

**Strategy-Less in a World Of Power Transition**

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At the meeting of the European Union (EU) heads of state and government on 26/27 June 2014, a paper was adopted which bore the grandiose title of *Strategic Agenda for the Union in Times of Change*. It announced five “overarching priorities” for the next five years: stronger economies and jobs; societies enabled to empower and protect; a secure energy and climate future; a trusted area of fundamental freedoms; effective joint action in the world. The document has already been subjected to a robust overall critical analysis (Emmanouilidis 2014). What concerns me here is the final section – the EU’s foreign and security policy. That section notes that the strategic and geopolitical environment has become “fast-shifting”, particularly in the EU’s southern and eastern hinterland, and offers four policy prescriptions. However, before assessing those prescriptions, it should be noted that the fundamental flaw in this section of the “Strategic Agenda” is that there is no sign of a strategy. If strategy is neatly defined as “the calculated relationship between means and large ends” (Brady Johnson 2014), it is notable that there is absolutely no reference to the former, and that the latter is reduced to the defense of the EU’s interests and values and the protection of its citizens. There is neither any attempt to understand the nature of the contemporary world (a world of power transition) nor to conceptualize the EU’s potential role in that shifting global order.

The EU regularly prides itself on being a “global actor”. The 2003 *European Security Strategy* (ESS) stated that: “Europe should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world”. It went on to boast that: “European forces have been deployed abroad to places as distant as Afghanistan, East Timor and the DRC”. It did not add the key detail that only in the latter had those forces been deployed *under the EU flag*. The 2014 document refers to security and defense “commitments and responsibilities across the world”. But the image purveyed by the EU is misleading. Of the thirty-seven missions recorded by ISIS-Europe as having been launched under the EU’s *Common Security and Defence Policy* (CSDP) (ISIS Europe 2014), no fewer than

seven have been in the former Yugoslavia (i.e. *inside* the EU's own external borders), and twenty in Africa. Of the remaining ten, five have been on the EU's Eastern border (three in Georgia and two in Moldova and/or Ukraine). Any objective or realistic geographical analysis of these missions would have to conclude that the overwhelming majority of them have been in the EU's neighbourhood. To this extent, it is clear that the EU is a *regional* actor, but one which frames regional conflicts and destabilisation in a broader globalising context. This needed saying in order to avoid illusions. And yet, even in the neighbourhood, as the Arab Spring and the recent crises in Ukraine make clear, the EU has neither a strategy nor even an effective policy.

The first "priority" enunciated in the *Strategic Agenda* paper is to "maximise our clout", by improving coordination "between the main fields of EU external action such as trade, energy, justice and home affairs, development and economic policy". This is akin to a formal statement from the Vatican that the Catholic Church opposes sin. The *European External Action Service* (EEAS) was created in large part precisely in order to enhance such synergies and yet it is not mentioned in this paper as a vehicle for promoting cohesion. It has long been an item of faith in EU statements on external policy coordination that defense and development should be seen as two sides of the same coin. Yet there has never been any serious attempt to operationalize this approach (Carbone 2013). The inclusion of "justice and home affairs" as an *external* policy agent appears to refer to the current crisis of migratory policy that has been exacerbated by the Arab Spring and the chaos in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. On 1 July 2014, this became a major priority of the Italian presidency of the EU (New York Times 2014). Yet joined-up policy between and among member states in this policy area, far from making progress, has recently been unravelling, thereby undermining "the very foundations of cooperation and solidarity" in migratory policy (Henry & Pastore 2014).

The second priority is to "be a strong partner in our neighbourhood [by] promoting prosperity, stability and democracy" in the hinterland. Unfortunately, as recent events have demonstrated, the much-touted *European Neighbourhood Policy* is in tatters, its two component parts – the *Union for the Mediterranean* and the *Eastern Partnership* –

having demonstrated their virtual irrelevance to the course of events in both geographical areas throughout the escalating crises of recent years (Echagüe et alii 2011; Perthes 2011; Lehne 2014; MacFarlane & Menon 2014). Any remotely constructive EU “strategy” for dealing with the neighbourhood must begin by recognizing these egregious past failings. The *Strategic Agenda* paper appears, on the contrary, to imply that more of the same will do the trick.

The third stated priority is to “engage our global strategic partners” on a vast range of issues “from trade and cyber security to human rights and conflict prevention, to non-proliferation and crisis management”, both bilaterally and in multilateral fora. This is less a strategic priority than a statement of international wishful thinking. Once again, the Council paper implies that the EU currently *has* a policy towards its “global partners”, blithely ignoring a significant body of recent critical analysis suggesting, to the contrary, that it desperately needs to develop one (Renard 2012; Sautenet 2013). Moreover, the section on strategic partners rather undermines its own *global* pretensions by highlighting the need to prioritize the *transatlantic* partnership. One major challenge for the EU – that of deciding how it should manage the relationship between its approach, on the one hand, to China, India, Brazil etc, and, on the other hand, to the US – is thus sidestepped (Menon 2014).

