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POLICY BRIEF

WHY EUROPE NEEDS A NEW GLOBAL STRATEGY

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SUMMARY

It is now a decade since European leaders approved the first-ever European Security Strategy (ESS), which began with the memorable statement that "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free". But Europe and the world have changed so dramatically in the last decade that it is increasingly hard to argue that the EU can simply stick to the "strategy" it agreed in 2003. Many of the approaches that worked so well for Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War seem to be ineffectual at best and counter-productive at worst in an age of power transition and global political awakening.

In particular, six of the ideas that were central to the ESS are now holding Europe back: European soft power struggles in an era of global awakening; European aid and economic assistance are losing impact in an era of big spenders; "effective multilateralism" is harder in an era of neo-Westphalian rising powers; liberal interventionism is more difficult because of fatigue and defence cuts; US disengagement is changing the transatlantic relationship; and economic power alone is not enough in Asia. Given these changes, European leaders should use the European Council in December to commission a major strategic rethink.

Today's Europe is in crisis. But of all the world's leading powers, none has had so much success in shaping the world around it over the last 20 years as the European Union. The United States provided the military underpinning for a Europe whole and free, but its record in other parts of the world has been mixed at best. Russia is still lagging behind where it was when the Cold War ended. Japan has stagnated. Meanwhile rising powers such as China have not yet sought to reshape global politics in their image. But since the end of the Cold War, the EU has peacefully expanded to include 16 new member states and has transformed much of its neighborhood by reducing ethnic conflicts, exporting the rule of law, and developing economies from the Baltic to the Balkans.

Furthermore, it is Europeans rather than Americans and Chinese who have pushed for institutionalised responses to global problems from climate change to chemical weapons. It is the EU that has inspired the institutions most likely to foster stability and co-operation in other neighbourhoods – the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union and the Arab League. The transformation of Europe's neighbourhood is a striking contrast with Asia, which, although it has been economically dynamic, has remained politically static. An article about Asian security by former US Secretary of State James Baker from 1992 sounds almost contemporaneous in its description of tensions between China, Japan, and Korea, the maritime disputes and the lack of institutional responses to them.[1]

1 James A. Baker, III, "America in Asia: Emerging Architecture for a Pacific Community", *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1991/92, available at http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/47433/james-a-baker-iii/america-in-asia-emerging-architecture-for-a-pacific-community#.

Europe's post-Cold War success story was captured by the first attempt to design a European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003, which began with the memorable statement that "Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free".[2] But while Europe today is still relatively prosperous, secure and free, it now looks out on the world with less optimism. Europeans seem to be losing power and influence in the world at a startling speed.

This is in part because of the euro crisis, but it is also because of the trap of historic success. This brief argues that Europe and the world have changed so dramatically in the last decade that the conceptual underpinnings of the 2003 ESS obscure rather than illuminate the challenges Europe now faces. In particular, six of the ideas that were central to the ESS are now holding Europe back. For that reason, Europe may be "wrecked by success" like those who, as Sigmund Freud explained in a 1916 essay, "fall ill precisely when a deeply-rooted and long-cherished wish has come to fulfilment".[3] In December, the European Council will discuss defence issues for the first time since the euro crisis began. European leaders should use it to commission a major strategic rethink.

What a difference a decade makes

It is now a decade since European leaders approved the ESS, which was prepared by the then High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana. The document did a good job of listing certain core concerns common to the EU's (then) 15 member states, such as the security of their neighbourhood and the importance of the multilateral system. It provided a doctrine around which Old and New Europe could unite in the aftermath of the Iraq War and crafted a policy framework within which EU defence efforts could be pursued. As a result, many policymakers joke that it has attained "Holy Writ" status. But it has now outlasted its usefulness: many of the approaches that worked so well for Europe in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War seem to be ineffectual at best and counter-productive at worst in an age of power transition and global political awakening.

In 2003, the West (that is, the US, with Europe following or supporting) could still plausibly claim to run the world. As the winner of the Cold War, the West was still economically and militarily unassailable, and the big disagreements that mattered were across the Atlantic rather than the Pacific. There was also a widespread sense that Western values had triumphed: liberal democracy and the Washington Consensus were unchallengeable (though they could be and were resisted) and the UN was about to endorse liberal interventionism in the form of a Responsibility to Protect.

Europe also felt confident: its new single currency was a success; it was developing a constitution and new foreign policy institutions; and it had begun its first Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations.

