing and implementing a more effective peacebuilding strategy. This goes much beyond the need to reinstate the Union's contribution to international peacekeeping missions, mentioned earlier.

A comprehensive reconceptualisation of strategic thinking in this area entails that effective peacebuilding interventions cannot be designed and implemented in a way that underestimates the inextricable link between



immediate security concerns and long-term development needs. In response to the nexus of challenges, an integrated approach is needed, connecting in a better and more durable manner the much-needed element of assistance towards local actors with the aims of fostering sustainable development, restoring state accountability, empowering regional structures and (re)building good governance.

This integrated approach can only be made possible through the introduction of three important elements: enhanced inter-agency coordination, especially among and within the relevant services in the European Commission and the EEAS; a more flexible set of financial instruments that can cover all the phases of the conflict cycle, from prevention to management and post-conflict stabilisation; and integrated civil–military chains of command for EU missions, similar to the UN Country Team concept.

What is more, an effective peacebuilding strategy needs adequate institutional capabilities to prevent the outbreak of conflicts and to promote sustainable peace. Such capabilities are required both in Brussels and in the field around the world, with a view to strengthening the EU's ability to plan, enable and manage civilian and military missions. The EU and Member States also need professionalised and available personnel to be deployed at short notice – both civilian and military – as well as effective crisis management procedures. Pooling and sharing of training and recruitment of personnel among Member States, notably through the reinforcement of EU training institutions such as the European Security and Defence College and the creation of shared EU databases for civilian and military staff, can help interoperability, while at the same time accelerating deployment.<sup>55</sup>

As cross-border externalities are becoming increasingly common, the EU and its Member States should also make

better use of information and communication technologies and Big Data and integrate them more fully into early warning, conflict analysis and peacebuilding. Dual-use technologies, including satellites and remotely piloted aircraft systems, can also contribute to EU missions by performing various tasks, such as intelligence, surveillance, definition of borders, force protection and supporting police and law enforcement agencies.<sup>56</sup> A clear EU vision on how to effectively employ dual-use technologies is urgently required to ensure proper coordination in both operational and financing terms, especially regarding EU funding of relevant research and technology activities, through Horizon 2020 projects and other initiatives such as the EDF.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the EU must also recognise that sometimes other regional, non-state and transnational actors might be better placed and/or equipped to deal with particular conflicts or crises. As recognised by the EUGS, the EU cannot be ever-present and omnipotent, and hence the Union should also elevate its level of strategic choice, better selecting among engagements and at times delegating on specific interventions.

In a time of scarce resources and power fragmentation, this means taking into consideration that the regionalisation of security is one of the key trends on the ground and that stronger partnerships with regional actors are needed worldwide. Progress on several peacebuilding fronts can be achieved with greater speed and ease with those regional organisations that share members and a geographical scope with the EU, namely NATO and the OSCE, but also with those active in the EU neighbourhood and where building blocks of cooperation have already been established, i.e., with the African Union, the Arab League, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Further dialogue and selected cooperation should be

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55 Ana E. Juncos et al., *EU-CIVCAP Policy Recommendations: Executive Summary of the Final Report including Guidance for Policymakers*, 30 September 2018, p. 8, [https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/eucivcap-executive\\_summary-policy\\_recommendations.pdf](https://eucivcap.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/eucivcap-executive_summary-policy_recommendations.pdf)

56 Nicoletta Pirozzi, Bernardo Venturi and Alessandro Marrone, "EU Member States' Capabilities in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: Personnel and Technology", in *Global Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2-3, 2018, p. 141-155

57 Juncos et al., *EU-CIVCAP Policy Recommendations*, cit., p. 7

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explored also with other actors, including, among others, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Organization of American States.

## **5. Getting the European defence architecture right**

The EUGS provided much needed political impetus into European defence cooperation. Subsequent initiatives – including PESCO, CARD, EDF and others – represent concrete steps forward. It is now time to implement those initiatives and to produce tangible results, in order to avoid the current momentum being lost. This requires first of all significant political will and a sustained focus from policymakers both at the national and the EU level. It also requires a systemic view that provides for an overall coherent framework between all the initiatives, so that they are reinforcing – and not overlapping or duplicating – each other, and that respects a correct balance between the intergovernmental and communitarian dimensions. If this balance is not there, national ministries of defence would refrain from a sufficient level of engagement. The next European legislature could be the opportunity to turn a hodgepodge of initiatives into a streamlined, coherent and balanced European defence cooperation framework.