The final “priority” is to “develop security and defence cooperation”. The means to this end are listed as “strengthening the CSDP in full complementarity with NATO”, developing military and civilian capacity and a stronger European defense industry. This amounts, not to a strategic agenda, but to a simple statement of just a few of the enormous challenges currently facing the EU in this crucial policy area. It is increasingly widely recognized that CSDP is in a state of existential crisis (Howorth 2014; Gnesotto 2014). There is a desperate need for core leadership, for strategic vision, for enhanced and appropriate *usable* capacity, for a radical new approach to CSDP’s relationship with NATO, for an answer to the constant and increasingly urgent plea from Washington for the EU to step up to the plate and assume its responsibility for the management and stabilization of its neighborhood. The EU’s member states remain deeply *divided* over

key issues such as the meaning of CSDP “autonomy” vis-à-vis NATO and the US; over the desirable balance between military and civilian priorities in CSDP missions; over the very range and ambition of those missions; over financing, procurement, collective defence; and above all over strategic vision. To state that the Union needs to “develop cooperation” on these issues is an extreme example of both litotes and struthiousness.

If the *Strategic Agenda* is the result of a lowest common denominator word-processing exercise from within the Council Secretariat, the banal generation of a form of words with which no member state could possibly disagree, then it serves no useful purpose. There is not a single idea in the paper, indeed hardly a single word, that has not been heard hundreds of times over the past quarter century. As a roadmap for the next five years, it differs in no way from any number of similar documents produced through similar word-processing procedures in recent decades. If, however, it is intended as a serious contribution to a strategic discussion the EU can no longer afford not to have, it suggests that the road ahead will be longer and more fraught than even the EU’s harshest critics have feared (Laqueur 2012; Soros 2014; Zielonka 2014). Yet crafting a genuine European grand strategy will be an exceptionally challenging task.

### **Europe faces a historical crossroads**

The European Union (and indeed the entire world) has reached a major historical crossroads – not dissimilar in scale and significance to 1648, 1815 or 1945. We are entering a complex period of power transition, triggered simultaneously by the end of the Cold War and by globalization. These processes reflect powerful movements of history’s tectonic plates. The challenges they have thrown up are like nothing the world has seen before. The “Westphalian System” (Moore 2010) morphed, after the Napoleonic Wars, into the “Concert of Europe” which proved quite incapable of managing the rise of new challengers (Taylor 1954). The seventy-five year European civil-war (1870-1945) pitting France against Germany, which twice dragged the rest of the world towards Armageddon, could only be ended by the massive military involvement of the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR (Fergusson 2006). The bipolarity of the Cold War years succeeded, in part through the balance of nuclear terror, in preserving the peace between the major

powers – yet at the expense of millions of dead in proxy wars across the Global South. For fifteen years after 1989, US uni-polarity preserved a tense and increasingly challenged form of global order (Brooks & Wohlforth 2008; Walt 2006; Joffe 2007), which nevertheless proved elusive in two main war-zones: Iraq and Afghanistan. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the principal global players are continental-scale nation states (USA, Russia, China, Brazil, India, South Africa, Indonesia, Australia), plus a small number of international institutions (UN, IMF, WTO) and regional regimes – primarily the European Union.

The challenges are unprecedented: the stabilisation of large areas of the globe marked by failing or failed states; the integration into a consensual new international order of large and powerful states marked by vastly different political, economic, social and religious cultures but linked by dense networks of global interdependence; the elimination of global poverty and despair and the violence it engenders; the management of the threat posed by radical “Islamism”; the management of weapons proliferation and the strengthening of arms control; the reversal of looming climate catastrophe; the generation of renewable and sustainable energy supplies. What makes the challenge all the more difficult is that all these problems are closely inter-linked.

The European Union finds itself geographically at the confluence of several fault-lines in the evolution of the international system. This situation renders the task of defining a grand strategy even more challenging than it might otherwise have been. The first fault line constitutes the Eastern boundary of the Union and features the unstable transformation of the former Soviet space. To this space has recently been added the Arctic, in which the littoral powers, and especially Russia, are currently jostling aggressively for position. There is both a theoretical and an empirical dimension to this situation. At the level of both international relations theory and European integration theory, the post-Cold War narrative of a new world order based on multilateralism and international law suggested that, henceforth, inter-state relations would not be resolved (at least not in the Eurasian landmass) by traditional militaristic or great power political means. Instead, the interdependence narrative ran, they would be nudged in a purely

