

**THE VALUE OF POWER, THE POWER OF VALUES:  
A CALL FOR AN EU GRAND STRATEGY**



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**THE VALUE OF POWER,  
THE POWER OF VALUES:  
A CALL FOR AN EU GRAND STRATEGY**

SVEN BISCOP (ed.)



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# Table of Contents

Executive Summary . . . . .	3
Preface . . . . .	7
Why a Grand Strategy Is Needed . . . . .	9
<i>A Cause for Strategy</i> . . . . .	9
<i>On to a True Strategic Review</i> . . . . .	13
A Grand Strategy for Whom? . . . . .	15
<i>Values</i> . . . . .	15
<i>Vital Interests</i> . . . . .	16
<i>Which Kind of Actor?</i> . . . . .	17
<i>A Power and a Project</i> . . . . .	19
Principles and Problems of a Grand Strategy . . . . .	21
<i>Principles</i> . . . . .	21
<i>Problems</i> . . . . .	22
A Grand Strategy to Achieve which Objectives? . . . . .	25
<i>The Neighbourhood</i> . . . . .	25
<i>Enlargement</i> . . . . .	26
<i>Regional Objectives</i> . . . . .	27
<i>Global and Institutional Objectives</i> . . . . .	29
<i>Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management</i> . . . . .	30
The Institutions of Grand Strategy . . . . .	35
Conclusion: A New European Project . . . . .	37
Contributors . . . . .	39





## Executive Summary

In its 2003 *European Security Strategy* (ESS), the EU has a grand strategy, embracing all instruments and resources at the disposal of the Union and the Member States, but a partial one. The ESS tells us *how* to do things – in a preventive, holistic and multilateral way – but it is much vaguer on *what* to do: what are the concrete objectives and priorities of the EU as a global actor?

The recent debate about the ESS, resulting in the 2008 *Report about the Implementation of the European Security Strategy*, failed to answer this question. Offering little in terms of recommendations for the future, the Report creates an impression of unfinished business, which the EU can ill afford now that the Lisbon Treaty will change the institutional set-up of its foreign and security policy, NATO has launched a strategic debate of its own to which an EU contribution is essential, and the EU risks being overshadowed by the much more purposive emerging powers or BRICs. Regardless of one's initial opinion about its opportunity, a fully-fledged strategic review is now in order, with the aim of completing the ESS.

The first rule of strategy-making is to know thyself. Which values and interests should our grand strategy safeguard? Europe has in fact a very distinctive social model, combining democracy, the market economy and strong government intervention. Preserving and strengthening this internal social contract between the EU and its citizens, guaranteeing them security, economic prosperity, political freedom and social well-being, is the fundamental objective of the EU, both internally and as a global actor. The conditions that have to be fulfilled to allow that constitute the EU's vital interests: defence against any military threat to the territory of the Union; open lines of communication and trade (in physical as well as in cyber space); a secure supply of energy and other vital natural resources; a clean environment; manageable migration flows; the maintenance of international law and universally agreed rights; and autonomy of EU decision-making.

To safeguard these interests, the EU must be a *power*, i.e. a strategic actor that consciously and purposely defines long-term objectives, actively pursues these, and acquires the necessary means to that end. Which kind of power the EU chooses to be, is also conditioned by the international environment. Marked by interpolarity, i.e. existential interdependence between an increased number of global powers, that environment is very challenging, but at the same time presents the EU with an opportunity to pursue a distinctive grand strategy. In the absence of enemies and in view of the need for cooperation to tackle global

challenges, the best way of defending our interests, in order to defend our model and values, is precisely to spread those values, because increasing the access of citizens worldwide to security, prosperity, freedom and well-being directly addresses the underlying causes of threats and challenges. If the fundamental objective of the EU is the preservation and strengthening of its internal social contract, the best way of achieving that is to promote it in the rest of the world (an external social contract), which moreover constitutes a positive agenda in its own right. The EU does not seek to coerce others into adopting it, not even merely to entice them through conditionality, but to *convince* them of the benefits of our model and values on the basis of shared interests and common challenges. Thus the recognition of the universality of our values can be gradually and consensually increased.

The preventive, holistic, and multilateral approach which the EU has pursued is in line with this grand strategy, but implementation has revealed a number of unanswered questions. How to avoid the clash between immediate interests and the emphasis on values, which thus leads to weakness? How to act vis-à-vis the emerging global powers and integrate them in the multilateral architecture? What to do when prevention fails and the threat or use of force is required?

The answers to these questions will determine the objectives which a complete grand strategy should define in more detail. The following priority areas require the identification of specific EU interests and the definition of concrete objectives, in order to direct sub-strategies, policies and actions:

- The Neighbourhood: What is the desired end-state of the Neighbourhood Policy? Can only democracy create a consensual value-based community and thus safeguard our interests, or will democratization create such upheaval that our interests would be damaged? Only when our interests and red lines are clear can a true strategic partnership with Russia be pursued.
- Enlargement: A successful instrument so far, further enlargement is determining for relations with Russia and for the geopolitical position of the EU – and cannot proceed therefore without strategic debate.
- Regional objectives: A reluctance to discuss interests and join up the different European presences, from aid and trade to diplomacy, has undermined policies towards Central Asia, the Gulf and Africa. Other regions too, such as Asia, Latin America and the Arctic need a thorough assessment of EU interests to determine whether or not our presence should be stepped up.
- Global and institutional objectives: The EU must sharpen its view about the multilateral architecture, reconciling reform with increased effectiveness of EU representation. That should inform a really strategic use of its strategic partnerships with the BRICs, the existence of which too often seems more important than their content.

- Conflict resolution and crisis management: A white book should define Europe's ambition as a security actor. Regardless of whether in a specific case Europeans deploy under the flag of ESDP, NATO or the UN: which types of operations must European forces be capable of, which priority regions and scenarios require intervention, and which is the scale of the effort to be devoted to these priorities?

It is not sufficient to have a more complete grand strategy – the EU must then also apply it. That requires an institutional follow-up structure. At the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the High Representative / Vice-President of the Commission, supported by the External Action Service, should be formally entrusted with the implementation and development of EU strategy.

A grand strategy that translates the values on which the EU's own social model is based into a proactive and constructive foreign policy, aimed at concrete objectives: on that basis, with the right political leadership, the EU can be a global power.



## Preface

Why another paper about EU strategy? And grand strategy at that? Because the debate about the implementation of the *European Security Strategy* that the EU organized in 2008 generated great expectations – that were greatly disappointed. This is not a criticism of those who were involved in the debate, as in fact were many of the authors of this paper. Events conspired to render an exercise which was always going to be difficult almost impossible: the Irish no vote in June 2008, the Georgian crisis that summer, and then the financial crisis ensured that little energy remained in the capitals for a true strategic review. The *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy* in which the debate culminated provides a concise overview of implementation and confirms the Union's choice for a holistic and multilateral approach, but offers less in terms of concrete recommendations for the future.

Our argument is that the EU cannot leave it at that. Because of the – perhaps exaggerated – expectations, the perception, which the EU can hardly afford, is one of unfinished business. The Report can therefore only be the end of the beginning: once started, the exercise must be brought to a good end, regardless of one's initial opinion about its opportunity. On the basis of the Report a true strategic review can yet take place. The result will be a *grand* strategy, because that is the scope of the ESS already today, embracing all of the instruments and resources at the disposal of the EU and the Member States, and because that expresses the high level of ambition which the EU as a global power must have.