This systemic view must be supported by a conceptual understanding of the different function of each initiative and by a review of the overall institutional architecture. Conceptually, this approach entails the full formalisation of the fact that the basis of any defence cooperation at the EU level must be the capability needs of the Member States and of the Union. This means that all the work in this domain must be geared towards producing capabilities that Member States and the EU actually need, and not towards providing incentives to the industry. A way to ensure this is to adopt the Capability Development Plan (CDP), which details the short- to long-term military needs

at the European level, as the baseline for all initiatives. The CDP should be complemented by the Overarching Strategic Research Agenda, also agreed by Member States, for the defence research needs, with both acting as the tools that tell us where we want to be.

Alongside this conceptualisation, the main function of the aforementioned CARD will be to provide a view of the current capability field, thus allowing us to map any progress – or lack thereof. CARD, therefore, will tell us where we are. Then there is the operational part of the concep-

tual framework, the PESCO, which is a process through which Member States should develop their capability needs, and the Commission's EDF, which should help finance the related projects. If all Member States and EU institutions are onboard with this overall framework, and if all future developments are coherent with it, then we will be able to make significant steps forward.

From an institutional standpoint, the aim of moving in this direction would be to structure the currently fragmented intergovernmental institutions in a way that preserves their role as drivers of defence policy and enhances their effectiveness, while not precluding future developments towards a communitarisation of defence. This would also ensure that Member States can fully exploit the support provided by the European Commission, notably through the EDF. The model for the intergovernmental institutional framework should

be that of a national structure, which has a political decision-maker (the Minister), a military leadership (the Chief of Defence) and someone responsible for procurement and capability development (a National Armaments Director). All those figures have their own supporting structures and are subject to political constraints by elected bodies (governments and parliaments). This model, of course, should be appropriately adapted to the EU format.

It follows that the necessary steps should be taken

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***All the work in this domain must be geared towards producing capabilities that Member States and the EU actually need, and not towards providing incentives to the industry***

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towards the creation of a Council of Defence Ministers, chaired by the HRVP. Ministers of Defence already meet several times a year for 'informal' Councils, back to back with Foreign Affairs colleagues, and within the European Defence Agency (EDA) Steering Board. But all those formats have limitations, either because they are informal, or because it is not just defence on the plate, or because they can only discuss EDA initiatives. Given the level of political ambition that EU Member States have subscribed to in the past few years in the area of security and defence, there is really no point anymore in not having a formalised Council of Defence Ministers. This should play the role domestically carried out by each Defence Minister, providing strategic guidance and taking key decisions on capability development, missions and operations.

However, simply deciding that Europe should now have a Council of Defence Ministers will not do, as such a Council will need a range of appropriate, specific supporting and implementing structures. In this regard, it is important to point out that almost everything that is needed for this to happen is already there.

The EU Military Committee is clearly fully qualified to function as if it was a national Chief of Defence. It could take the crucial strategic decisions, while availing itself of the support of the EU Military Staff. Similarly, the various compositions of the EDA Steering Board might well support a newly created Council of Defence Ministers on matters pertaining to European defence policy and capability development (defence policy, Research & Development policy, armaments policy). The EDA itself might very well play the role of a European armaments agency, as was foreseen when it was founded, perhaps itself supported by a specialist programme management agency such as the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation. The several different directorates and units comprising the crisis management component of the EEAS, if drastically streamlined and rationalised, could usefully represent the operational side, ensuring also the necessary liaison with the civilian world. Finally, the European Commission

would provide much needed resources, while – last but not least – a defence committee (a full one) in the European Parliament could exercise proper oversight on capability development and missions.

Creating a Council of Defence Ministers is an idea worth actively exploring and implementing, but only if it does not result in a mere make-up, and only if it does not simply add up to the already crowded and confusing European defence cooperation framework.

