

The European Union Global Strategy: How Best to Adapt to New Challenges?

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I Context

The writing of the new European Union Global Strategy comes at a difficult time. The world has become more and more volatile and there are crises on Europe's eastern, southeastern and southern flanks. Although the conflicts in the south and the east are very different in nature, they both highlight the need for the EU to strengthen its foreign and security policy to better respond to a hybrid blend of challenges, which involve military and non-military, conventional and unconventional methods and tactics. The Global Strategy has the difficult task of setting the EU's interests and objectives in respect of global security as well as the means to achieve them in the medium and long term.

The geopolitical situation of the various member states means that the threats are perceived differently, and coming up with a common strategy risks watering down the threat assessments. There are marked and fundamental differences in both strategic goals and capabilities of hostile actors and partners in the east and in the south. The Global Strategy therefore needs to allow for tailor-made approaches that look at countries and their aims individually, without ever compromising the core values of the EU.

Until recently, the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) focused exclusively on crisis management outside EU borders. However, the security landscape has changed and possible threat scenarios can arise on our borders and even within our countries. France's invocation of Article 42.7 of the Lisbon Treaty showed that member states can and will turn to the EU in case of non-traditional threats to their security. Member states need to increase their defence capabilities on both the national and the European level. In tackling non-traditional threats, one needs to consider that these emanate not only from terrorist networks, organised crime and other non-state actors, but also from hostile states.

In the east, Russia constantly tests European solidarity by exploiting vulnerabilities, coercing and pressuring member states through a variety of

measures from nuclear threats to information warfare. Russian strategy traditionally consists of a combination of conventional, irregular and non-military means. Russia sees the world as divided into spheres of influence, causing various problems between it and the EU. It also uses hybrid tactics extensively against EU's Eastern Partners to influence their policies and undermine their freedom of choice.

Due to the size of its territory, the potential of its population and its immense economic capabilities Russia could, in principle, play a key role in increasing stability and security in Europe. It remains a cooperation partner in various areas of joint interest, in particular the fight against terrorism, the implementation of non-proliferation policies and the reduction of cross-border crime. However, a meaningful partnership on any level—let alone a strategic one—should remain on hold until Russia is ready to fulfil its commitments under UN and OSCE principles, especially with regard to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states.

In the south, the threat presently stems from failed and dysfunctional states and non-state actors like Daesh. The sudden and massive flow into the EU of people fleeing civil war and economic hardship at home has already had a substantial impact on the domestic politics of most European countries. Although migration flows are unlikely to stop in the near future, the EU still lacks proper data about how they will develop, and mechanisms that would allow them to prepare accordingly. The crises on Europe's southern and southeastern borders emphasise the weakness of EU border controls and asylum policies, as well as the failure of the Dublin Regulations. Internal and external security threats can no longer be viewed as separate concerns and there is a dangerous lack of information sharing between member states that puts the EU at risk of terrorist attacks.

II Policy Recommendations

Surrounding countries

- **The Global Strategy should send a clear and unambiguous signal to Russia as well as other countries in the region that the EU is a serious player without any idealistic fantasies or unrealistic expectations and that it does not accept the concept of a world order based on spheres of influence.** While in relations with Russia one should support a dual-track strategy¹ of deterrence and engagement, this should be based on honest dialogue, rather than on keeping Russia happy with unjustified concessions. The present confrontation with Russia is rooted in president Putin's interest in reviving the policy of spheres of influence. The Global Strategy should send a clear message to Europe at large that it will never accept such an approach.

¹ See, for example, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/nathalie-tocci/eu-russia-relations-towards-pro-active-agenda> (last accessed 4 February 2016)

- **The Global Strategy must not compromise on EU core values, including respect for human rights and international law. We need a tailor-made approach to different neighbours, but the core values must remain the same in relations with everyone, including Eastern Partnership and Southern Neighbourhood countries as well as the Russian Federation.** Russia has tried to raise the temperature in its relations with the EU by casting present tensions as a battle of values, where the West somehow imposes “its” value system on Russia. President Putin likes to emphasise that the Russian people themselves, not outsiders, have the right to choose their way of life. The EU must focus on democratic values and principles, in particular emphasising the importance of free elections, freedom of the media and freedom to demonstrate. We have to protect our values openly and unapologetically. The human rights dialogue should be a crucial part of our relationship with Russia, just as it is with other countries. The EU must remain careful not to succumb to Putinist logic, and instead protect its values as universal.
- **The Global Strategy must be clear that further integration of Eastern Partnership countries into the EU is beneficial to all and does not in any way reduce the role Russia plays in Europe.** The EU remains committed to the principle of the freedom of choice of sovereign countries in their relationship with the EU.
- **The Global Strategy should include economic tools as part of the EU’s foreign-policy mechanisms.** The sanctions imposed on Russia after its annexation of Crimea sent the right signal. The EU should not be afraid to use sanctions in the future.

Surrounding countries

- **The Global Strategy should focus on developing tools for timely reaction to crises on its borders.** Control of the external borders of the Schengen Area is not exclusively the responsibility of the individual member states located on its land and sea borders, but should also involve other nations. The proposal in late 2015 for a European Border and Coast Guard is the first step in this direction, but more needs to be done. A more orderly and coordinated process at Europe’s borders would benefit people seeking asylum and allow for better screening and vetting, thereby benefitting the national security of member states.
- **The Global Strategy should push EU countries towards adopting a more equitable sharing of responsibility for asylum seekers and implementing common EU standards on reception conditions and asylum procedures.** The EU refugee relocation scheme must be more efficient than the smugglers at getting people to where they have a right to go. The answer should be forward-looking and offer long-term solutions.