Building on its earlier work on EU strategy, *Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations* convened an international working group of academics and practitioners. The aim is not to write a grand strategy – “We the peoples of the European Union...” – that would be too immodest a venture, even for the academics among us. Our aim is to make the case for a grand strategy, and to pose all the questions which a grand strategy should address, in order to stimulate the debate.

Like earlier Egmont working groups, ours is an informal group, implying that all members speak only in their own name and do not represent a country or institution. While not necessarily agreeing with every single word, all members of the group subscribe to the spirit and the main arguments of the paper. Those members who consented to it are listed at the end of the paper; others preferred to remain anonymous. As the group's convenor and scribe, I want to express my sincere gratitude to all members for their contribution. If only all of one's writings could be alimanted and scrutinized by such distinguished experts...

Sven BISCOP





## Why a Grand Strategy Is Needed

In its 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) the EU already has a grand strategy – but a partial one. Grand strategy, defined by John Gaddis as “the calculated relationship between means and large ends”, is about defining the long-term overall foreign policy objectives to be achieved and the basic categories of instruments to be applied to that end. It serves as a reference framework for day-to-day policy-making and guides the definition of the means – i.e. the civilian and military capabilities – to be developed. By nature, grand strategy has a broad scope, integrating all external policies, so in EU terms not just ESDP or even CFSP, but all relevant Community policies as well. For each of these areas more detailed strategies must be developed, serving as “sub-strategies” to the grand strategy.

The ESS does part of this: starting from an analysis of the global environment, it outlines a holistic approach, putting to use in an integrated way the full range of instruments for external action, through partnerships and multilateral institutions, for a permanent policy of prevention and stabilization, and it draws some implications for the means. This is an important strategic choice, but it mostly tells us *how* to do things – the ESS is much vaguer on *what* to do. So the issue is not that the ESS is not valid or has been outdated – in fact, it already mentions all of the so-called new threats and challenges, proof of the authors’ foresight. The issue is that the ESS is incomplete in terms of objectives, because to start with it is not clear about the values and interests to be defended. A grand strategy must necessarily be translated into sub-strategies and then policies for it to be put into action, but the objectives of “building security in our neighbourhood” and “effective multilateralism”<sup>1</sup> have proved too broad, and Member States far too hesitant to act upon the strategy that they have adopted, to generate clear priorities. As a result, the EU has not become markedly more proactive, capable or coherent since the adoption of the ESS.

## A Cause for Strategy

Even with an incomplete grand strategy, the EU could have been more of a global power, beyond the area of trade, if it had not been for the half-hearted implementation of the ESS and Member States’ reluctance to act proactively and collectively. Grand strategy need not start from scratch, as the ESS makes valid

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1. Under the heading of “strategic objectives” the ESS also mentions “addressing the threats”, but rather than setting future-oriented targets, this section is limited to listing past actions and outlining the need for a preventive and holistic approach.

choices, but a fully-fledged revision is now required, in order to complete it. The reasons are manifold.

When the December 2007 European Council mandated High Representative Javier Solana “to examine the implementation of the Strategy with a view to proposing elements on how to improve the implementation and, as appropriate, elements to complement it”, great expectations were raised, but the outcome was disappointing.<sup>2</sup> The December 2008 European Council duly adopted a *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World*, deciding to leave the ESS itself untouched. This might have been an acceptable result, had the Report offered concrete recommendations to improve implementation – but it did not, although recognizing that “despite all that has been achieved, implementation of the ESS remains work in progress”. Even though partly an issue of expectations management, in the eyes of many this outcome has once again confirmed the image of a hesitant and reactive EU, uncertain of its role on the world stage, internally divided and riddled by institutional blockages. The Report therefore cannot now be the end of the process – it must be the start of a true strategic review. Even if in 2008 one did not feel a review necessary yet, or thought the timing – before ratification of the Lisbon Treaty – not ideal, once undertaken, it must now be brought to a good end as soon as the political momentum can be created. That would also bring enhanced clarity, for although the Report – which is longer than the ESS itself – “does not replace the ESS, but reinforces it”, the existence of the two documents alongside each other is prone to confusion. Surely, if the EU would revisit the issue, it would not seek to adopt a “report on the Report”.

The eventual entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty could create the necessary political momentum, and is an argument in itself in favour of continuing the review process, in order to incorporate its innovations in the field of foreign and security policy. The Lisbon Treaty will provide the EU with more and better tools – a grand strategy should tell us when and why to use them. It should also be clear where the institutional ownership of a grand strategy lies and who is responsible for its implementation, an issue on which the ESS remains silent.

The negative perception of the strength of EU strategic thinking comes at a particular moment because it coincides with NATO’s decision, at its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit in Strasbourg-Kehl on 4 April 2009, to develop a new Strategic Concept. The administration of US President Barack Obama will certainly come to the NATO debate with a clear sense of what it wants, informed by a new

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2. For an analysis of the debate, see: Sven Biscop, “Odd Couple or Dynamic Duo? The EU and Strategy in Times of Crisis”. In: *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 14, 2009, No. 3, pp. 367-384.

*National Security Strategy*. If the EU as well arrives at the table with a revised grand strategy, or at least with a unified position based on further debate, Europeans have a unique chance to influence the debate: if the EU and the US first define their own priorities, where they meet a truly shared NATO strategy can emerge.<sup>3</sup> That NATO's Strategic Concept is a function of EU and US strategy ought to be self-evident, as the former concerns only the military dimension of the comprehensive scope of both of the latter – the US would never contemplate having NATO's military strategy determine its grand strategy, and neither should the EU. If however European Allies join the debate individually, pretending that the EU does not exist, and continue the schizophrenic practice of adopting contradictory positions in NATO and the Union, the result can only be a one-sided Strategic Concept, which not reflecting a true consensus cannot be expected to generate forceful action either.

This is not about choosing for or against NATO – it is about the effectiveness of the Transatlantic partnership, which will remain the EU's most important alliance. As long as those Member States that are more Atlantic-oriented consciously hinder CFSP/ESDP, and those that are more EU-oriented consciously hinder NATO, both will underperform. As a military alliance, NATO is not the place to address all of the challenges that Europeans want to discuss with the US. In practice, NATO has already lost much of its centrality, as a consequence of the end of the Cold War and the broadening of our concept of security. No longer the only forum where Europeans and Americans discuss security, the political centre of gravity has shifted to what are de facto the Alliance's two "pillars", and to direct discussions between them – the EU and the US. Europeans have but one option therefore: to choose once and for all to act as the EU in diplomacy and defence and build a much deepened and operational direct EU-US partnership, going beyond the current summitry. The EU and the US are the fully-fledged international actors that can wage a comprehensive foreign policy; NATO is the technical platform at their disposal when, in the context of their political partnership, they decide to act together militarily. The US can only benefit: whereas today it can easily dominate a divided set of Allies that cannot contribute much, it will gain a united Ally, which will demand a greater say in decision-making, but with which real burden-sharing will be possible. It is not less evident to debate diplomacy and defence than it is to debate trade with the US as an equal partner – provided of course that the EU does what it takes to become an equal partner in those areas as well. Only then will it be taken seriously. The EU has only to act on the ESS: "Our aim should be an effective and balanced partnership with the USA".