## **6. Financing our ambition**

When it comes to defence funding, it would be wise to drop the 2% debate altogether. It does not make military sense, and it is used as a political tool to enfeeble European voices within NATO. The 2% is a political target that NATO allies agreed together: it simply bears a political meaning as a target demonstrating political ambition, but makes very little military sense.

For that matter, no quantitative target alone makes sense: even if one country spends 15% of its GDP on the armed forces, but this only goes to raise paycheques, it will continue to have the same military capabilities it has with a tenfold lower expenditure. Politically speaking, the US claim that it spends 4% on its defence budget while others spend less than 2% makes no sense either: this part of the US budget is reserved for NATO-related forces alone, since it is also intended to keep alive the global US military architecture with its overseas bases, carrier groups,

etc., which are mostly not related to the North Atlantic Alliance. Continuing to discuss and fixate on the 2% threshold will not help the EU grow in this domain, while it will continue exposing the Union to the barrage of attacks by the US administration, keeping it on its toes forever.

So let's put aside 2% and discuss capabilities instead. Let's discuss how can we build better, cheaper and more readily available military capabilities. This will certainly entail putting more money in the pot, but it will also signi-

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***Let's put aside  
2% and discuss  
capabilities  
instead***

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fy looking at how to get ‘more bang for the buck’, i.e., how to better increase defence cooperation in Europe. In this direction, the financial tools foreseen in the next budget cycle seem to be the most promising answer to the questions at hand, if of course they are confirmed in the negotiations that lead to the approval of the MMF 2021–27. In light of this, the proposal presented by the European Commission in May 2018 relating to increased investment in EU external action up to 26% in order to reach €123 billion should be confirmed, while the overall budget for security and defence should be significantly reinforced to €27.5 billion.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, the partial political agreement reached by the EU institutions in February 2019 on a €13 billion European defence budget should be confirmed by the European Parliament and the Council. This will contribute to the realisation of the EU’s strategic autonomy with substantial investments in both research and capabilities development.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the HRVP proposal to establish the European Peace Facility (EPF) should be seriously considered by EU policy-makers in the next MFF negotiations, as it would represent a welcome step of progress towards closing the existing gaps in capacity-building for military actors and reinforcing the EU’s commitment to peace and stability worldwide. Under the EPF scheme, a new off-budget fund worth €10.5 billion would be established, aimed at allowing the financing of all Common Foreign and Security Policy action with military or defence implications – thus expanding the geographic scope of the African Peace Facility – and enhancing the scope of common costs for military CSDP missions and operations – thereby reinforcing the so-called Athena mechanism.<sup>60</sup>

Beyond defence, and to keep up with the ambitious objectives of the EUGS when it comes to an integrated approach and a joined-up Union, the proposal of the European Commission to establish a new single Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) with a €90 billion budget should be supported and expanded.<sup>61</sup> The NDICI would bring together eight separate instruments and funds under the current MFF, in addition to parts of the European Development Fund. As such, it is a positive example of rationalisation of existing financial tools, but a certain number of conditions need to be met to translate into a real step forward. These include the adequate balance between external action and development objectives, the correct identification of priorities in addressing the root causes of migration and the eradication of poverty in least developed countries, and the combination of flexibility and predictability of funding.<sup>62</sup>

Relatedly, the next MFF should prioritise support for global public goods, including security and defence of citizens and societies, the effective management of large-scale migration and the promotion of human rights, but also the fight against climate change. Doing so would be a formidable opportunity for the EU to demonstrate that it is serious about fulfilling the raised expectations to become a stronger global player, vis-à-vis both external partners and its Member States. It would also be an important step towards realising the vision of the EUGS, but also the requirements of the Union’s engagement within the framework of the European Consensus on Development and other key international priorities, such as the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>63</sup>

<sup>58</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *EU budget 2021-2027 Invests More and Better in External Action, Security and Defence*, Brussels, 2 May 2018, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/43885/eu-budget-2021-2027-invests-more-and-better-external-action-security-and-defence\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/43885/eu-budget-2021-2027-invests-more-and-better-external-action-security-and-defence_en)

<sup>59</sup> European Commission, *Factsheet: The European Defence Fund*, March 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/34509>