peaceful direction through trade, investment, regional cooperation in a range of policy fields, and institutionalized dialogue. Alas, that optimistic “post-modern” reading of Eurasian history proved to be quite misguided. Western triumphalism (whether of the Chicago-economics-transforms-Russia variety; or of the NATO expansionism variety; or of the “humanitarian interventionism” in Kosovo or Libya variety; or of the European-Union-as-a-magnet for “eastern Partnerships” variety) has had the effect in Moscow of fuelling an “encirclement” and “humiliation” mentality whose corollary has been a renewed determination to reassert Russia’s traditional role as a European great power bent on re-establishing hegemony over its “near abroad”. Western assertions that neither Wall Street capitalism, nor NATO expansionism, nor European Union enlargement is anything other than benign may resonate with some Western liberals. They cut no ice whatever in Moscow. And other Western liberals argue strongly that the European Union was largely responsible for triggering the Ukraine crisis in the first place (Menon & McFarlane 2015; House of Lords 2015). To the extent to which the EU believed it had a “strategy” towards the East, the events of 2014 demonstrated incontrovertibly that it was a deeply flawed strategy (Lehne 2014).

This is where the empirical challenge comes in. When Russia, under either President Medvedev in 2008 or President Putin in 2014, acting on the perception of encirclement and humiliation referred to above, invaded, with military force, a sovereign state (first Georgia, then Ukraine), the West in general and Western Europe in particular, had no clear idea how to respond. In the Georgian case, the “crisis” was nipped in the bud because French President Sarkozy happened to be the right man in the right place at the right time and because both Russia and Georgia welcomed his “honest brokering” to get them off their respective hooks. The EU’s Georgia “monitoring” mission since 2008 has largely continued because Putin has seen it in his interest to have EU officials act as gatekeepers while he absorbed Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In the US, the relief was palpable that Washington had not followed through on its promise of NATO membership for Georgia. In the Ukraine case, the EU member states have been at sixes and sevens as to how to respond, a deep division having emerged not only between Western European states and Eastern European states in general, but even within and among the Central and

Eastern European “frontline” states (Forbrig 2015). NATO has hummed and hawed, torn between Polish, Estonian and Lithuanian demands for the stationing of US divisions on the front-line, and manifest American reluctance to get deeply involved. In the event, a “Readiness Action Plan” and a “Very High Readiness Joint Task Force”, spearheaded by Germany, have emerged as a compromise between saber-rattling and empty discourse (Major & Moelling 2015). At the same time, Chancellor Merkel, who became the de facto voice of the EU on the Ukraine crisis (with a support role played by President Hollande) repeated at every opportunity that “there is no military solution to this crisis” – an assurance echoed equally constantly by Hollande. If that is so, what exactly are the RAP and the VHRJTF intended to do? This dilemma squares the circle between theory and empiricism. So much of Western commentary has focused on the notion that Vladimir Putin is simply evil, that he will eventually be replaced and that the problem will then go away. Such a reaction is far closer to wishful thinking than to strategy. Would a “nice Putin” have acted any differently? One expert at least is convinced that he would not – at least not in any fundamental way, because Russia may change its leader “but it is not going to be able to change its geographical location, its historic associations or its longstanding wish to keep the West – which hasn’t always crossed the border bearing flowers – at bay”(Gessen 2015). This view is echoed by Thomas Graham (2015)

The second fault-line consists of the Southern border of the EU, the vast expanses of Arab territories running from Mauritania on the Atlantic coast, to Egypt on the Red Sea, and even beyond to the Arabian territories carved up by the Western powers after World War I, and which have recently descended into chaos: from Yemen in the South, via Saudi Arabia – a tense, central, but highly ambivalent, player – to Iraq, Syria and the Gulf in general. Here, a battle for control of the Islamic world (and thereafter for control of the entire world) is raging between forces, ideas, tribes and sects that have tussled with each other for centuries, but whose *current* violent confrontation was sparked by the Iranian revolution, itself a direct by-product of misguided Western strategy. The European Union, over the past twenty years, has adopted two successive and to some extent overlapping “strategies” towards the Southern rim. The first was the *Euro-Mediterranean Partnership* (EMP), otherwise known as the “Barcelona Process”,



launched in 1995 in large part as an attempt to balance out the EU's recent prioritisation of Central and Eastern Europe. This "process", comprising three "baskets" (political and security dialogue; economic and financial partnership; social, cultural and human partnership) sought to create a Mediterranean region of peace, security and shared prosperity. In reality, Barcelona was an empty shell featuring high-sounding rhetoric in place of policy, let alone strategy (Youngs 2005). It was in large part because Barcelona was perceived as having run into the sand that the project was replaced in 2007 by Nicolas Sarkozy's pet scheme, the *Union for the Mediterranean* (UfM), which went hand in hand with the French president's concurrent rehabilitation of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi (Balfour 2009; Cardwell 2010). Despite the high-sounding rhetoric that also accompanied this project, the UfM in fact amounted to a Faustian pact between the EU and North Africa's dictators, under which they tracked down Islamist "terrorists" and kept EU-bound migration under control, in exchange for token EU development money and a blind eye turned to their human rights record. That "policy" blew apart during the Arab Spring and has not yet been replaced with any alternative approach. Meanwhile, as a result of the implosion of Libya and massive destabilization of both the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, migratory pressures on Europe have multiplied tenfold, at the same time as the EU finds itself increasingly concerned about the *domestic* insecurity fuelled by the constant flow of jihadists from EU member states to the Islamic State – and the potential consequences once they return.