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3. Simon Serfaty & Sven Biscop, *A Shared Security Strategy for a Euro-Atlantic Partnership of Equals*. Washington DC, CSIS, July 2009.

Recent events have shown that in some cases NATO, for political reasons, is not suitable as a framework for action either: deployment under the NATO flag was not an option in Lebanon in 2006 – although the EU eventually decided to reinforce UNIFIL rather than launch an ESDP operation; in the Georgian crisis, NATO was part of the problem rather than the solution, leaving the EU as the only available mediator, in the absence of US leadership; and even in the anti-piracy operations off Somalia starting end 2008 it has proved much more difficult for NATO than for the EU to interact with the countries of the region. This is not to say that NATO will never be the best option in a specific situation, but it proves that more leadership will – rightly – be expected from the EU, notably by the US, especially with regard to its neighbourhood and beyond. And leadership requires strategy.

Current EU strategic thinking does not seem up to that level of proactive engagement, which is all the more evident by contrasting it with the much more purposive action of other global powers that do act strategically in function of explicit interests, notably the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China, as well as other “emerging” actors), and of course the US. That is not to say that they are always successful in achieving their objectives or that their diagnosis is always correct and far-sighted – but at least they appear to have a clear idea of what their immediate objectives are. In the words of Jo Coelmont: “While the EU is playing ping pong, they are playing chess”. Most of them do not regard the EU as a strategic actor, and are adept at playing off one Member State against the other, as the EU is only too good at “divide and rule”: by dividing itself, others rule. Even in the economic field, where it is a global power, the EU undermines itself. Naturally, the EU is hampered by its collective decision-making when compared with presidential or even authoritarian regimes: all the more reason to deepen its collective strategic thinking and give more direction to decision-making. Every analysis points in the same direction: “The future will be dominated by large, strategic players”.<sup>4</sup> If they want to safeguard their interests and not be pulled apart, Europeans have no choice but to act as a “large, strategic player” themselves, i.e. to act collectively and with a clear sense of purpose. This does not necessarily imply that the EU must now also play traditional power politics, but it does mean that the EU must choose which type of power it wants to be.

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4. Jolyon Howorth, “The Case for an EU Grand Strategy”. In: Sven Biscop, Jolyon Howorth & Bastian Giegerich, *Europe: A Time for Strategy*. Egmont Paper 27. Brussels, Egmont, 2009.

## On to a True Strategic Review

The EU has arrived at a stage where its own further development without strategy appears difficult. European integration has always been an open-ended process, into which policy fields were incorporated in a mostly ad hoc fashion, but that approach has reached its limits. Enlargement has reached the point where major strategic choices have to be made, for the accession of Turkey or Ukraine would substantially change the strategic picture. The difficulties surrounding first the Constitutional and then the Lisbon Treaty, and the resulting institutional standstill, demonstrate the need for a new project, for a new narrative for the EU as a whole, to be translated into resolute joint action (in combating the crisis e.g.) in order to give renewed impetus to and mobilize public opinion for European integration. A grand strategy for the EU as a global actor is an essential part of that.

It is quite conceivable that the 2008 ESS debate caused “strategic fatigue” in the Member States and the EU institutions, and the issue disappeared from the agenda after the adoption of the Implementation Report. But for all the reasons above, the Report cannot be the end of the process. Rather, the ESS together with the work done for the Report should now be the basis for a true review.



## A Grand Strategy for Whom?

The first rule of strategy-making could simply be: know thyself. Seemingly evident, it is actually not that clear which values and interests the EU seeks to safeguard, and which kind of international actor it wants to be.

### Values

The Treaty defines the values on which the EU is based and which it states should also guide its foreign policy. The Lisbon Treaty extends this definition, putting additional emphasis on equality, solidarity and human dignity.<sup>5</sup> This highlights what is in fact most distinctive about the EU model of society: the combination of democracy, the market economy, and strong state intervention, at Member State and EU levels, to ensure fair competition and social security.

This European social model, including the values on which it is based, can be conceptualized as a social contract between EU citizens, which are all entitled to an integral whole of public goods, and the EU and the Member States, whose responsibility it is to provide these goods:

- Security or freedom from fear.
- Economic prosperity or freedom from want.
- Political freedom: democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law.
- Social well-being: health, education, and a clean environment.

Some of these values have been officially recognized as universal rights, e.g. in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, although sadly not all signatories act upon it. The universality of other values is contested, in some cases including within the EU. Obviously, the stronger the cohesion of the European model, the stronger the foundations on which to base EU foreign policy.

Arguably, next to guaranteeing peace among its members, the European social model is Europe's most successful achievement. Therefore, when this social contract is perceived to be threatened, it is one of the main reasons for citizens'

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5. See Art. 2: "The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail"; and Art. 21, §1: "The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law".

disenchantment with the EU.<sup>6</sup> The economic and financial crisis demonstrates that Europe's almost unique success in guaranteeing a high standard of living to the large majority of its citizens should not be taken for granted. At the same time, it can – or ought to – be a source of soft power, because of its attractiveness to others.

The fundamental objective of the EU, both internally and externally, can thus be defined as the preservation and strengthening for its citizens of the security, economic, political and social dimensions of the European social model and the values on which it is based.

## Vital Interests

An assessment of the conditions that have to be fulfilled for this fundamental objective to be achieved, allows identifying the EU's vital interests, i.e. those that determine the very survival of its model:

- Defence against any military threat to the territory of the Union.
- Open lines of communication and trade (in physical as well as in cyber space).
- A secure supply of energy and other vital natural resources.
- A clean environment.
- Manageable migration flows.
- The maintenance of international law and universally agreed rights.
- Autonomy of EU decision-making.

These *vital* interests are common to all Member States, who no longer have national vital interests, different from those of other Member States. Too often, “to have an interest” is confused with “being interested”: Belgium may be more interested in Central Africa and Poland in Ukraine, but objectively the stability of both is equally important to, and thus equally in the interest of both Brussels and Warsaw. Moreover, not only do Member States share the same vital interests, they are also inextricably related, as a consequence of the ever-deepening integration and interdependence within the EU. The vital interests of one Member State can no longer be separated from those of another; a threat to the vital interests of one inevitably threatens all. Finally, no single Member State any longer has the resources to safeguard all of its vital interests on its own – at the global level, all Member States are small States.

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6. Guy Verhofstadt, *The United States of Europe: Manifesto for a New Europe*. London, The Federal Trust for Education and Research, 2006.

An issue about which the ESS largely remains silent, interests cannot be ignored. The negative connotation that the notion has acquired in the eyes of many is neither justified nor rational, for interests are at the heart of policy-making. All actors evidently pursue their interests. In itself, that is neither positive nor negative – the question is *how* they are pursued or, in other words, which kind of actor the EU decides to be.

## Which Kind of Actor?

The answer to that question is determined by the EU's values, which guide its foreign policy, and is conditioned by the international environment, i.e. the threats, challenges, and actors, which are analyzed in the ESS and the Implementation Report.