<sup>60</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *European Peace Facility: An EU Off-Budget Fund to Build Peace and Strengthen International Security*, Brussels, 13 June 2018, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/mff\\_dpeacefacility\\_v3\\_eu.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/mff_dpeacefacility_v3_eu.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> European Parliament, *A New Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument. Proposal for a New Regulation*, 19 March 2019, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628251/EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)628251\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2018/628251/EPRS_BRI(2018)628251_EN.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> Niels Keijzer, Clare Castillejo and Mariella Di Ciommo, *The Proposed Single Instrument: Can It Be All Things to All People?*, European Think Tank Group (ETTG), Brussels, 18 June 2018, <https://ettg.eu/2018/06/18/the-proposed-single-instrument-can-it-be-all-things-to-all-people/>

<sup>63</sup> Tancrède Voituriez, Elisabeth Hege, Giulia Maci and Christine Hackenesch, *Steering the EU towards a Sustainability Transformation*, European Think Tank Group (ETTG), Brussels, 23 April 2018, <https://ettg.eu/2018/04/23/steering-the-eu-towards-a-sustainability-transformation/>

## 7. De-securitising and managing migration

If democracy, as we know it and experience it in Europe, is an idea currently under siege by populists, then this development is by and large a consequence of the misconception that Europe is under siege by refugees or migrants. The ‘crisis’ lens served to distort the true proportions of the problem, leading to its excessive securitisation. This in turn led to the expansion of the Overton window of migration-related public discourse across Europe, with many fringe, if not unacceptable, ideas, making a ‘spectacular’ return to the centre of discussion. The combination of these two developments has proven an electoral Trojan horse for populist, demagogic and nationalist forces that have capitalised on real or perceived fears to further their political agendas. It has also monopolised the EU’s foreign policy agenda, leading to the predominance of short-termism over longer-term perspectives, thus overlooking development, humanitarian peacebuilding and other priorities.

In order to change this, the migration dossier should be restored to its accurate proportions. This is not to suggest that migration issues should be underestimated or overlooked. It is rather to signal that the threat inflation that the migration vector has been willingly or unwillingly afforded should regain its true dimensions. Otherwise the migration issue will continue to be misused as a tool of advancing the electoral and political platforms of those centrifugal forces that view the Union as a threat. At the same time, the specificity of the refugee dimension – which has been sidelined in the so-called migration crisis – should be preserved and the protection space guaranteed by international law maintained.

De-securitising migration is a welcome step but it would be hollow if it were not complemented by a concurrent change in the fundamental approach underlying policy design and implementation in this domain. A better management of migration flows can be achieved, but only if such a policy “has a solid base in protection, mutual trust,

and solidarity, together with a sound orientation towards development”.<sup>64</sup>

For this to happen, the securitisation and externalisation trends of migration policy must also be reversed. The EU has rightly identified migration as a phenomenon at the intersection between security and development. Nevertheless, this dual dimension is often lost when attempting to tackle the issue, with the pendulum swinging in the vast majority of cases towards security as the dominant approach between the two. Consequently, the focus has often been not on balancing security concerns and development needs, but rather almost exclusively on countering the former; with the spotlight being on border control, security sector reform, maritime security, measures countering migrant smuggling, human trafficking and other pertinent aspects.

Rebalancing this is an integral element of the paradigm shift that needs to take place in the EU’s approach towards migration. This needs to be complemented by a much better understanding of the complex (and often intertwined) structural factors linked to demographic, urbanisation, climate change and poverty trends in the countries of origin, transit and destination. An effective strategy should start by considering the structural gaps that exist in governance at the local, national and regional level, and developing, through proper foresight, an appropriate policy posture, consisting of proactive rather than reactive responses to the problems on the ground. This process requires a closer involvement of actors and authorities across the entire continuum of migration flows: listening to partners’ points of view and interests is essential to develop context-sensitive knowledge, and ensuring ownership by all actors involved is pivotal to planning effective interventions.