Thus Europe finds itself in double jeopardy from developments in the Arab and Islamic world. These developments posit the emergence of an aggressively anti-Western "separate world order, by definition superior to and incompatible with the Westphalian system or the values of liberal internationalism" (Kissinger 2014: 118). On the one hand, Europe has no strategy to attempt to *manage* or counter these developments, and on the other hand it finds itself the indirect and unsuspecting *target* both of increasingly desperate migrants and of increasingly radicalized European citizens. The attacks in Paris and Copenhagen and the foiled plots in Belgium and the UK are eloquent testimony to the reality that Europe has become the object rather than the subject of historical change.

How to face up to this situation baffles even Henry Kissinger, who resorted to noting that “If order cannot be achieved by consensus or imposed by force, it will be wrought, at disastrous and dehumanizing cost, from the experience of chaos” (p.129).

What have Europeans *other than the official institutions* been saying about this situation? Alas, in comparison to the lively debate on power transition that has animated the academic and policy-making communities in the United States (Walt, 2005; Brooks & Wohlforth 2008; Ikenberry 2011; Kupchan 2012; Posen 2014; Kissinger 2014; Nye 2015), Europeans have been notable by their relative silence on these issues.

In summer 2013, mindful of the crucial meeting of the European Council on defence scheduled for December of that year, no fewer than four major reports appeared – all calling for and offering thoughts on a European strategic approach. The first was an initiative launched by the Strategic Research Institute of the French *Ecole Militaire* (IRSEM), which had issued, in 2012, an 86 page comparative analysis of the *national* White Papers of the then 27 EU member states in an attempt to produce a European framework for an overall security strategy (IRSEM 2012). That study noted the extreme heterogeneity of the 27 disparate European White Papers and called for an indispensable effort at convergence. The IRSEM report was then refined, in April 2013, by the *European Council on Foreign Relations* (De France and Witney 2013). Noting the extreme seriousness of what the authors called the EU’s “strategic myopia and cacophony”, they called for an EU grand strategy to be initiated by Herman Van Rompuy at the European Council meeting in December 2013. The second important initiative came from the foreign ministers of Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden, in an attempt to generate discussion about the EU’s role as a global actor at a time of sweeping international change. It was taken up by the main think tanks in the four initiating countries and joined by a variety of other think tanks in Europe. A number of key workshops was organised in the four capital cities and an overall report issued in May 2013 (EGS 2013). The third development was a collective initiative launched by sixteen of the “great and the good” in European security and defence: ambassadors, flag officers, parliamentarians and academics, each of whom wrote a substantial essay on one or other

aspect of a grand strategy for the EU. The ninety-five pages of recommendations were published in June 2013 (IERI 2013). The fourth study emanated from the *European Strategy and Policy Analysis System* (ESPAS) and was spearheaded by experts from both Chatham House and FRIDE (ESPAS 2013). The starting point for all of these reports is the recognition that the world has changed very rapidly, that new and unfamiliar threats have arisen which cannot be met by traditional instruments, that the world is being structured by an ever smaller number of ever larger units, familiarly referred to as multipolarity, that the EU, as the world's largest economy – with global interests – should both perceive itself and position itself as one of those poles, that the member states, on their own (even the large ones), cannot be players in this new system and that, therefore, a collective strategy has become indispensable.

The ECFR report, which is essentially limited to considerations of *military* strategy, breaks EU member states down into those who actually *have* a grand strategy (France and the UK); those who have “some sense of strategic purpose” (Sweden, Finland and the Czech Republic); those with global horizons, although little in the way of operational plans (the Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Hungary and Slovenia); “abstentionists”, who have no coherent plan and in some cases no defence ministry as such (Luxembourg, Austria, Ireland, Malta); “drifters”, whose national plans, for one reason or another, have not been updated since the turn of the century (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Belgium); and the rest, dubbed “localists”, whose main concern is their own territorial integrity (De France & Witney 2013: 4-8). The main proposal of this report is for a “European semester” in defence, rather like the procedure which now operates for economic and monetary policy in the Eurozone, whereby the 28 member states would submit their national defence budget and planning for scrutiny by their partners. This, it is argued, “would highlight as no other process could the extent of the waste and duplication in European defence expenditure, the size and nature of the capability gaps, present and future; the incoherence of national programmes when summed together; and crucially the opportunities for getting more from less” (De France & Witney 2013: 9). The comparison of the twenty-seven national “strategies” is enlightening. The blueprint

for an EU grand strategy, however, is somewhat minimalist, but that, of course, was not the primary purpose of the study.