In terms of threats, i.e. issues that imply a risk of violence and therefore may ultimately demand a military response, today's environment is relatively benign. As the ESS states: "Large-scale aggression against any Member State is now improbable". Other threats are indeed "more diverse, less visible and less predictable": terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, state failure – but today none of these constitutes an immediate vital threat. That does not mean that they can be ignored, for if left unattended more serious threats to EU territory may again develop. In the long term, even inter-state war between major actors cannot be excluded, unlikely though it appears today; even if the EU would not be directly involved, the implications would be enormous. It does imply however that, fortunately, the EU can now afford not to focus on military power alone.

At the same time, today's environment contains a number of major challenges, all complex, global and interrelated, and potentially having a multiplier effect on the threats: poverty, climate change, scarcity of energy, water, and other natural resources, and large-scale migration. Because of globalisation, the dependence of the EU and hence its vulnerability to these threats and challenges have greatly increased. Finally, in terms of actors, the environment is marked by growing multipolarity and a relative shift in the distribution of power: as the military, economic and soft power of other global actors increases (though not at the same pace in all dimensions of power or in all of these States), the relative importance of the EU declines, notably vis-à-vis the BRICs. Although in absolute terms the EU still is the major economic power, on par only with the US, it

is confronted with increasingly active other players, and thus sees its leverage decreasing, both in bilateral relations and multilateral forums.<sup>7</sup>

How to interpret this environment? Although undoubtedly very challenging, it also contains elements on which the EU can build constructive engagement. For one, the EU has no enemies: not a single State has the capacity or even the intention to directly confront it militarily. Secondly, the world is marked not just by increasing multipolarity, but also by increasing interdependence between the poles. Although other global actors often have different worldviews and competing objectives, all are increasingly interlinked economically, and all are confronted with the same complex global challenges that can be successfully addressed only in cooperation between them. If the United States' unipolar moment has clearly passed, the defining characteristic of today's world is not just multipolarity, which focuses too exclusively on relative power, but what Giovanni Grevi has dubbed "interpolarity", which takes into account this "deepening, existential interdependence" between the powers, in spite of the competition between them. Global interdependence is so great that "its mismanagement can threaten not only the prosperity, but the political stability and ultimately, in extreme cases, the very survival of the actors that belong to the system"; therefore "the ability to shape multilateral cooperation or lead collective action in addressing international challenges becomes a central feature of power".<sup>8</sup>

This context does not guarantee the absence of tension or strife between the powers, but it constitutes a great opportunity. In the past international stability under conditions of multipolarity has been possible for long periods, when shared objectives linked the great powers together in a social contract which all subscribed to, not out of altruism, but because it allowed them to maintain great power status and to secure their vital interests. If it provides benefits to all, such leadership is acceptable to the "secondary" powers.<sup>9</sup> No environment could be more amenable to the creation of such a social contract than interpolarity. In the absence of enemies and in view of the need for cooperation to tackle common challenges, EU grand strategy need not be threat-based – that generates a sense of urgency but also fear and introspection<sup>10</sup> – nor need it focus on the "traditional", coercive use of power. Instead, it can focus on values: the best way of

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7. Thomas Renard, *A BRIC in the World: Emerging Powers, Europe, and the Coming Order*. Egmont Paper No. 31. Brussels, Egmont, 2009.

8. Giovanni Grevi, *The Interpolar World: A New Scenario*. Occasional Paper 79. Paris, EUISS, 2009, p. 24.

9. Rik Coolsaet, *International Stability, Multipolarity, and the Social Contract*. Paper presented at the ACUNS 2009 Annual Meeting.

10. Giovanni Grevi, "Framing the European Strategic Debate". In: *Studia Diplomatica*, Vol. 61, 2008, No. 3, pp. 5-18.

defending our interests in order to defend our model and values, is precisely to spread those values, because increasing the access of citizens worldwide to the same core public goods (security, prosperity, freedom, well-being) directly addresses the underlying causes of threats and challenges. In other words, if the fundamental objective of the EU is the preservation and strengthening of the European social model and the values on which it is based (its internal social contract), the best way of achieving that is to promote it in the rest of the world (an external social contract), which moreover constitutes a positive agenda in its own right. EU grand strategy can thus be constructive,<sup>11</sup> aimed at achieving objectives that are in the enlightened self-interest of the EU – that is what policy is about – but which also directly benefit others and thus express a feeling of responsibility for and solidarity with the have-nots.

“[The EU’s] achievements are the results of a distinctive European approach to foreign and security policy”, states the Implementation Report. Distinctiveness is not an objective per se, but this is a distinctive grand strategy, different from that of all other global actors. The EU refrains from the aggressive use of force and uses coercion (by diplomatic, economic, and as a last resort, military means) only when vital interests are threatened, and does not seek to establish spheres of influence, but pursues its interests through a preventive, holistic and multilateral approach based on the promotion of its model and values. It does not seek to coerce others into adopting it, not even merely to entice them through conditionality, but to *convince* them of the benefits of our model and values through cooperation on the basis of shared interests and common challenges. Thus marrying multilateralism and partnership to multipolarity, the recognition of the universality of our values can be gradually and consensually increased.

## A Power and a Project

Labels abound to describe the EU: civilian, normative, or transformative power, *puissance tranquille* – if a label is required, perhaps “positive power” can serve.<sup>12</sup> More important than the adjective is the noun: the EU must be a *power*,

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11. “The EU is *not* attempting to compete militarily with other world powers, the EU is *not* building up a military capacity independent of that of its member states, the EU is *not* trying to acquire WMD, the EU has *no* territorial claims to make, the EU does *not* intend to intervene militarily to change regimes, and the EU is determined to work hand-in-hand with the United Nations. In short, as it embodies a new category of international actor, the EU’s approach to global relations is different from the traditional approach of major powers. As a consequence, the rest of the world welcomes the European Union as a new kind of more constructive actor in global relations.” Martin Ortega, *Building the Future. The EU’s contribution to Global Governance*. Chaillot Paper 100. Paris, EUISS, 2007, p. 93.

12. Sven Biscop, *The European Security Strategy. A Global Agenda for Positive Power*. Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005.

i.e. a strategic actor that consciously and purposely defines long-term objectives, actively pursues these, and acquires the necessary means to that end. Being a model for others to emulate is not sufficient, for too many, swayed by nationalism, radicalism, fundamentalism or just cynicism, simply no longer see the EU as a model. Attractiveness alone does not generate soft power – the EU must be seen to act upon its strategy. The EU therefore cannot be a status quo power that seeks to maintain current conditions: its agenda entails a commitment to proactively shape the environment.

