SECURITY POLICY BRIEF

Egmont's Grand Strategy Project

A Strategy for the European Union in the Post-Cold War International System: a Third-party

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In Egmont Paper No. 33 "The Value of Power, the Power of Values: A Call for an EU Grand Strategy", edited by Sven Biscop, Egmont calls for an EU Grand Strategy completing the *European Security Strategy* by identifying EU interests and setting concrete objectives. A proactive EU, acting as a true global power, must result. Some of Europe's leading strategic thinkers react to Egmont's proposals in its series of Security Policy Briefs.

In this first paper of the Grand Strategy Project series, French expert Frédéric Ramel describes the EU as being a third party more than a strategic actor. In a world that is unstable due to its oligopolar structure and its heterogeneous nature, he argues, the EU needs a "complete strategy" in order to (1) reconcile maximum variety and diversity with maximum unity and integration; (2) set up coordination with other actors; and (3) develop strategic agility and strategic expectancy.

Two preconditions are required in order to produce a strategy: to know others, or the strategic environment – sources of threats, alliances and friendships – and to know thyself, or the strategic identity. French strategic thinker Lucien Poirier qualified this second dimension as an *ontological* one that is all the more insightful within the context of White Book production at the national level.[1]

This contribution aims at defining both preconditions as they pertain to the EU, and at articulating a strategy that relies upon them. It is divided into three parts, first of which is the description of the current international system. Using a "sociological toolbox", I will qualify the strategic environment of the EU as unstable due to several factors. The second section deals with the EU's strategic identity, not a strategic actor but rather a strategic third-party. The last section proposes a strategy that will connect environment and identity; I will tackle the idea of "Grand Strategy", and more specifically, I will explain why another expression is needed.

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[1] Lucien Poirier, *La crise des fondements*, Paris, Economica, 1994, p. 179.

The International System Today: A Source of Instability

The international system is formed by political institutions that have regular interactions, including war. In order to precisely define the current international system, two dimensions may be used: structure and nature.

Structure: uncompleted oligo-polarity. What configuration of poles based on material components – the number of global powers – is emerging today? The "unipolar moment" has disappeared because of both economic weaknesses (the financial crisis) and military choices against "rogue States". However, neither does the current system fit the model of a multi-polar order (more than 20 powers). In reality, the current system most closely resembles an *oligo-polar structure* (between 5 and 7 powers)[2]. In such a configuration, no one can win against the coalition of all others. Contrary to fully-fledged multipolarity, all actors are required to adopt defensive strategies in order to maintain the status quo, and they share a common purpose: reinforcing cooperation between themselves.[3]

Who are these actors? They include the US, China, India, Russia and Brazil. We must add three remarks:

- The emerging powers that comprise this oligo-polar structure tend to reproduce a hierarchical conception of international order. They are reluctant to democratize the international system entirely. Their aim is to legitimize a world "directorate".[4]

- Russia and Brazil are "the least emergent among the emerging powers"[5] because of the former's demographic and societal vulnerabilities, and the latter's uncertainty about the actualization of power.
- The EU can become a global power through increased political integration, but such a process causes a double problem: it may provoke public suspicion and resistance, as opinion polls reveal, but also cleavages between Member States (not all of them are willing to increase integration).

Finally, the process of oligo-polarity is incomplete and further complicated by transnational actors that insert asymmetrical links in the system.

Nature: heterogeneous world. This second dimension of analysis refers to the assimilation of political regimes, principles and values that participants in a system share. Raymond Aron argues: "I call homogeneous systems those in which the States belong to the same type, obey the same conception of policy. I call heterogeneous, on the other hand, those systems in which the States are organized according to different principles and appeal to contradictory values". Composed of States that share the same values and political regimes, homogeneous systems are more stable than heterogeneous ones. In the latter, wars are frequent because of ideological struggles. Based on this distinction, the use of force by States in a homogeneous society can be explained by two elements: to identify a threatening heterogeneous State (or rebel actor) and/or to socialize this heterogeneous State (or actor) by force. Thus, homogenization of the international society aims at producing global inclusion. In other words, this process depends on a kind of global universalism. Today, the international system remains heterogeneous, even though one can identify convergences. Lines are not only spatial but also "substantive" (values-based), as they express what States believe the international order should be.