The *European Global Strategy* report, emanating from the four foreign ministries, stresses that the main objective of the European Union is “to promote its shared values, peace and the well-being of its peoples” in an increasingly turbulent and unpredictable world. It devotes a great deal of time to the optimisation of conditions for enhanced global trade, which is seen as the basis of Europeans’ well being. It suggests six guiding principles behind a global strategy. “European economic and social development” should be seen as the condition for Europeans to compete successfully in a global context. “A neighbourhood of democracy human rights and the rule of law”, is seen as a vital concomitant of regional – and therefore – global stability. “A sustainable environment and access to natural resources” requires multilateral frameworks of regulation but also diversification and adaptation. “Minimal constraints on the global flow of people, ideas, goods and services” is identified as a key principle of a liberal world order. “Just and effective governance systems at a regional and global level” is again a necessary corollary to the promotion of European values. The sixth precondition is “a secure and resilient EU” in which the new threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been contained or dissipated (EGS 2013: 6-7). These preconditions are followed by eleven strategic objectives which amount in many ways to an elaboration on the requirements of meeting the preconditions – objectives such as furthering the internal market, enhancing energy efficiency, staying the course on enlargement, forging a new relationship with the United States. Critics of the EGS document were quick to note that it “has a distinct flavour of motherhood and apple pie” (Ojanen & Raik 2013) and indeed that was my own reaction on reading the full report. It is extremely difficult to see how these precepts could be rendered operational. Indeed, one of the contributors to the EGS process, Anand Menon, argued that the entire objective of drawing up a European strategic blueprint was unhelpful and unnecessary: “Any document that all 27 member states can agree on would be flaccid, couched in generalities, and unable to provide a guide to specific foreign policy actions” (Menon 2012). I disagreed strongly with Menon at the time, but given the final product, I am no longer so sure that he was wrong.

The lengthy set of recommendations published by the *Institut Européen des Relations Internationales* addresses a more complex range of issues than the other two papers. It also enters more fully into the discussion of the real stakes over the coming decades. Starting with an open-ended assessment of the implications of a multi-polar world, which it sees as oscillating between polycentrism and anarchy, it considers the new threats the EU will face. The first is systemic instability. The traditional Westphalian system, the paper argues, is being transcended, but it is not clear by what. The second threat is regional conflict relatively close to home (Caucasus, Sahel). The growth of fundamentalism has generated a new competition between value systems. Thirdly, there are specific European vulnerabilities such as energy and cyber-attacks, climate change and new technologies. The new multi-polar order offers the EU possibilities of influence providing it decides that it wishes to play a polar role. Its key position at the confluence of several geo-strategic spaces (Euro-Atlantic; Euro-Asian; Euro-Mediterranean/African; and Euro-Arctic) gives it extensive leverage. The US “tilt” encourages the EU to play a much stronger role in the former (indeed, as long as the EU can muster up the will to do so). The uncertainties in the Euro-Asian space make a strategic partnership with Russia unavoidable (however, it does take two to tango). In the Euro-Mediterranean/African space, the EU’s geographical, historical and diplomatic assets make it a more central player than any of the other great powers (but is the EU’s collective will as strong as that of one of its member states – France?). The document offers many suggestions for capitalizing on the EU’s strengths (IERI 2013).

The ESPAS report notes the twin trends of increased interdependence and greater fragmentation in the international system. Interdependence, it argues, will heighten systemic vulnerabilities, especially with the acceleration of South-South relations, while power will continue to shift eastward, accompanied by rapid developments in technologies such as super-computing, synthetic biology and cyber capacity. The report foresees an increase in inter-state conflict (bucking a recent emerging consensus on the decline of major warfare) owing in part to the shift in the geopolitics of access and denial. At the same time, the multiplication of actors will render international cooperation more

difficult. The EU's options in this brave new world are seen as constrained, military capacity being likely to continue to diminish, and its "strongest card [being] confidence in its experience of rules-based integration" (ESPAS 2013: 71), a strange conclusion given the context that preceded it. The EU will thrive more as a "super-partner" than as a superpower and should focus on energy and climate security while striving to become a technology powerhouse. Unfortunately, none of these prescriptions really addresses the geo-strategic challenges I outlined above, focusing, on the contrary, on attempts to leverage the EU's current perceived relative advantages (ESPAS 2013).