The idea of the EU as a power is mentioned neither in the ESS nor in the Implementation Report – the former only states that because of its weight the EU “is inevitably a global player”. To be a power demands a much more self-confident and voluntaristic outlook. The European Council’s Laeken Declaration (15 December 2001) actually already put it in much more assertive terms:

*“Now that the Cold War is over and we are living in a globalised, yet also highly fragmented world, Europe needs to shoulder its responsibilities in the governance of globalisation. The role it has to play is that of a power resolutely doing battle against all violence, all terror and all fanaticism, but which also does not turn a blind eye to the world’s heartrending injustices. In short, a power wanting to change the course of world affairs in such a way as to benefit not just the rich countries but also the poorest. A power seeking to set globalisation within a moral framework, in other words to anchor it in solidarity and sustainable development.”*

The EU definitely has the means to be a power – if that is what it *wants* to be. This brings us back to the starting point: a grand strategy for whom? An EU that is a mere market simply cannot be a grand strategic actor. This is Europe as a process: a platform for functional economic cooperation between sovereign States, which may continue to evolve in function of the technical needs of the internal market. Such a Europe does not constitute a pole of the multipolar world; it lacks the centre of gravity to be a strategic actor. But as argued above, if Europe wants to safeguard its interests vis-à-vis the other large strategic actors, it has no choice but to become one itself. That automatically entails the choice for Europe as a project: an ever deepening political union in which Member States pool sovereignty in order to pursue their common vision with maximum effect.

# Principles and Problems of a Grand Strategy

The decision which kind of international actor the EU wants to be thus equals the choice for a specific approach, which is based on the promotion of its own model, and which at heart is preventive, holistic, and multilateral. These three principles constitute the *how* to do things advocated by the ESS and the Implementation Report.

## Principles

The first principle is *prevention*: “This implies that we should be ready to act before a crisis occurs. Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early”, as the ESS states. A permanent strategy of prevention and stabilisation, addressing the root causes of threats and challenges, aims to prevent conflict so that, ideally, coercion and the use of force will not be necessary. Addressing the root causes means to close the gap, both within and between countries, between the haves and the have-nots in terms of access to the core public goods: security, prosperity, freedom and well-being. For this gap generates feelings of frustration and marginalization on the part of those that are excluded economically or politically, radicalisation and extremism of various kinds, social and economic instability, massive migration flows, and tension and conflicts within and between States. Effective prevention is an enormous challenge, for it means addressing a much wider range of issues, at a much earlier stage, across the globe, because as the ESS says “the first line of defence will often be abroad”.

Closing the gap between haves and have-nots of necessity demands a *holistic* approach, the second principle, for our social model is comprehensive as such. The security, economic, political and social dimensions are inextricably related – an individual cannot enjoy any one core public good unless having access to them all – and all are present, in differing degrees, in all threats and challenges. In the ESS: “none of the new threats is purely military, nor can any be tackled by purely military means. Each requires a mixture of instruments”. Therefore every foreign policy must simultaneously address all dimensions, making use in an integrated way of all available instruments: “Diplomatic efforts, development, trade and environmental policies, should follow the same agenda”. This is perhaps the core phrase in the ESS: “The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order”.

Such a holistic approach is best implemented via *multilateralism*, the third principle: “We need to pursue our objectives both through multilateral cooperation in international organizations and through partnerships with key actors”, according to the ESS. Only in cooperation with others can our objectives be achieved peacefully, only in cooperation with all global actors can global challenges be successfully addressed, and only in cooperation with a wide range of actors can complex issues be comprehensively tackled. “The development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective”, declares the ESS under the heading of “effective multilateralism”. Multilateralism is “effective” to the extent that the ensemble of regimes, mechanisms and institutions manages to provide access to the core public goods to citizens worldwide.

These are indeed *principles* of foreign policy, i.e. the EU pursues them as a matter of principle, even when in specific circumstances doing so may render a task more difficult. The reason why it is not a matter of choice is that these principles reflect the values on which our internal social contract is based; therefore they determine the EU’s soft power, i.e. the credibility and legitimacy of the external social contract that we pursue.

## Problems

Although these are well established principles, their translation into practice raises questions which the ESS and the Implementation Report do not address. At least three core issues demand a thorough debate.

The EU has pursued its agenda mainly via “positive conditionality”, establishing comprehensive partnerships that promise benefits in function of reforms undertaken by the partner country in a variety of fields. In practice, except in the case of enlargement that approach has seldom yielded the hoped for results. On the one hand, the proverbial carrot on offer is not always what interests the partner the most, e.g. access to the EU’s labour or agricultural market, while on the other hand it is often accorded quite regardless of the partner’s performance. The EU too often applies double standards, condemning in one country what it discreetly overlooks in another, and too rarely manages a coherent approach, without one EU policy undercutting another. In combination with the fact that as a result of the rise of other global powers, the envisaged partner countries can now shop around and seek partnership with the one that offers the most interesting conditions – or the least conditionality – EU leverage appears limited, especially vis-à-vis authoritarian regimes.

The fundamental dilemma that the EU has yet to solve is what to do when its interests (e.g. energy supply, control of migration, fight against terrorism) generate short-term demands (e.g. cooperation with authoritarian regimes) that clash with its inherently longer-term method of pursuing its interests at the grand strategic level, i.e. with the promotion of its model outside the EU. The EU cannot afford to continue to ignore this dilemma, for already the contrast between high-flown rhetoric about human rights and democracy and mostly rather hesitant policies in practice, has greatly damaged its credibility and legitimacy. Too many perceive the EU as a status quo actor, prioritizing economic and security interests and not sincerely committed to promoting reform.

A first serious debate is in order, about the objectives which the EU should set at the grand strategic level, and about how to translate those in sub-strategies, policies and actions, in order to ensure that the emphasis on values does not lead to weakness. Should the EU prioritize certain values among those that constitute its model, in order to reconcile its long-term strategy of prevention and stabilization with the immediate needs demanded by its interests? Must human rights be prioritized before democracy, as the former can be promoted without challenging the nature of a regime, thus allowing cooperation in other fields? Can good governance be an indirect way towards democratization? Which “carrots” can be offered to increase the effectiveness of conditionality? Should more differentiated regional strategies be adopted? What, on the other hand, is the minimum threshold below which the EU cannot accept to deal with any regime, even to the detriment of short-term interests?

The EU must in any case be conscious of the limits of conditionality: vis-à-vis regional organizations and other global powers, it is not an option, for interdependence is too great and the scale of things too vast for the EU to have any serious leverage. On the contrary, pontificating without acting only serves to further undermine EU soft power, especially as some of the other global powers in their modern – as opposed to the post-modern EU – outlook are bound to ask how many divisions the EU has. Such actors can only be *convinced* of the value of the EU model on the basis of shared interests and common challenges. A second debate therefore concerns EU objectives as regards its strategic partnerships with regional organizations and global actors, which implies a debate about the EU’s view on the future of the multilateral institutions. While some of the current strategic partners evidently are global powers, the global role of others is less obvious or limited to specific policy areas. Apart from installing various annual meetings and summits, it is not clear what strategic partnership entails: which common objectives and joint actions are to be pursued in which policy areas? Who takes the lead in these partnerships on the EU side? How can

the proliferation of bilateral partnerships be squared with the promotion of regional integration and multilateralism?