Thus, the international system is unstable because of the asymmetry between current actors (nation-states vs. non-state actors, etc.), its heterogeneous

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[2] This distinction explains my dissension with the notion of inter-polarity, which means "multi-polarity in the age of interdependence" as developed by Giovanni Grevi (see "The Interpolar World: A New Scenario", *Occasional Paper* 79, Paris, EU Institute for Security Studies, June 2009, p. 9). Additionally, general mechanisms of inter-polarity (Cooperation and Conflict) are not new in the international system but rather factors that shape international debates (economy, energy, environment).

[3] For this notion of oligo-polarity, see Jean Baechler, "La mondialisation politique", in Jean Baechler, Ramine Kamrane, dir., *Aspects de la mondialisation politique*, Report from the Académie des Sciences morales et politiques, pp. 6-10. http://www.asmp.fr/travaux/gpw/mondialisation/Baechler1.pdf

[4] Sebastian Santander, "Vers une décentralisation progressive du monde en une multiplicité de pôles", in Sebastian Santander, ed., *L'émergence de nouvelles puissances. Vers un système multipolaire?*, Paris, Ellipses, 2009, p. 235.

[5] Thomas Renard, "A BRIC in the World: Emerging Powers, Europe, and the Coming Order", *Egmont Papers*, 31, October 2009, p. 3.

nature, and the non-achievement of oligo-polarity.[6] What is the EU's role in such an environment?

EU Identity: A Third-party in the International System

Even if the EU increases its capacity and assumes a stronger strategic position, it will not be a strategic actor from a military or classical point of view, but rather it will be a third-party.[7]

How is the EU a third? First, the EU maintains an exterior position towards parties in conflict. Secondly, if it does intervene, it is in response to requests from parties in conflict or the UN Security Council (as the different mandates adopted by the European Council reveal). Thirdly, the EU is not a military alliance like NATO. But what kind of third does it embody? A typology of the third provided by Georg Simmel in his *Sociology* (1908)[8] distinguishes three kinds of third-parties (see box below).

The Union does not embody an actor that benefits from the conflict (*tertius gaudens*) or aims at creating a conflict between foreign actors (*divide et impera*). Its role is most closely identified with Simmel's first category, but it is not a judicial power. If the EU has assumed the function of mediator, it fails to be an arbitrator or judge in the general conception. Rather, the EU is a "tiers structurant" or structuring third:[9] a new category outside Simmel's original theory. The purpose of this kind of third is to support the local population, in all its diversity, to structure its society in compliance with the principle of local ownership, taking into account relative time factors, and as much as possible according to EU norms and values.

This implies an art or practice of "weaving" links between people from an economic, political, social and now security point of view. Several missions illustrate such practice, including the Aceh Monitoring Mission in Indonesia, EUBAM Rafah, and EUMM Georgia.[10] The EU is already a major

Non-partisan and mediator	"produces concordance between two colliding parties by creating direct contact between the unconnected or quarrelling elements; functions as an arbiter who balances the contradictory claims against one another and eliminates what is incompatible in them"
Divide et impera	"third element intentionally produces the conflict in order to gain a dominating position"
Tertius gaudens	"uses his relatively superior position for purely egoistic interests (interactions take place between other parties and himself and they become a means for his own purposes)"

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[6] Dario Battistella, *Théories des relations internationales*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2009, 3rd ed., pp. 642-643.

[7] To a certain extent, I agree with Charlotte Wagnsson ("The EU as a Strategic Actor, 'Re-Actor' or Passive Pole?", in Kjell Engelbrekt, Jan Hallenberg The European Union and Strategy: An Emerging Actor, London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 193-199) who distinguishes the EU from strategic actors in a classical sense, but the other concepts she uses must be enlarged (pole and re-actor) by integrating the notion of a third-party. I agree, too, with Adrian Hyde-Price ("A Neurotic Centaur: The Limitations of the EU as a Strategic Actor" , in Kjell Engelbrekt, Jan Hallenberg, op .cit., p. 165.) about his general diagnosis (the EU is not a strategic actor) but not with his supporting factors (national foreign policy interests automatically become coherent at a supranational level according to the Machiavellian concept of the "Centaur".). Regarding political objectives, the EU aims at developing the functions of a third-party.

[8] Trans. Kurt H. Wolff, Glencoe, Illinois, Free press, 1950, pp. 145-179.

institution that is not being bypassed, but rather it is seen as a source of stabilization abroad. The EU must have a strategy based on this identity as a third-party. What concrete objectives and priorities should it develop as a strategic third?

[9] A collective study produced by an IRSEM workshop will be published on this concept: "L'UE en tant que tiers stratégique", *Cahiers de l'IRSEM*, winter 2010, forthcoming.