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<sup>64</sup> FEPS Global Migration Group, *Prioritising People: A Progressive Narrative for Migration*, Brussels, 19 September 2018, p. 13, <https://www.feps-europe.eu/resources/publications/625-prioritising-people-a-progressive-narrative-on-migration.html>

Evidently, a prerequisite for all this to materialise is the EU assuming its own responsibility by re-designing both the fundamentals and the specifics of its migration and asylum policy internally. The operationalisation of a fair responsibility-sharing through the implementation of a refugee quota scheme together with the reform of the Dublin regulation cannot be further postponed. Direly needed steps in this direction should also include a broadening of resettlement schemes and humanitarian corridors. At the same time, migration policy should be recalibrated in order to couple the fight against irregular immigration with the development of channels of regular migration and forward-looking integration policies.

## **8. Elevating Africa from a neighbour to a true partner**

Suffering both from an imbalanced focus on security and from many of the misguided assumptions relating to migration, the African continent should figure among the top priorities of the EU's foreign policy agenda for the next decades.

Due to its relevance as a turbulent neighbour, a strategic partner and a potential ally, Africa matters tremendously for Europe. But this is not merely due to the flows of migrants arriving on the EU's shores or the security issues that might arise from these flows, as many regressive forces would suggest; rather, it is mostly because of the continent's equally tremendous promise and potential. Disentangling myth and stereotypes from reality is a first key step in the process of revitalising the relationship between Africa and Europe. This, the EU owes to the African people following the dark past of our engagement, and the painful wounds that this engagement has left on the ground.

“  
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Yet, injecting greater strategic depth in the bi-continental relationship denotes a lot more than this. As the HRVP has acknowledged on so many occasions, doing so entails elevating the relationship from a simple geographical engagement to a genuinely cooperative and balanced partnership.

This will require nothing short of another fundamental shift in the way the EU and its Member States view the African continent.

In line with the principled pragmatism credo stipulated in the EUGS, the priority actions to be included in such a future partnership should be anchored in an African vision for “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa” as presented in the Agenda 2063 adopted by the African Union Assembly in 2015<sup>65</sup> but linked to the EU's strategic interests. This can be the stimulus for a more frank partnership between Africa and Europe, based on clearly identified mutual interests, which could then incentivise considerable buy-in of EU Member States. However, an approach that aspires to be both fair and effective cannot run the risk of overlooking the issue of African ownership of this vision and of the assessment of local needs that will support it. This must be the result of a joint and inclusive process, based on the participation of the main stakeholders at the continental, regional, national and local level, both in Europe and in Africa.

On the basis of this joint assessment, the EU has to lay out its own path in approaching this renewed partnership with Africa, on the one hand reconciling the diverging interests of its Member States, and on the other making clear the substantive differences of this approach vis-à-vis other regional and international actors, including the US, China, Turkey and the Gulf States.

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<sup>65</sup> African Union, *Agenda 2063*, <https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/agenda2063.pdf>



Admittedly, this is a difficult endeavour, but one worth pursuing actively. Fostering the resilience of African societies should be seen as vital in this regard, superseding any individual EU Member State's particular interests on the ground. Having a concerted focus on resilience can be ensured by enlarging the vision on democratic governance and civic participation. A number of initiatives should be promoted to build accountable and inclusive political systems in Africa beyond electoral processes, for example by empowering youth and advancing women's participation in the political life and in peacebuilding processes.

A distinctive EU approach should also involve additional efforts in the improvement of African capacities in peace and security, in that order. This can be made possible in cooperation with external partners, as was done in the G5 Sahel case, and by ensuring predictable funding to capacity-building for the African Union, regional organisations such as ECOWAS and IGAD, and various African countries' institutions, dependent on a conditionality that reflects the EU's principles as much as its interests.