Finally, the third debate is about what to do if, in spite of all positive intentions, prevention fails and conflict does erupt. What is the EU view on the threat and use of force? The ESS remains vague. It calls for “a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention”. Such intervention is put in a multilateral context, as regards who is to act – “The United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” – and why to act – “We want international organizations, regimes and treaties to be effective in confronting threats to international peace and security, and must therefore be ready to act when their rules are broken”. Read together with other EU documents, such as the 2004 *Paper for Submission to the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*,<sup>13</sup> and looking at the practice of the EU and its Member States, it is evident that the use of force is seen as an instrument of last resort, which in principle is used only with a Security Council mandate. Together with “a new European consensus that the use of military force abroad can be legitimate for the purpose of protecting vulnerable ethnic groups against massive violations of their human rights”, these are the main elements of what Christoph Meyer concludes is an increasingly shared view among Member States about “humanitarian power Europe”.<sup>14</sup> Yet although a shared strategic culture thus seems to be emerging, this has never been translated into clear priorities for ESDP.

The debate on these major issues – conditionality, strategic partnerships and the multilateral architecture, and the use of force – will be determining for the objectives which a grand strategy should define in more detail.

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13. In this paper the EU first reaffirms its commitment to the holistic approach, stressing the need for “economic, political and legal instruments, as well as military instruments, and close cooperation between states as well as international organizations across a range of sectors”. When crisis management is in order, a gradual and comprehensive process of intervention is outlined, going from “the reinforcement of institutions, the security system, and the promotion of economic and social development”, through “the mandating of a civilian mission”, to “carefully targeted sanctions” and finally, “if warranted by ongoing security conditions and crisis management needs, the mandating of a rapid reaction force and/or a military peacekeeping mission”.

14. Christoph O. Meyer, *The Quest for a European Strategic Culture. Changing Norms on Security and Defence in the European Union*. Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2006, p. 141. To a similar conclusion comes Bastian Giegerich, *European Security and Strategic Culture. National Responses to the EU's Security and Defence Policy*. Baden-Baden, Nomos, 2006.

## A Grand Strategy to Achieve which Objectives?

The whole aim of continuing the review process started in 2008 is to define in more detail the EU's strategic objectives. Of course, a grand strategy is not an operational document – it will always be a guide for day-to-day policy-making. But the clearer the strategic objectives, the more they will generate purposive action. Therefore, on the basis of its vital interests the EU should identify its specific interests in each of the areas below and set more concrete objectives, for all fields of external action, in order to direct its sub-strategies, policies and actions.

### The Neighbourhood

The ESS is the most specific about the EU's neighbourhood: “Our task is to promote a ring of well governed countries to the East of the European Union and on the borders of the Mediterranean with whom we can enjoy close and cooperative relations”. In this region the EU is most clearly trying to bring its holistic approach into practice and for it the EU has defined the most elaborate sub-strategies: the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and more recently the Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership. Because of its proximity, it is the region where arguably the EU has the most leverage, and where developments have the most direct impact on the EU – “Even in an era of globalisation, geography is still important”, the ESS rightly notes. And yet, the region also provides the clearest illustration of the clash between the immediate pursuit of EU interests and the longer-term promotion of EU values, as high-flown rhetoric about democracy and human rights is overshadowed by an emphasis on practical cooperation on energy, migration and terrorism, even with the most authoritarian regimes. None of the sub-strategies has effectively addressed this fundamental dilemma. “The Mediterranean [...] still poses complex challenges, such as insufficient political reform and illegal migration”, says the Implementation Report with a certain sense of understatement, while in the eastern neighbourhood the Georgia crisis highlighted the region's volatility.

Basically, the desired end-state of the ENP remains unclear. The establishment of “a ring of well governed countries” could imply full-scale democratization as the means of building long-term stability and a truly consensual value-based community with our neighbours, thus safeguarding our interests. Or democratization could cause such upheaval as to make consensual spreading of our values impossible and thus damage our interests; an alternative, more modest

objective must then be defined. Is there a threshold in terms of human rights standards below which partnership should be renounced and visible measures adopted? Should the strategic objective not be further differentiated between our eastern and southern neighbourhood? Until now, a reticence to openly discuss EU interests has prevented a thorough debate on these questions. Waging the debate in such terms would lead to a more transparent discussion and would allow to identify which shared interests and common threats and challenges between the EU and its neighbours can be the basis for cooperation, and how such cooperation can be extended to specific elements of our model and values, so that gradually the root causes of the threats and challenges can be addressed. “Positive conditionality” that is much more targeted and consistent – i.e. that sincerely takes into account the extent to which the partner lives up to its end of the deal – will be an additional stimulus.

EU strategic objectives for its eastern neighbourhood cannot be decoupled from those vis-à-vis Russia, with which the ESS just says “[w]e should continue to work for closer relations”. In practice, EU interests in Russia are quite evident; in view of their proximity and mutual dependence in the energy field, Brussels and Moscow have no option but to establish a close working relationship. The vital precondition is first that the EU acts as one, for Europe’s relations with Russia are a prime example of “self-divide and be ruled over”. Secondly, the EU must define in much more concrete terms its interests and objectives towards its eastern neighbourhood and, further a field, the Caucasus – quick EU action after the 2008 Georgia crisis hides the fact that in reality EU objectives towards the region are all but clear. Only when they are, and the EU knows what its red lines are, can a true strategic partnership with Russia be pursued. The EU should not fear Russia, nor should it be in favour of everything that Russia is against and vice versa – Brussels must “simply” make policy in function of its interests and priorities. In the Implementation Report: “Our partnership should be based on respect for common values, notably human rights, democracy, and rule of law, and market economic principles as well as on common interests and objectives”. Only a united EU can, and should, make Russia understand however that if red lines are crossed, “there is a price to be paid, including in [its] relationship with the [EU]”, to borrow a phrase from the ESS.

## Enlargement

Debating EU objectives for “the east”, i.e. for the European continent, implies debating EU enlargement. Enlargement has so far been used as a very successful instrument, ensuring peace and stability on the continent. It is not evident however that further enlargement would bring further such benefits. If the accession

of Iceland and eventually the Balkan countries – and perhaps one day Norway and Switzerland – is relatively uncontroversial, membership for Belarus or Ukraine would be determining for relations with Russia, while membership for Turkey would expand the EU into a whole new geographic area and thus be determining for its geopolitical position. Unless the EU aims to duplicate the UN, enlargement is a finite instrument in any case – whether further enlargement is still in order requires a careful balancing of the strategic pros and cons. In any case further enlargement without substantial deepening of the Union – notably qualified majority voting in the CFSP – is unadvisable. The answer given to this question by a grand strategy must not necessarily be definite – but a grand strategy must answer it.

An EU grand strategy should also have a view about NATO enlargement, for that has an equally great impact on Russia, with evident implications for the EU. The vital interests and strategic objectives of the EU, together with those of the US, covering the whole spectrum of relations with Russia, should determine NATO policies, not the other way around – the Alliance’s absence in the Georgian crisis has amply demonstrated that NATO is not the appropriate actor to pilot our Russia strategy. This is another reason why an EU grand strategy is needed as the basis for a common European contribution to the debate about a new NATO strategic concept. Similarly, an EU grand strategy should put forward which role it sees for the OSCE. In the ESS, the OSCE is mentioned only very briefly, on par with the Council of Europe: “For the European Union, the strength and effectiveness of the OSCE and the Council of Europe has a particular significance”. The EU and its Member States could probably make better use of their prominent position in the OSCE, if there were more effective coordination between the two.