These papers illustrate the massive challenges facing the EU in its task of generating some sort of strategic vision. The issue of *how* the EU should go about the business of "promoting its values" in a multi-polar, multi-cultural world, lies at the heart of the on-going international debate about the "West and the Rest". How can the current process of power transition best be managed in the interests of global peace? International relations scholars have theorized that major power transitions tend to be accompanied by military conflict (Organski 1968). As the stakes currently seem to be on the rise in the East and South China Seas, this issue acquires huge salience, especially in the context of the US "tilt" to Asia. Should the EU plan on "tilting" along with the US? (Kaiser and Muniz 2013; Islam 2013)? This would, I believe, be a massive mistake. The EU has its work more than cut out in traditional security and defence terms in its own neighbourhood. Further afield, it can aspire to defend and promote its values (as both the official EEAS papers and the think tank reports suggest). But the question is: how? Scholars such as John Ikenberry have argued that the liberal international system put in place after World War Two is sufficiently strong, attractive and resilient to be able to co-opt the rising powers into its logic and institutions without any fundamental change in its values. It is easy to join and difficult to overthrow – therefore the strategic objective of the West should be to strengthen it (Ikenberry 2011). Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has been relatively successful in helping to adapt the international institutions of interdependence to the new globalised and liberalised environment (Hoffmann et alii 1993). Its approach has been reminiscent, at the international institutional level, of the quest for "milieu goals" theorised by Arnold Wolfers (Yalem 1960). However, this tactic

is currently facing more serious obstacles as the world's rising powers attempt to modify the institutional framework that has dominated for the past half century. The "Rest" are unlikely simply to swallow Western values and systems hook, line and sinker. Some scholars have insisted on the need for the West to strike a "global grand bargain" with the Rest in order to avoid the military conflict theorised by Organski and others (Hutchings 2008; Hutchings and Kemp 2008). Still others, such as Charles Kupchan, envisage a global order in which, for the first time in history, no one power will exercise unrivalled authority and in which there will be multiple and divergent pathways towards modernity. No single power will be able to impose its will on others (Kupchan 2012). It is therefore not enough simply to state that the EU will "promote its values". It needs to know how it is going to achieve this, in a world featuring significant political-cultural diversity, without coming to blows with those who do not share those values.

There are many instances in which the EU has sought to promote a "principled foreign policy" in the teeth of opposition from other international actors, including the US. On issues as diverse as climate change, food safety, the death penalty, torture, environmental policy, the rights of children and women, landmines, sustainable development, democracy promotion, the EU has generally taken a principled position in international negotiations. Yet it is important to keep a sense of perspective. On Kyoto and climate change, one major expert has recently offered the following damning appraisal of the EU's global contribution: "there has been much action but little effect. The rhetoric, the plethora of initiatives, directives, and interventions have not been matched by outcomes." (Helm 2009) The EU went to the climate change conference in Copenhagen in 2010, confident in its role as a norm entrepreneur able to persuade other actors to follow its virtuous example. It discovered to its astonishment that soft power cuts no ice at all when push really comes to shove (Groen & Niemann 2011). On development aid, for which the EU takes pride in being the biggest donor in the world, it has been calculated that the cost to the Global South of the EU's protectionist and subsidised *Common Agricultural Policy* amounts to several times the value of all the European aid monies disbursed (Grant et alii 2004). While the EU roundly condemns all forms of torture, several EU governments have recently been found complicit in assisting

the US policy of “extraordinary rendition” whereby US prisoners arbitrarily labelled as “enemy combatants” are flown around the world to regimes where the administration of torture is not only legal but, in these cases, the very purpose of the visit. According to a European Parliament Report, the CIA operated 1,245 flights involving the transport of suspects to torture bases overseas, often with the full knowledge of the European governments involved (European Parliament 2006). In particular, the UK’s complicity in this and other shameful practices with respect to the island of Diego Garcia has been amply documented (Vine 2009; Freedland 2009). The EU may be a rights-based, values-driven, post-modern entity. It has certainly done more, through its power of attraction, to multiply the number of democracies in the world (and particularly in Europe) than any other international actor (Vachudova 2005; Grabbe 2006). But it is still made up of member states that behave exactly as all states have behaved since the Treaty of Westphalia. Alyson Bailes, pondering the coherence between the declared values behind CSDP and other areas of policy, goes even further:

“The other side of this coin is that the EU is only too ready to do things that hurt people for its own interests’ sake in just about any other, non-military, field of its collective policy. EU trade policies hurt the same weak states the EU tries to heal through its ESDP missions and security advice; tough EU immigration and asylum policies throw individuals back to the same environments that the *Common Foreign and Security Policy* (CFSP) defines as an offence against human values” (Bailes 2008: 120).

In evaluating the EU’s commitment to hard and fast values and principles in foreign policy, elements of opportunism and hypocrisy are super-abundant.