As a practical testament to its genuine intention for a fairer, elevated partnership that differentiates Europe from other international actors, the EU should use the current positive momentum and substantiate its policy re-orientation in a number of more tangible ways. For instance, the EU should adopt an integrated approach to natural resources, combining a social and environmental focus – in line with the SDGs – with the regulatory, legal and educational dimensions. In particular, the definition of clear and effective pan-African regulatory frameworks for the management of natural resources (i.e., land ownership and land use controls) might guarantee adequate levels of investment, along with greater control on the behaviour of the actors involved.<sup>66</sup> A specific focus on boosting local manufacturing and processing capacity could favour the exploitation of Africa's natural resources to the benefit of its own citizens, contributing to the

strengthening of internal demand and to the boosting of intra-African trade.<sup>67</sup>

In responding to imbalances in the nexus between security and development, a deep reflection of the EU's development model in its foreign policy calculus should also take place. Such a reflection is a necessary condition, if the relationship with Africa is to take a leap forward. This means, first and foremost, restoring the link between the allocation of development funds and long-term development goals. EU internal priorities and migration flows management should not divert development aid from vital objectives, such as poverty eradication, always respecting the principle of joint planning with local partners.

Relatedly, the EU should also find innovative solutions to the question of promoting sustainable development in low-income countries. This requires actions to promote stronger interconnections – possibly through digital platforms – between the education and labour sectors. Encouraging stronger interlinkages between both continents in the innovation field, as well as promoting research exchanges, could have a marked impact, as long as they are tied to 'return to Africa' policies with the specific objective of creating and spreading local knowledge, skills and expertise across the continent. This can in turn create a positive environment to meet the aspirations of younger African generations, which could be vital in sustaining the spirit and the practices of this new, cooperative vision of a truly balanced partnership in the future.

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66 Nicoletta Pirozzi, Nicolo' Sartori and Bernardo Venturi, *The Joint Africa-EU Strategy*, November 2017, Brussels, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/603849/EXPO\\_STU\(2017\)603849\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/603849/EXPO_STU(2017)603849_EN.pdf)

67 *Ibid.*

## 9. Preserving the legacy of the EU Global Strategy

In connecting many of the dots of the policy recommendations above, a vital factor would be to preserve and build upon the EUGS legacy in the years to come.

When it was released in 2016, the Strategy defied many expectations. It did so by:

- Becoming global in its remit and its ambition, when the scope of the document had been pre-emptively considered by the naysayers to be narrow before its publication;
- Not being a too long or too expansive wish-list, but instead being grounded on maturity and pragmatism, without abolishing the necessary transformative element of vision;
- Being coherent in its scope, responding to the varied insecurity factors of Europeans, regardless of whether they lived in Athens, London, Warsaw, Prague, Lisbon or Tallinn; and
- Being released when it was: despite those predicting that it would be shelved due to the cataclysmic events following the UK referendum, it was presented mere days after the vote, and with good reason.

With its limitations more than obvious almost three years on, but also with its achievements well documented, the EUGS can now be acknowledged to have at least offered a roadmap of progress, unevenly but steadily followed through. It did so not by means of analytical inertia, offering a slight repackaging of terminology already there, but by introducing a high level of conceptual innovation, such as the elements of

‘resilience’, ‘principled pragmatism’, ‘integrated approach’ and ‘joined-up Union’.

In a policy domain pregnant with ideas but suffering in delivery, these innovations might not have shaken up the system like many wished or hoped, but they very much articulated a concrete and coherent vision, elaborating a cohesive mix of strategic policy objectives and methods for the EU’s position in and orientation towards the world. While still incomplete in their application, these innovations have been complemented by a number of additional documents since 2016, refining the vision included in the Strategy and attempting to make it more actionable.

As suggested by the near-truism with which this report began (“The world is changing”), the global flux within which the EU finds itself makes abundantly clear the need to preserve the Strategy’s legacy and the staying power of some of its constructive, innovative elements. With many of the tremendously positive changes set in motion

or at least given impetus by the EUGS still unfolding, however slowly, the EU simply does not have the luxury to start from scratch and assume a tabula rasa approach beyond the end of the current Commission mandate.

The recommendation here is not to eternally keep the same political priorities, binding the successor of the current HRVP past the 2019 institutional reconfiguration, but rather to strengthen an adequate level of continuity in state affairs, and build upon the progress achieved. This can only be done by identifying priorities and actions for an effective foreign policy based on the lessons learned from the experience of the Strategy’s implementation, rather than by electing to start all over again.

This need for continuity concerns not only the Strategy’s content and innovation, but also the institutional culture

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it introduced. Europe cannot wait a further 13 years for another strategic document of this kind. Having an exercise of this magnitude and scope under every HRVP is therefore also needed, since it will further deepen the belief and understanding that the EU is (one of the) primary players in setting the common course framework of action.