## Regional Objectives

The ESS does not define objectives for regions other than the neighbourhood, in spite of obvious EU interests, in the areas adjacent to its neighbourhood to start with, notably the Gulf and Central Asia. The EU has established relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including annual ministerial meetings, but except for the economic dimension cooperation is limited. In June 2004 The European Council adopted the *EU Strategic Partnership with the Mediterranean and the Middle East*, which sought to apply the holistic approach of the ENP/EMP to relations with the GCC countries, plus Yemen, Iran and Iraq. These have proved to have a very limited interest in the initiative however; not a lot has been heard about it since its adoption. The June 2007 European Council adopted *The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership*, focusing

on political dialogue, education, rule of law, human rights and energy. Both in Central Asia and the Gulf region the dilemma between interests and values presents itself in even starker terms than in the neighbourhood. Many of the regimes are even more intransigent and moreover possess important energy assets, while the desired end-state is even vaguer. A grand strategy should provide more guidance.

Sub-Sahara Africa goes almost unmentioned in the ESS, in spite of the EU's enormous presence as a development, humanitarian and security actor. There is no lack of frameworks: in 2007 a *Joint Africa-EU Strategy* was adopted, followed by a *First Action Plan (2008-2010)*, many African States are partners in the ACP-framework, and the EU is increasingly cooperating with the African Union. And yet, the EU's interests and strategic objectives remain very vague – the EU being particularly reticent to discuss Africa policy in those terms – hence coordination and sense of purpose could be much strengthened. On the one hand the absence of a truly holistic approach often leads to contradictions between EU policies, with trade notably undercutting aid; on the other hand there is an extreme reluctance to integrate development in the broader foreign policy framework and capitalize on the volume of the EU's efforts to pursue objectives in other areas of external action. All the while other global actors are increasing their presence, in a much more resolute way. The idea is not that the EU joins this “scramble for Africa”, but its grand strategy should prioritize and provide a common purpose for its presence on the continent, for integrated EU policies and European-African partnership to become much more effective.

“Our history, geography and cultural ties give us links with every part of the world”, says the ESS. A grand strategy should look beyond the regions where the EU traditionally is present – a global power cannot ignore any part of the globe. Whether or not it is true that the centre of gravity is shifting to the Asia-Pacific, the EU should assess what its specific interests in the region and its sub-regions are. Even if in the end the EU would not greatly step up its presence, at least EU policies would then be the result of a thorough assessment, rather than what now appears a gap in its strategic thinking. Similarly, Latin America requires a lot more analysis, and the Arctic, where important geopolitical developments are taking place. In all of these regions, the EU purports to promote regional integration, and has concluded strategic partnerships – the effective pursuit of these policies demands a lot more strategic thinking about EU aims.

## Global and Institutional Objectives

“At a global level, Europe must lead a renewal of the multilateral order”, states the Implementation Report, “[...] We have a unique moment to renew multilateralism, working with the United States and with our partners around the world”. A thorough assessment of EU interests in the various regions of the globe and a clearer definition of its objectives is a prerequisite for refocusing the EU’s strategic partnerships with regional organizations and individual global actors. At the same time, a prioritization of actions to be taken to tackle the global challenges, in function of the Union’s vital interests, is in order. On many of these issues – climate, migration, energy – the EU already has elaborate policies – these must be integrated into its broader foreign policy framework. Finally, the EU must sharpen its view on how best to organize the multilateral architecture. To be effective and legitimate, the multilateral architecture must evidently be adapted to take into account the growing importance of the “emerging” global actors. Can the EU, which clearly is over-represented, contribute to such reforms while making its own representation more effective, e.g. by compensating for the loss of European seats by speaking much more with one voice? Which are the EU’s preferred multilateral forums? How e.g. does the EU assess the growing role of the G20? The EU cannot afford to dither, for things are moving fast, as the rise of the G20 demonstrates. Without proactive involvement, Europe will be running behind the facts.

Taken together, these regional, global and institutional interests and objectives could inform a really strategic use of the strategic partnerships. Rather than objectives in their own right, the strategic partnerships are instruments to further “effective multilateralism”. The EU could identify shared interests with each of its strategic partners, in order to establish in a number of priority policy areas effective practical cooperation with those strategic partners that share EU interests in that specific domain, with the ultimate aim of institutionalizing those forms of cooperation and linking them up with the permanent multilateral institutions. Such a pragmatic approach of coalition-building and practical cooperation, on very specific issues to start with, can expand into broader areas, including with regard to values. If e.g. it is unlikely that we will see China at the forefront of democracy promotion, it has an economic interest in promoting the rule of law, if only to ensure that the mining concessions it acquires are not simultaneously offered to someone else. Such a process, forging an external social contract, could allow the EU to gradually and consensually increase the minimal standards to which everyone should adhere, thus slowly but surely strengthening the recognition of the universality of our values.

Rather than asking with which State or organization a strategic partnership should be concluded, the EU should look beyond those already in existence and involve actors in constructive cooperation in function of their power in the specific area concerned. In practice, two types of partners may eventually emerge: those with which the EU establishes cooperation in a comprehensive range of areas – probably at least Russia, China and India, if they would be inclined to such cooperation that is, and of course the US; and those with whom cooperation focuses on a more limited range of issues or regions.

For the strategic partnerships to work, the EU must speak with one voice. At the very least, Member States should subscribe to a rule of transparency and automatically inform the EU, at an early stage, of all important bilateral arrangements with strategic partners, so as to allow for debate in the EU institutions and de-conflicting of potentially competing interests. Ideally, on key issues, strategic partnerships could establish the EU as the unique interlocutor on a series of key issues, hence limiting the margin of manoeuvre of individual Member States.

## Conflict Resolution and Crisis Management

The EU's interests and objectives in a region should determine to which extent the EU will contribute to, or even take the lead in conflict resolution and crisis management, through diplomatic, civilian and military instruments. If the EU's engagement for global peace and security can be stepped up, there are, sadly, too many conflicts and crises for the EU to deal effectively with all of them, certainly in a leading role. Therefore, as the Report states, "We need to prioritise our commitments, in line with resources". In view of the sensitivity of the use of the military instrument, and the need to justify the use of hard power in the context of the EU's distinctive grand strategy without creating suspicion on the part of the other global actors, that holds true especially for ESDP. On this EU strategic thinking is the least explicit. There is a missing link between the vague ambition expressed in the ESS – "to share in the responsibility for global security" – and the practice of ESDP operations and capability development.

First of all, there is not even consensus about which *tasks or types of operations* the EU can undertake. Most Member States do put their forces in harm's way, for national and NATO operations or coalitions of the willing. Yet although legally the EU's Petersberg Tasks include operations at the high end of the spectrum of violence, politically the Member States are still extremely divided over the use of force under the EU flag.