How should the EU deal – strategically – with the challenge of engagement with actors who do not share (much, if at all) its commitment to what in the West are considered basic human rights and freedoms and are often unthinkingly categorised as “universal values”? While recognizing that other civilizations espouse different values, the EU should give serious thought to the most *effective* way of engaging in “values competition” without risking unnecessarily deleterious material consequences and without compromising its basic beliefs. Can the EU, because it covets a barrel of oil, turn a blind eye to the gunning down in Moscow of independent journalists? Should it ignore repression in Tibet because it wishes to launch a new supermarket chain across China?



The literature on human rights promotion in the EU is considerable, and the conclusions are broadly consistent (Balfour 2006; Balfour 2007; Balfour 2011). The EU promotes a strong self-image as a purveyor of human rights in its foreign policies. The Commission “has made human rights and democracy a central aspect of its external relations: in the political dialogue it holds with third countries; through its development cooperation and assistance; or through its action in multilateral fora such as the United Nations” (European Commission 2007). The Council, Commission and Parliament have all set up committees or working parties to monitor human rights situations in third countries and Javier Solana appointed a Personal Representative for Human Rights. Yet the “human rights card” is applied and enforced with considerable elasticity and selectivity and it is very difficult to detect a principled thread running through the EU’s approach to these issues. Different member states frequently adopt diametrically opposite policies to deal with the same problem, each arguing that their particular approach is more likely to further the cause of human rights and democracy. Thus, for instance, the UK and other EU member states demanded sanctions and a travel ban against Zimbabwe and its president Robert Mugabe because of his appalling human rights record inside his own country, while France and Belgium opposed such a policy because of Mugabe’s allegedly constructive approach to peace negotiations in Congo (Castle 2003). Moreover, it is unrealistic to assume a clear distinction between idealism and interests in the promotion, say, of democracy. While the EU has been very successful in promoting democracy among its accession states, this has not been devoid of interest-based considerations: the policy helped prop up European security, it helped the EU raise its international profile and it gave a fillip to the integration process (Olsen 2000). Richard Youngs has similarly cautioned against assuming normative, value-driven motives behind external policy to the exclusion of a concomitant focus on strategic calculation (Youngs 2004). Media-assisted scuffles around the passage through Western cities of the Olympic flame in 2008 did little for the people of Tibet and much to enflame Chinese nationalism among a younger generation that had hitherto been relatively immune to it. Such activity was, in short, counter-productive. Given the limited success rate to date of efforts to leverage human rights conditionality or to enforce democratic “norms”, even in the EU’s direct neighbourhood (Kirkpatrick et alii 2013), let alone further a-field (Donno 2008; Donno

2013), a radically new approach is required. The EU should perhaps think less in terms of politically-loaded fungible conditionality (a new trade agreement in exchange for greater internet access) or of megaphone declarations of outrage about the incarceration of Aung San Suu Kyi or the arrest of a Falun Gong leader, and more in terms of discreet and ongoing conversations with cognate parties in the other country (parliamentarians raising issues with parliamentarians, ministers with ministers, officials with officials, but all outside the glare of the media). The key questions which seem not yet to have been addressed are: to what extent does the recognition of value *diversity* imply the relativisation of value *promotion*; and what are the most *effective* methods of influencing the outcome of a competition between conflicting values? That is the stuff of strategic thinking, but it is not yet evident on the EU radar screen.

As we saw during the “Arab Spring”, lacking any clear strategic answer to any of these sets of questions, the EU proved totally ineffectual. This will not change until it begins to take seriously the issue of grand strategy addressing the challenge of the EU’s “hard power” objectives. What might be some practical, concrete steps in that direction? The 2010 Reflection Group called for the establishment of “a European forecasting and analytical unit, as part of the European External Action Service and working in close cooperation with national centres under the principle of shared intelligence”. Intelligence is a domain that goes to the very core of state sovereignty. Attempts to develop some formal EU intelligence-sharing agency (or even procedures) have been bedevilled with suspicion and mistrust (Muller-Wille 2004). Small states with no intelligence-gathering facilities of their own resent their dependence on the large states. Large EU states which do gather their own national intelligence (there are seven of them: France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom) are traditionally reluctant to share it fully either with one another or (still less) with smaller states. The result is that the EU has had to make do with whatever scraps of intelligence its member states are prepared to give it. There are two main intelligence operations in the EU, the *Intelligence Analysis Centre* – a branch of the EEAS – and the EUMS’s *Intelligence Division*. The former involves seventy to eighty analysts from all member states, working 24/7. It feeds intelligence, garnered from agencies around the world, to the Council, via the Political

and Security Committee. The Intelligence Division, which is the largest single component of the EUMS, involves several dozen senior officers working in three main branches: Policy, Requirements and Production, supplying focused intelligence reports for the purposes of operational planning and early warning (Antunes 2007). These agencies liaise with and receive data from the EU's Satellite Centre in Torrejon, Spain.