[10] See Gilles Mahric, "Une approche institutionnelle du tiers dans les crises: l'Union européenne comme tiers structurant" in "L'UE en tant que tiers stratégique", *Cahier de l'IRSEM*, forthcoming.

A "Complete Strategy" for a Third-party

"Grand Strategy" is not the best way to devise a strategy for the EU as a "tiers structurant". What concept may be more adequate and why?

The limits of "Grand Strategy". Applying "Grand Strategy" to the EU encounters several obstacles. First, it implies the use of a state's perspective (state-centric approach). When Liddell Hart[11] and Paul Kennedy provided their conception of "Grand Strategy", they were thinking about a strategy for the Nation-State.[12] But the EU is not a State, nor a military alliance.

Secondly, "Grand Strategy" was developed as an American model, and is a notion carried on by several experts in the United States even post-Cold War.[13] Offensively and defensively reinforced by flexible coalitions,[14] it intends to maintain American leadership in the international system. Some analysts argue that a strong link may be identified between this Grand Strategy and a will to extend the weakening unipolar moment.[15] The EU must not fall into this trap, which could be viewed as a kind of Polybius syndrome (the idea of copying the strategy of the dominant power). Last but not least, using a Grand Strategy means being influenced by a Machiavellian trend. When Americans propose a "Grand Strategy" that will shape the international environment for American security interests, they refer implicitly to a Machiavellian philosophy. In his *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli argues that republics should follow the example of the Roman Empire by adopting an imperialist and expansionist foreign policy. He advises building a "Republic of Expansion", as he observes the need for continual expansion if a Republic is to achieve greatness and glory. No expansion results in decline either through stagnation and dissolution over time, or being conquered by others, as the experiences of Venice and Sparta reveal. These Republics were conquered whereas Rome used its *virtù*: a capacity to anticipate the risks caused by its political growth and a willingness to correct resultant disorders. States in the post-Cold War world do not follow the expansionist policies of the Romans for fear that such practices would be like the myth of the sword of Damocles – the leader living in constant fear that one day he will be toppled.

Finally, the EU is not a power like others. The Laeken Declaration insists on making this distinction: "the role [the EU] has to play is that of a power resolutely doing battle against all violence, all terror and all fanaticism". We must avoid the trap of strategic sameness that Kenneth Waltz formulates about all strategic actors: "competition produces a tendency toward the sameness of the competitors".[16] That is why the notion of "Complete Strategy" (Lucien Poirier) is more adapted for the EU.

A "Complete Strategy" for the EU. This strategy differs from "Grand Strategy" because the political objectives are quite different.[17] Even though they have the use of resources in common, the aims are not the same. A Complete Strategy applied to the EU must be built upon three considerations.

To reconcile maximum variety and diversity with maximum unity and integration. This first step boils down to integrating general strategies – diplomacy, economics, security and military – in order to go beyond the image of a "composite actor". From an institutional point of view, the Lisbon Treaty revitalises this process thanks to several innovations: a High Representative of

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[11] B.H. Liddel Hart, *Strategy*, New York: Meridian, 1991, p. 332.

[12] Grand strategy aims at using "diplomacy to improve a state's ability to leverage its reputation and access to assistance". Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Towards a Broader Definition", in Paul Kennedy, ed., *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, New Haven: University Press, 1991, p. 4-5.

[13] Francis Fukuyama and John Ikenberry, *Report on Grand Strategy*, Working Group on Preventive Action, 2006, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton (http://wws.princeton.edu/ppns/conferences/reports/fall/GSC.pdf). See also Barry Posen.

[14] David C. Ellis, "US Grand Strategy Following the George W. Bush Presidency", *International Studies Perspectives*, 10, 2009, pp. 361-377.

[15] Jonathan Merten, "Primacy and Grand Strategy Beliefs in US Unilateralism", *Global Governance*, 13, 2007, pp. 119-138.

[16] Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979, p . 127.

[17] Lars Wedin ("The EU as a Military Strategic Actor", in Kjell Engelbrekt, Jan Hallenberg, *op. Cit*, p. 43 and pp. 46-47) is correct to apply Lucien Poirier's thought to the EU, but I am reluctant to translate "stratégie intégrale" into "Grand Strategy" because of the arguments above.