### **10. Strengthening the European project**

As the last, but self-evidently not least, recommendation, none of the above changes can take place if the European project itself is not strengthened.

The symbolic shock of Brexit, the fact that we are running the risk of turning numb to the authoritarian bent observed in many countries outside Europe but also within, and the many examples of foreign policy incoherence between policy and rhetoric (amongst some impressive examples of coherence) are all illustrative of the urgency of so doing.

Elaborating a comprehensive list of progressive policy pathways through which the European project can be strengthened goes far beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, in offering a more progressive EU foreign policy agenda for the future, there are some important elements that are worth emphasising.

Primarily, that Europe means what it says on the tin. Member States cannot choose what they like and implement it while discarding what does not suit them; they cannot, for example, be recipients of EU funding while working to undermine fundamental EU values, or they cannot take solidarity for granted during normal times, only for it to be glaringly absent when it counts.

Strengthening the European project thus does not only mean defending it from external challenges that seek to

dilute the quality of Europe's democracy, such as campaigns of disinformation and foreign interference; it also means dealing more resolutely with the internal ones.

The Union can neither be reduced to a trade-related or single market transactionalism, nor diminished to an à la carte guarantor of its basic principles, as in both cases the entire European project will become morally indignant. This is why the EU institutions need to continue standing firm on violations of its fundamental principles within European borders, using the full panoply of tools and mechanisms available, including Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union.

**“  
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into action  
”**

Not acting to rectify the problem now means that we will likely not be able to put the toothpaste back into the tube. Principles and values matter and they are likely to matter more in an era where a 'dine or be dinner' power competition is at least a partial reality; therefore, they cannot be allowed to be hijacked or abandoned by those regressive political forces that perceive Europe solely as an agent of interest promotion.

How is this relevant for foreign policy?

Precisely because if Europe means what it says on the tin, people can see the ingredients and choose whether to 'purchase' or not. Preaching water internationally, while drinking wine domestically is not a good policy blueprint for enhanced credibility, especially if the EU wants to translate the EUGS vision into action and to continue serving as the champion and defender of liberal international values.

There is no binary option with which the EU can opt for not defending these values across its territory, while continuing to advocate in favour of them outside of it. In an era where the Union, having long premised the core of its foreign policy on its soft-power capacities and its



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normative power dimension, seems to have accepted its decreasing leverage, not acting to first put its own house in order would serve to further exacerbate this decline in reach and impact.

As alluded to on multiple occasions above, vocal and actionable unity is a prerequisite for more consistency between domestic and international policies and politics. From the EU's unified position towards Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the Khashoggi case to the sanctions imposed against the Russian Federation in the follow-up to the Crimea crisis, and from the Iran nuclear deal to the EU-27's united stance vis-à-vis Brexit, there are several – smaller and larger – examples making it crystal clear that unity is direly needed to tackle what regularly ails the EU's foreign policy: inaction, incoherence and irrelevance. By standing together, Europeans gain greater leverage, are less exposed to divide et impera tactics by other international players, shield themselves from retribution and ultimately produce policy outcomes that are much more satisfactory for every Member State. It is uncertain what each Member State can deliver individually – especially on the more haute-politique dossiers – when delinked from unified European power.

In this spirit, strengthening the European project, its underlying ethos of compromise and its component values, is necessary for making the EUGS a more actionable reality, and thereby strengthening EU foreign policy. After all, many forget that fostering resilience, the Strategy's leitmotif of sorts, concerns both the external dimension and the internal dimension of the EU. Therefore, the call that the Strategy makes in favour of encouraging those homegrown dynamics that go in the direction of more accountability, legitimacy and political participation, rings alarmingly true both for what is happening outside, but also inside our Union.

In today's world, which is fraught with uncertainty, a stronger Europe within its borders is a stronger Europe beyond its borders; and for this reason is a sine qua non for a Europe walking the strategic talk in designing and implementing a better foreign policy for its future, for our future. More boldly, with greater unity, with a more confident stride – and of course or rather therefore, in a more progressive direction.

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