The current arrangements are encouraging, but for the EU to generate a serious intelligence-gathering facility of its own would require two major developments. The first would be for the large member states, which enjoy their own intelligence-gathering facilities, to agree to pool the results in a comprehensive and transparent way. This would be a huge step forward (Walsh 2009). The second would be for the United Kingdom radically to revise its intimate relationship with US intelligence – the price of which is a US-imposed prohibition from sharing most data with EU partners. This would be an even greater leap forward and is unlikely to happen soon (Svendsen 2009; Clark 2012). For the moment, the EU's intelligence arrangements are relatively satisfactory for the limited purposes of overseas crisis management – but even there the French operation *Serval* in Mali in 2013 was relatively dependent on US intelligence. If the EU were ever to become serious about developing a grand strategy, a qualitative leap towards an entirely new intelligence framework and practice would be essential.

Beyond the generation of strategic intelligence, the second step in the direction of a grand strategy would be to re-organise some of the existing EU decision-shaping agencies so as to create some form of *European Security Council* – as was first proposed by James Rogers in 2007.

“The European Security Council's role could be to provide a unified institutionalised setting at the European level for the relentless assessment of security threats and strategic challenges. It could give advice to the president of the Council of the European Union, the high representative and the Member States. It could be a centralised agency for Member States to exchange and assess global and domestic intelligence. The Security Council would provide a platform for input from the European Union Institute for Security Studies and the European Defence Agency, as well as from foreign offices and defence ministries in the respective Member States. Finally, it could bestow a podium for the formal exchange of ideas about foreign, security and defence policies

between academics and think tank personnel with European practitioners and officials.” (Rogers 2007)

Many suggestions have since been formulated for a new overarching institutional agency of this type. Alternative titles proposed have included a “Strategic Advisory Body”, an “EU Forecasting & Analytical Unit”, and a “European Defence Review Commission” – among others. It is significant that all analysts call for such a body. The key to the strategic value-added of such a body would be its capacity to synergise the inputs from a wide range of policy areas: trade, aid, development, diplomacy as well as the requirements of both the military and civilian dimensions of international crisis management. It would, in short, become the primary platform for the formulation and regular updating of an EU grand strategy, akin to the quadrennial US *National Security Strategy* documents. This would then, as a third step, require further developments in terms of operational planning.

The absence of any significant EU planning capability, and in particular of a dedicated Operational Headquarters (OHQ) has long been seen as a major handicap to the development of CSDP (Biava 2008). France has consistently sought to promote such a facility (in the name of empowering and autonomizing CSDP) and the UK has equally consistently opposed it (arguing that this would “duplicate” existing planning facilities at NATO, and that CSDP should in any case prioritise civilian planning where it can add value). Germany has hidden behind this stand-off to avoid taking any decision, conscious that it has misgivings about France’s military ambitions for the EU and, for its own different reasons, not unsupportive of the UK’s somewhat disingenuous support of civilian planning (Simon 2010).

These would be the major indispensable pre-requisites for the development of an EU grand strategy. Other initiatives would include growing cooperation between the recently created External Action Service and the diplomatic services of the member states; a lucid appraisal – by the European Security Council – of the strategic objectives of the EU’s many “strategic partnerships”, and their calculated coordination; major further development of the EU’s capacity for the mounting of international crisis

management missions, both civilian and military; the creation of new configurations of the European Council, allowing for joint meetings (on the model of the recent meetings of defence ministers and overseas development ministers) between, say, foreign and interior ministers, trade and development ministers etc; a significantly upgraded role for the European Defence Agency, working in close cooperation with the European Security Council and the External Action Service. Crucial too will be the leadership of a dynamic few. This has now become a truism. Franco-British leadership is problematic because of the ambivalent role of the UK. Franco-German leadership is problematic because of Germany's nervousness. Increasingly, a consensus is building around the designation of a "core group" or "Eurogroup" based on the Weimar Five (France, Germany, Poland, Italy and Spain) (Sénat 2013; Coelmont & De Langlois 2013; Howorth 2014).

The challenges facing Europe – as an international security and defense actor – derive largely from the ill-defined core purpose of this policy area, and from the increasingly illogical and unworkable structural and political relationship between CSDP and NATO. The problem remains fundamentally *political*. It is also strategic in the sense that the world around the EU is changing rapidly – and not for the better. Unless and until the EU's member states acquire a firm grasp of the processes of power transition that are taking place not only in their immediate neighbourhood but around the globe, and unless they make a resolute collective decision to become actors in those processes rather than bystanders or spectators, the EU's foreign and security project will continue to remain a work in progress which is still, essentially, in its infancy.

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