

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

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### Seminar Report

Last year's debate on the implementation of the *European Security Strategy* (ESS) resulted in a report that left many scholars and practitioners unsatisfied. The *Report on Implementation of the European Security Strategy* lacks concrete recommendations, and leaves the European strategic project incomplete. Using this report as a starting point, the EU should conduct a full-scale strategic review, culminating in a grand strategy. A grand strategy must be broad in scope, considering all policy instruments and resources available to the EU. However, it should also be specific about what the values and interests of the Union are, to establish European priorities in foreign policy. This proposal is put forward in the Egmont Paper No. 33 (<http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep33.pdf>), the product of a working group composed of academics and practitioners. The argument for a grand strategy articulated in this paper was the focus of the seminar. Questions about the validity of a grand strategy, the type of power the EU should be, and the potential for an ESDP white book were debated at length.

The first panel introduced the argument of the Egmont Paper and framed the debate. Does the EU need a grand strategy? Most agreed it was necessary, although the history of European integration seems to suggest otherwise. The EU was largely developed without strategy, relying instead on the Monnet Method. But the stable Cold War environment allowed this method to succeed. In the current security environment where the only constant in international relations is change, a grand strategy is needed. However, it was pointed out that we must be wary of making grand statements without concrete follow-up. Such exercises serve only to lower the credibility of the Union. That being said, the EU is also losing credibility by not having a grand strategy.

It was suggested that now is an ideal time to develop an EU grand strategy for two main reasons. Firstly, the recent ratification of the Lisbon Treaty means that the focus can shift from institutional matters to strategic policies providing guidance for the use of new instruments and resources. In other words, the EU has instruments for a strategy, but not a strategy. The second reason concerns the parallel process of NATO's quest for a new strategic concept and Obama's administration developing its

first National Security Strategy. Focus on redefining strategy within NATO and the US means that policy-makers are already spending a great deal of time considering threats, values, and interests. This energy should be harnessed by the Union as well, as it risks falling into the shadows of the US, its new guiding principles, and its global vision for NATO.

The ESS, which was quite a daring document in its time, provides a strong foundation for a grand strategy, insisting that the European approach to security must be comprehensive, holistic and preventive. However, a grand strategy must define the values that are to be protected and interests that are to be pursued. Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the Union its social model – a combination of democracy, market principles, and strong state intervention. The preservation of this model is a fundamental aim of the EU, and in order to do this vital interests such as the integrity of EU territory, the secure supply of energy and raw materials, clear lines of trade and communication, a sustainable environment, manageable migration, and international law must be safeguarded. EU interests must be translated into concrete objectives in issue areas such as the neighbourhood policy, enlargement, the multilateral architecture, strategic partnerships, and ESDP.

There was much debate about whether values and interests can be pursued in a complementary manner, or whether trade-offs must be made. Twenty-seven member states are likely to have differing notions of what the trade-offs should be. Even the social model differs between member states. Nevertheless, it is in the interest of all member states to defend the social model, even if its manifestation varies from one state to a next.

The very notion of basing a strategy on values was also contested. Security strategy is traditionally written about threats that are faced, and the exercise of coercive power to counter these threats. It was suggested that threats should still be the driving force. Another problem arises here, namely that threat perception differs between member states, particularly according to their geographic location. However, with no real territorial threats to the Union, the EU can afford to make a proactive rather than reactive strategy, based on what it wants to achieve, rather than what it needs to defend itself against. In the end, what unites the EU trumps what divides it.

The second panel discussed the EU's potential to have a grand strategy and to be a global power, and whether or not these are appropriate goals. As the global order transitions, power is also being redefined. While the EU cannot be considered a world power, it does have the ability to influence. As we enter an era of 'interpolarity' (a phrase coined by Giovanni Grevi in recent publications), states and international organizations must prepare themselves to strike a global grand bargain. Specifically, actors must have a clear perception of their values and interests, and be prepared to make trade-offs with other actors, to establish a constructive positive-sum multi-level world order, rather than zero-sum multilateralism of the past.

In order to make a secure bargain, the EU needs a grand strategy where it clearly states values, interests, and concessions it might be willing to make. Most other global players are unitary states that behave strategically, so the EU cannot afford to leave its interests undefined. Decisions must be made as regards ESDP missions. The first ten years of several short-term missions have been successful, but will the EU expand its

reach and commitment? What tools will be used? While the EU's ability to exercise soft power can be admired, many traditional elements of power, such as military force and political will are not obsolete. What attitude will be taken towards threats? As was raised in the first panel, it is perhaps more desirable to develop a proactive strategy, based on expeditionary interventions. However, the Union should exercise caution in the way it presents its model, and should avoid attempts to export the EU brand.

The issue of timing was raised again, with some suggesting that the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty will in fact make the grand strategy project less feasible in the coming year, as the institutions busy themselves with implementation of the treaty. This was countered by the point that now that the Lisbon Treaty has been ratified, the public will expect that the EU use its new instruments according to a concrete vision. In this sense, a grand strategy can also be a useful PR document, explaining to EU citizens and the rest of the world what values the EU is guided by, and what it aims to do to preserve these values.