In order to prevent a domino effect, the Global Strategy should outline flexible aid policies directed at those countries in the EU’s neighbourhood that are suffering due to large migration flows and related economic hardship. Countries that have to provide a lot of aid themselves need to be able to receive both humanitarian and development aid to maintain them as pillars

of stability. Although Lebanon and Jordan are currently the ones suffering the most, flexible aid policies should become a mechanism that can be easily transferred to other regions as well.

The Global Strategy should promote a tailor-made approach in bilateral partnerships with neighbours. Responding differently to the specific needs and realities of partner countries allows member states to build their partnerships more effectively. Bilateral partnerships should be sufficiently flexible to allow for individual approaches to partner countries, i.e. to move quicker with those countries that are ready for it.

The EU must invest more in its soft-power tools and promote its image in a more positive and result-oriented manner in order to build civil society's resilience towards outside actors. Russia has effectively used societal cleavages, particularly minority issues, to the benefit of its foreign policy in the Eastern Partnership region as well as in some EU member states. Active support of and engagement with civil society will help to build social resilience against external influencing policies. Civil society is a unique tool for keeping governments in the neighbourhood accountable.

The Global Strategy should not completely rule out the prospect of membership indefinitely. Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova all declared their commitment and aspiration for eventual EU membership at the Riga Summit in May 2015, and there is no reason for the EU not to put the theoretical prospect on the table. A dialogue on prospective membership should not be a topic for political speculation among member states, but rather a matter of recognition of the successful implementation of reforms.

Hybrid threats

- **The Global Strategy must remain realistic in what it aims to achieve.** Instead of flirting with illusionary ideas of a European Army or Defence Union, the EU needs to focus on two areas: (1) the development of European defence capabilities and (2) linking and better coordinating external and internal policies and instruments.
 - o **The development of defence capabilities necessitates both cooperation and coordination, including in the form of pooling and sharing resources, but also increased defence spending.** An agreement along the lines of NATO's 2014 Wales Summit pledge to work towards spending 2% of GDP on defence—which would contain political guidance and a commitment to increase defence budgets—would be an important step in this regard.
 - o **The Global Strategy should address, as part of the CSDP, the response mechanism to the invocation of the EU Solidarity Clause by a Member State that suffers an attack.** At present, CSDP does not deal with threats against the EU on its own territory. The first step should be to address member states' security concerns within the CSDP framework and to provide support for developing capabilities to handle those concerns. The response will then depend on the nature of the initial event, e.g. whether it is a cyber incident or a terrorist attack, but there

should be a clear understanding of what type of support should be provided and from whom.

- **The increasing military aggressiveness of Russia means that ensuring effective deterrence should remain central.** This can only be done by continued transatlantic defence commitments institutionalised through NATO.
- **While countering hybrid warfare is first and foremost the responsibility of each individual member state, the EU should assist them in strengthening resilience and, in the event of a hybrid attack, support the Member State in defending against it.** The Global Strategy should propose specific measures for assisting member states in building resilience and reducing vulnerabilities in fields like border control and counterterrorism, cyber defence and the protection of critical infrastructure.
- **The EU needs to counter hostile hybrid activities from the start, to be aware and to anticipate them.** The Global Strategy would do well to rethink its various policy areas through the lens of security and hybrid threats. A coherent response requires combining CSDP responses with those in other areas, such as justice and police, border security, energy, cyber and counterterrorism.
- **The Global Strategy should incorporate an EU-level plan for dealing with strategic communications and the information domain as part of hybrid warfare.** Although it is difficult to develop a common strategic narrative with 28 member states, there is a need to take public diplomacy initiatives as not all member states are always affected equally. For example, Russia's aggressive intelligence activities in Europe are aimed not only at gathering sensitive information, but also at influencing, dividing and destabilising target countries. This does not mean that the EU should engage in counter-propaganda tactics, but it is necessary to find a compelling way of telling the truth. Reliable information is a powerful weapon.
- **In order to improve the EU's overall resilience, shared situational awareness is needed among EU agencies, across member states, and with NATO.** The EU should develop a common approach to compiling and maintaining up-to-date (almost real-time) shared situational awareness, building upon information exchanges between the public and private sectors and with NATO. Developing mechanisms at the strategic level for speedy and flexible decision-making, and rehearsing them in exercises, is needed to respond effectively to threats.

Cyber security

- **In the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the EU's goal should be to contribute globally to safeguarding its core values online: the freedom of expression, human rights, the rule of law, a free and open internet, and a safe digital domain.** Better cooperation between law-enforcement and national computer-response teams (CERTs) is needed to combat cybercrime and the use of the Internet by terrorists.

- **To foster global cyber-security cooperation, inter alia through its cyber diplomacy policies, the EU should acquire a more prominent role, and prioritise and focus its capacity-building initiatives in third countries.** It should develop further its key strategic partnerships and relationships with key international organisations, as well as contribute to international discussions on the definition of norms and principles of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. The EU must support the development of cyber norms and confidence-building measures.
- **Cyber security must become a mainstream part of all policies, linked to other external action instruments (capacity-building, development aid, strategic partnerships, protection of freedom and human rights online).** Internally, member states should achieve baseline cyber resilience and reinforce cooperation among themselves and at the EU level.
- **Cyber security must be integrated into the EU's military and civilian missions and the Global Strategy should outline priorities and means for doing so.** The EU should strengthen its role in facilitating the development of collective cyber-defence capability, as well as pooling and sharing. In the area of CSDP, ICT systems and critical infrastructure on which EU civilian and military missions depend need to be better protected, and interoperability among member states and with NATO must be strengthened. There is a need to improve information sharing, align threat assessments, and improve capabilities for incident detection and response. A unified cyber-defence concept for CSDP military operations and civilian missions, which is presently being developed in Brussels, should also take into account cyber threats against member states within EU territory.