Union Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, a European External Action Service (EEAS), and a permanent President of the Council. From an operational point of view, the EU has already been practicing this integrative approach since 2003 by broadening the second pillar through the successful development of civil-military missions.[18] From a material point of view, the EU has a strategy of resource management that is both logistical ("making available and placing resources at the disposal of military and civil forces") and generative ("creation of new resources through research and industrial development").[19]

To set up coordination with other actors. In the spirit of the San Francisco Charter, the EU has developed task-sharing with other organizations (even sub-regional actors, especially in Africa). However, major decisions regarding coordination have always revolved around NATO because "the evolution of transatlantic relations is the primary determinant for the future of Europe as an international actor".[20] The birth of ESDP in 1999 caused a stir in Washington, and the Clinton administration was reluctant to its development, as evidenced by the 3 "D" doctrine: no Decoupling, no Discrimination and no Duplication. Madeleine Albright professed a *NATO First* attitude because she feared a weaker financial participation from the Europeans in the Atlantic Alliance. Ten years later, this fear has dissipated. The Obama administration is friendly and open to the development of (now) CSDP. As National Security Advisor, General Jones argues: "There is much less division between being European and being a member of the Atlantic Community. A Europe that is strong and

independent is good for a strong and independent alliance".[21] Furthermore, NATO's 60th birthday Summit in Strasbourg-Kehl sought to close the cultural gap between the two sides of the Atlantic, values and interests are converging, and member States congratulated Europeans on being more efficient in the Declaration on Alliance Security, in which "NATO recognises the importance of a stronger and more capable European defence, and welcomes the EU's efforts to strengthen its capabilities and its capacity to address common security challenges that both NATO and the EU face today".

We can even add that the new soft-multilateralism of Obama hopes to redefine ties with Europe (the judicial processing of Guantanamo prisoners being just one example). It is quite obvious that the EU would benefit from any comparative advantages that come from the complementarity between NATO and ESDP regarding territory and function. *Territorially*, NATO may not be allowed to intervene in certain geographic areas because of negative perceptions of the US. However, being more neutral and balanced, the EU may be seen as a more legitimate actor in post-Soviet territories or in Africa (Georgia or Chad for instance). *Functionally*, the EU is not considered a strategic actor in conflict whereas NATO does maintain such mission.

To develop strategic agility and strategic expectancy. Agility means flexibility in operations (the ability to both plan and react strategically). As in Moliere's play where Monsieur Jourdain is able to spontaneously create prose on command, the EU has already expressed this agility through several mission scenarios. According to the Chairman of the Military Committee, General Bentégeat, three kinds of situations are identifiable: type Bosnia (EU intervention after NATO), type Afghanistan or Kosovo (EU intervention as a civil contributor) and type Congo (EU autonomous intervention).[22] But agility alone is not sufficient. Hope must be integrated into strategy because there must be a

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[18] See Henri Bentégeat "Declaration", September 2009, Assembly of WEU :
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/090916%20WEU.pdf

[19] Lars Wedin, "The EU as a Military Strategic Actor", in Kjell Engelbrekt, Jan Hallenberg, *op. Cit,* p. 49.

[20] Georges-Henri Soutou, "Le problème de l'émergence de l'Europe dans un monde multipolaire. Europe-puissance ou collaboration transatlantique ?", in Jean Baechler, Ramine Kamrane, eds., *Aspects de la mondialisation politique*, Report from l'Académie des Sciences morales et politiques, p. 18. Original text: "l'évolution des rapports transatlantiques reste absolument déterminante pour l'avenir de l'Europe comme facteur international"
http://www.asmp.fr/travaux/gpw/mondialisation/Baechler1.pdf

[21] Authors' translation. "Le Général Jones et la PESD", *Le Monde*, 24 march 2009,
http://clesnes.blog.lemonde.fr/2009/03/24/le-general-jones-et-la-pesd/

[22] Henri Bentégeat "Défense et sécurité européennes", Défense nationale, February 2009.

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balance between what we hope to win and the risks we run. A strategic aim is rational only when hope is positive, meaning that the expected gains are superior to the risks any action would encounter.

Finally, to produce a strategy for the EU, we must move beyond European mythology. In the myth of Sisyphus, a deceitful actor copes with constant handicaps (failing, dilemmas, limitations) as described by Stanley Hoffmann. In the myth of Europa, a woman is seduced by Zeus and carried away to Crete where she is protected by the god of gods from Hera, and she becomes unwilling to assure her own security. If the EU has "strategic qualities", it suffers from numerous shortcomings of strategic institutions and reasoning[23] as implied by these myths.

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[23] Kjell Engelbrekt and Jan Hallenberg, "Conclusion : A Strategic Actor under Permanent Construction? " , *op. cit.*