Secondly, *priority regions and scenarios* must be defined, in function of Europe's vital interests: where and why will the EU deploy troops and perhaps even go to war? Because of its proximity, the neighbourhood logically appears as a clear priority, where the EU should not only be active but also take the lead. In the ESS "Resolution of the Arab/Israeli conflict is a strategic priority" – although that clear statement does not necessarily translate into proactive engagement – and the Implementation Report adds that "We need a sustained effort to address conflicts in the Southern Caucasus, Republic of Moldova and between Israel and the Arab States". But if the neighbourhood is a clear geographic priority, it is less clear in which types of contingencies the EU will undertake which type of action. Whether the "broader neighbourhood", including Central Asia and the Gulf, is a priority as well should also be debated. Next to the neighbourhood, only Iran is singled out as a priority, and the EU has indeed been "at the forefront of international efforts to address Iran's nuclear programme", as the Report states. Other conflicts are mentioned in the ESS: "Problems such as those in Kashmir, the Great Lakes Region and the Korean Peninsula impact on European interests directly and indirectly, as do conflicts nearer to home, above all in the Middle East" – whether that implies the EU should actively contribute to their resolution is not clear at all. Sub-Saharan Africa has been an important area of focus for ESDP, though the strategy behind it is not always clear; e.g. if the EU twice intervened in the DRC at the request of the UN, why was the third request refused? This demonstrates that without strategy, it is impossible to define what success of an operation means. Other strategic players are becoming increasingly active, but are mostly unwilling to contribute to crisis-management on the African continent – what are the EU's priorities? Securing Europe's lines of communication with the world, of which the operation off Somalia is an example, is a more obvious priority.<sup>15</sup>

Importantly, the collective security system of the UN, and therefore of the EU, as its main supporter and with two permanent members of the Security Council in its ranks, can only be legitimate if it addresses the threats to everyone's security – too much selectivity undermines the system. Even though it cannot always play a leading role, the EU must therefore also shoulder its share of the responsibility for global peace and security by playing an active role in the Security Council (notably via its strategic partnerships with the non-EU permanent members) and by contributing capabilities to UN(-mandated) crisis management and peacekeeping operations. Notably if anywhere in the world the threshold to

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15. James Rogers, *From Suez to Shanghai: The European Union and Eurasian Maritime Security*. Occasional Paper 77. Paris, EUISS, 2009.

activate the mechanism of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)<sup>16</sup> is reached, the EU, in view of its support for the principle, and in view of its vital interest in upholding international law, should contribute. Not mentioned in the ESS, R2P is included in the Implementation Report – a positive signal.

Finally, the EU must decide *the scale of the effort* to devote to these priorities. Quantitatively, ESDP is based on the 1999 Helsinki Headline Goal, i.e. 60,000 troops, but in the perception this has been overshadowed by the much more limited battlegroup project. The actual availability of the forces declared cannot be assessed, as they are not pre-identified and Member States have mostly declared similar numbers to NATO as well. If all ongoing ESDP, NATO, UN and national operations in which EU Member States participate are counted, Europe today deploys more than 80,000 troops, but EU Member States obviously cannot mobilize 60,000 additional troops for expeditionary operations. But even the combined ESDP and NATO level of ambition, even if collective defence is taken into account, still falls far short of the total combined armed forces at the disposal of the EU-27: 2 million troops. There is as yet no vision about how many of those Europe really needs.

An EU grand strategy must define Europe's ambition as a global security actor, which can then inform a military or civil-military sub-strategy or "white book". As Member States have but a single set of forces, the question is not what the ESDP level of ambition is and what that of NATO: the question is what the EU, as the political expression of Europe and as a comprehensive foreign policy actor, wants to contribute as a global security provider, regardless of whether a specific operation is undertaken under ESDP or NATO (or UN) command. It is in the EU therefore that Member States logically ought to take the primary *political* decision whether or not to act in a given situation. If their decision entails military action, the secondary step is to select the organization through which to act – NATO, ESDP, the UN, the OSCE, an ad hoc coalition – which will always be a tailored solution, in function of which partners want to go along and which organization is best suited for the case at hand. It is in the EU as well that Member States can build more deployable forces, by various forms of cooperation and pooling between Europeans, and which will be available for all of the potential frameworks for operations.

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16. Endorsed at the UN Millennium+5 Summit in September 2005, R2P implies that if a State is unable or unwilling to protect its own population, or is itself the perpetrator of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes or crimes against humanity, national sovereignty must give way to a responsibility to protect on the part of the international community. In such cases, the Security Council must mandate intervention, if necessary by military means.

A white book must thus cut across organizational divides and must cover the full spectrum of operations, including a transparent assessment of what is really needed for collective defence, also in view of the Lisbon Treaty's stipulations about the Solidarity Clause and "mutual defence" – existing plans are too much of a paper exercise. How many forces should the EU-27 be able to muster for crisis management and long-term peacekeeping, for which priorities, which reserves does that require, and what are the needs of collective defence? In all probability the result will be that Europe does not need 2 million uniforms, but can use some additional strategic capabilities.



## The Institutions of Grand Strategy

It is not sufficient to have a grand strategy – one must then also apply it. Ultimately, joint action shapes a common strategic culture. Experience with the ESS shows that this requires a institutional follow-up structure, ensuring that a specific body is responsible for monitoring implementation, and setting deadlines for reporting back to the European Council. For lack of it, the ESS, although omnipresent in the public debate, failed to have sufficient impact on actual policy-making: officials habitually referred to it when having to explain to various publics the EU's role in the world, but did not seem to refer to it very often in their own work. Most importantly, the remit of a grand strategy must be perfectly clear. As it is, the ESS is too often seen as “the Solana paper”, pertaining only to the CFSP; little sense of ownership seems to exist in the Commission, certainly outside DG Relex. Furthermore, there is no clear locus for strategic debate within the institutions. The Political and Security Committee is too much absorbed by daily business (ongoing operations, the development of concepts, preparing Council meetings) and the same holds true for the Policy Unit. Drafting the original ESS in 2003 was a specific mandate, which did not automatically endow Solana and his staff with the authority for its follow-up.

At the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the ESS – to be developed into a complete grand strategy – must be officially designated the guiding document for all dimensions of EU foreign policy, across the pillars. The High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission, supported by the External Action Service, should be formally entrusted with its implementation and development and take the lead in the Council and the Political and Security Committee. As the High Representative will chair the Council when it deals with foreign policy, he/she will have a much greater impact on agenda-setting, which should allow him/her to schedule strategic-level debates as required, supported by a strong policy-planning branch with which the External Action Service should be endowed.

Finally, a systematic strategic review process should be instituted, e.g. every 5 years, with clear follow-up and reporting mechanisms, in order to ensure that the EU, at the level of Heads of State and Government, regularly assesses and if necessary amends its grand strategy, which must be a dynamic document. A true strategic review allows us to identify in which areas the grand strategy has yet to be translated into sub-strategies, policies and actions, to assess their effectiveness in areas where it has, and to establish where they overlap and contradict each other. At the level of sub-strategies too, evaluation and review processes should be set up. Thus strategic awareness can be institutionalized.



## Conclusion: A New European Project

A grand strategy that translates the values on which the EU's own social model is based into a proactive and constructive foreign policy, aimed at concrete objectives: on that basis, with the right political leadership, the EU can be a global power. Like other European projects before it – the opening of the borders, the Euro – this too can be an inspiring project, able to generate the support of the public. Documents alone do not change the world – even though academics might sometimes wish otherwise – but it is important to provide a narrative to policy-makers and the public alike, explaining why Europe must be a global power and which objectives it must achieve. The choice for “Europe as a project” requires inspiring projects to pursue.



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