Panel three addressed the power play between global actors, and assessed the EU's chances of being a successful strategic player. Continuing a theme touched on in the previous panel, the changing international system was discussed at length. Power is indeed shifting, from a unipolar US, to emerging actors. In a sense, power is being dispersed, and its dispersion constrains the actions of those who do hold it. However, direct great power rivalry (particularly in military means) as seen throughout history no longer exists. Threat perception among the largest powers now has many common features, with WMD, terrorism, organized crime, and state fragility ranking high on the list. Threat perception also differs from earlier times because broadly speaking, the source of threats is not ideological.

This picture of the world was contested, as some view it to be much more complex, challenging and contradictory. It was agreed that great power conflict is unlikely, but nuclear weapons are considered the stabilizing factor. This sparked a discussion of Obama's publicly stated desire to rid the world of all nuclear weapons, and what his motives for this mission may be. Regardless of the reasons why, and the complexity of the emerging world order, it must be recognized that the world has fundamentally changed.

The power an actor holds depends on its participation in addressing issues. An actor's influence can be assessed by its ability to promote its priorities as regards arising issues. But first, these priorities must be defined, something the EU has yet to do. Another weakness the EU has is internal divisions. Twenty-seven members mean that divergent national priorities often prevent internal cohesion. Does the EU even have its own interests, or is it simply a vehicle through which member states pursue collective interests? In another interpretation, the multi-level structure of the EU means that there are many entry points into the EU – via institutions and actors from the EU or the member states. Moreover, interests do not have to be a zero-sum game. Just because something is in one actor's interest, it does not mean that other actors cannot favour it as well. Where member state interests overlap, EU interests can be identified.

Discussions of EU versus member state interests are important, because the development of a strategy must be preceded by knowledge of oneself, and knowledge of one's strategic environment.

The final panel explored the possibility of developing an ESDP white book, an issue that repeatedly rose throughout the seminar. The idea of an ESDP white book has been around since the ESDP was created ten years ago, but it has never been pursued. While we are likely heading towards a white book, it may not appear in an orthodox form, and it may not appear for a long time. Developing a grand strategy, however, is an important and necessary step. Currently the focus should be not on a book, but on a genuine strategic process. The EU should direct its attention towards linking its security tools with what it wants to achieve.

As regards strategic developments, the EU could do three things. It could start from scratch, listing all the means and ends, and trying to make connections, or it could do nothing at all. The third option is doctrinal codification. The EU could admit that ESDP is not about defence so much as crisis management and stabilization of conflict zones. This option seems most likely, as it is particularly important that the EU defines what types of operations it will undertake. ESDP cannot be a policy that is applied at random everywhere, for every type of mission. Priorities must be set. These priorities must take into account the power shift, as was discussed in previous panels. Specifically, power is shifting eastwards, from state to non-state actors, and from national to international levels.

Developments in ESDP can already be perceived as a bottom-up trend towards a white book. Permanent Structured Cooperation, introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, will form an important chapter in European security and defence. Battle groups, the EDA, and the air transport programme are also elements that will make up an eventual ESDP white book. However, the bottom-up trends need to be met by top-down action, and at the moment such action is not politically feasible. There needs to be consensus among member states before the project is initiated, and at the moment no such consensus exists. Defence has been a taboo subject in the EU since the failure of the European Defence Community in the 1950s. States are still hesitant to give up control over national defence, which is often seen as the last bastion of sovereignty, and is likely to be strongly contested by the public.

That being said, factors out of states' control may push the Union closer to an ESDP white book. The economic crisis will strengthen calls for common funding in the coming years. The time lag between economic difficulty and defence spending (which is predetermined a year or two in advance) will catch up with European states at the same time, who may see the wisdom in pooling resources rather than continuing with costly duplication.

One component in particular was highlighted as something that should be central to grand strategy and an eventual ESDP white paper, namely maritime geostrategy. As the world's biggest economy, the EU needs to secure its trade routes. With other powers such as China extending their maritime reach, and with piracy on the rise, the EU would be wise to increase its presence on the seas. A potential white paper will also deal with geographic spaces in which capabilities should be employed, and seas cannot be neglected.

While the grand strategy project was largely praised as a necessary and important step for the EU, and a step towards an eventual ESDP white paper, some contentious issues remain. Firstly, the appropriateness of timing is uncertain. On one hand, the Lisbon Treaty has just been ratified so institutional debates can now give way to policy debates. On the other hand, the step after ratification is implementation, and this process is sure to take a great deal of time and energy. The current period is about restructuring, so while practitioners will be busy, it may also be most appropriate that they develop policies to explain the new instruments and how they will be used. This could be particularly useful for explaining the benefits of the Lisbon Treaty and how it will be implemented to the public, the majority of which had no say in the ratification process.

Values and interests also prompted much discussion. Should values guide strategy? Are values and interests complementary or will they clash? Should values be exported. It was widely agreed that while trade-offs must be made, values and interests can be simultaneously promoted, and indeed have a place in an EU grand strategy. As far as exporting values is concerned, a warning was issued about the dangers of this exercise, in light of a similar strand of thinking in American foreign policy in the past twenty years. Good governance may be an exportable value, but democracy may not. In sum, the EU needs a grand strategy, and more importantly needs serious and transparent debates about European values, interests, and priorities in the changing world order.

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