Since then, however, the world has changed almost beyond recognition and European optimism has been diminished. The 2008 report on the implementation of the ESS said Europe was still "an anchor of stability".[4] But the euro crisis has discredited the euro and the EU's institutions and replaced confidence with insecurity for millions of Europeans. Iraq and Afghanistan have discredited liberal interventionism for most Europeans and "non-intervention" is being re-established as the global norm. The "emerging economies" have emerged: the Chinese economy has doubled in size; authoritarian capitalism is the new brand leader; and from the Doha Round to climate change to Syria, European agendas have been blocked. In many capitals, hubristic talk of "balancing" the US has given way to anxiety about the "pivot" and American decline.

Meanwhile, within Europe, citizens rejected the constitution and with it the assumption of "ever closer union". Solidarity has crumbled as the EU has doubled in size; the crisis has set debtors against creditors; economic insecurity has bred intolerance; and strategic differences between those who look east and those who look south, and between those who look in and those who look out, have sharpened. Defence budgets have plunged, capabilities have shrunk, research and development spending has been halved, and for all the talk of "pooling and sharing", defence co-operation levels have declined. In 2003, France led the first EU military intervention, Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which inspired the creation of the EU's so-called Battlegroups. Ten years later, the EU and its Battlegroups were ignored as France conducted a similar intervention in Mali.

Europe has made some progress in the last decade in developing a coherent, effective foreign policy. Many of the divisions among Europeans have narrowed. Countries such as France that were most sceptical about the transatlantic relationship are now some of the most Atlanticist nations and most active members of NATO. Germany and Poland no longer represent different paradigms on policy towards Russia and Europe has taken steps to reduce its energy dependence. The Lisbon Treaty created a European foreign minister and diplomatic service that has the power to bridge the gap between the resources of the European Commission and the political authority of the European Council. But it is hard to imagine a multinational enterprise that had sustained such a dramatic loss of market share, stock price, and reputation attempting to assure its shareholders that its decade-old strategy remained valid. It may be time to unlearn some of the lessons of the 1990s.

2 "A Secure Europe in a Better World", European Security Strategy, Brussels, 10 December 2003, p. 1, available at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf.

3 Sigmund Freud, "Those Wrecked by Success" (1916), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume 14, (London: Vintage, 1999), pp. 315–331.

4 "Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World", Brussels, 11 December 2008, p. 1, available at http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf (hereafter, "Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy").

Six new dilemmas

The decision by European Council President Herman Van Rompuy to discuss defence issues at the European Council in December has stimulated strategic thinking in Brussels and in some member state capitals. During the last year, there have been a number of assessments of the EU's potential for cohesion, including a report published in May by four European think tanks at the behest of the Italian, Polish, Spanish and Swedish foreign ministries.[5] In October, the EEAS released a preparatory report for the December meeting, in which it argued that "the debate on capabilities, military or civilian, needs to flow from an understanding of the strategic context".[6] In particular, at the December summit, European leaders should reflect on six dilemmas that expose the limits of the ideas of the 2003 ESS in providing answers to the problems Europe faces today.

Soft power in an era of global political awakening

We are living through what Zbigniew Brzezinski has called a "global political awakening" that is constraining the ability of old elites to govern.[7] Over the last few years we have seen manifestations of this from Brazil and Bulgaria to Tunisia and Turkey. But although the global desire for democracy is growing, this remarkable concatenation of political activism is not driving the world towards liberal democracy. The most dramatic illustration of this is the Arab uprisings, which were welcomed by Europeans but have unleashed politics that are in many cases challenging for the EU. Although the revolutions were largely internal affairs, a central part of the "dignity" they proclaimed is about emancipation from external influence.

Thus Europe's commitment to liberal values and human rights sometimes pits it against public opinion. In contrast to the post-communist states inside Europe in the 1990s, there is little desire from southern Mediterranean countries to adopt European standards. In fact, many of the countries in the region, especially Egypt and Algeria, are fiercely protective of their independence and want to emancipate themselves from foreign and, in particular, Western influence rather than sign up to European norms – which in any case look less appealing since the euro crisis. In Egypt, for example, neither the military or the Muslim Brotherhood have embraced Western norms – and the country's liberals, forced to choose between unpalatable options, appear to have decided to back the military.

In this new context, the very idea of European soft power – the assumption that people want to become like us – is problematic. In the era of enlargement, the EU was genuinely able to use the appeal of membership to shape the policies of its near neighbours. It can still occasionally apply this type of leverage with a handful of countries in the Western Balkans such as Serbia. The promise of closer ties to the EU may still have an impact on some other countries in the post-Soviet space such as Moldova and Ukraine. But the EU has struggled to gain any comparable leverage over its neighbours in North Africa and the Middle East, while other former Soviet states from Belarus to Uzbekistan stoutly resist the EU's charms.

The weakening of European soft power is also a consequence of the "soft power competition" that Europe increasingly faces across its neighbourhood. In the Middle East, a struggle for influence between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and Iran has broken out.[8] While in Syria, this emerging cold war has become a proxy battle, elsewhere it is being fought through offers of financial aid, sometimes reaching into the billions of dollars, and sectarian religious politics. In the eastern neighbourhood, the EU faces geopolitical competition from Russia. Elsewhere around the world, Europe increasingly faces competition from China.

The increased activity of regional organisations beyond Europe such as the African Union and the Arab League has sometimes been to the EU's strategic advantage. For example, African Union peacekeepers funded by the EU played a major part in stabilising Somalia while West African troops supported France in Mali. But in other cases they have pursued strategic goals that are at odds with European interest. For example, the African Union was fiercely critical of Europe's policy towards Libya in 2011 and the Arab League, which engaged in the Syrian crisis in late 2011 and early 2012 with EU backing, became a vehicle for Saudi Arabia and its allies to thwart UN-led efforts to make a peace deal as 2012 wore on. In the eastern neighbourhood, Russia is turning the European model against the EU with its proposals for a "Eurasian Union" involving former Soviet states.

In other words, European soft power is a wasting asset in a world in which other regions and powers are increasingly self-confident and less willing to base their policies on relations with the West. This is a fundamental obstacle to any strategy based on the "comprehensive" export of European values and models in the EU's neighbourhood or further afield. The EU should not give up its values. But it does need to rethink how they can best be promoted at a time when ideological, financial and political competition in both Europe's eastern and southern neighbourhoods is liable to remain high, and even grow, in the years ahead.

5 "Towards a European Global Strategy. Securing European Influence in a Changing World", European Global Strategy, May 2013, available at http://www.europeanglobalstrategy.eu/about (hereafter, "Towards a European Global Strategy").

6 "Preparing the December 2013 European Council on Security and Defence. Final Report by the High Representative", Brussels, 15 October 2013, p. 1, available at http://eeas.europa.eu/statements/docs/2013/131015_02_en.pdf .

7 See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

8 Julien Barnes-Dacey and Daniel Levy, "The Regional Struggle for Syria", European Council on Foreign Relations, July 2013, available at http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR86_SYRIA_REPORT.pdf.

Development aid and economic assistance as leverage in an age of big spenders

In Egypt and other countries emerging from the Arab revolutions, the EU has also had to recognise the limitations of its financial tools for shaping other societies. EU member states pride themselves on being collectively the world's greatest donors of development aid and remain willing to use economic access to the EU as a political tool. But although the EU still has some economic leverage over neighbours such as Ukraine, it has much less in the Middle East and North Africa. This is partly because, against the background of the crisis, member states have made big cuts in development aid and have failed to recalibrate their technocratic donor programmes to fund political reform, which has had an impact on the EU's leverage.

However, even when the EU tries to use its aid and remaining economic strength to achieve explicitly political goals, other big-spending actors are able to undermine it. For example, when the EU talked about cutting off funding to Egypt in response to this summer's coup, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states proffered alternative financing. While the EU responded relatively quickly to the Syrian government's repression with rounds of sanctions in 2011, Iran and Russia have found ways to prop up Damascus despite its economic weakness. While the EU has poured funds into the DRC for over a decade, the government has courted Beijing and repeatedly ignored Western demands to improve governance because of promises of Chinese grants.

Facing domestic criticism over the amount of money going abroad in a period of domestic austerity, European policymakers are increasingly hard-headed about the way they distribute aid. They are more likely to spend it to stop weak states turning into potential terrorist bases, or to use it to facilitate commercial ties with growing economies. There is nonetheless still an altruistic streak in aid policy: there is mounting support for a push to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030. European governments should get behind this. But whatever the moral and economic case for aid, European governments must recognise that it offers diminishing political returns.

Effective multilateralism in a neo-Westphalian world

When EU officials wrote the 2003 ESS, they were particularly conscious of the damage that the Iraq War had done to the UN – and to perceptions of Europe as a cohesive force in the world. So it was not surprising that the strategy gave particular attention to revitalising "effective multilateralism" with the UN at its core. EU member states have taken these strategic goals seriously, especially by investing in the UN, which the 2008 report on the implementation of the ESS called the "apex of the international system."[9] The 2008 report also widened the institutional focus, emphasising the need for Europe and emerging powers to invest in the international financial institutions and the G20.

However, Europeans have been increasingly frustrated by the readiness of rising powers to use the UN and other institutions as a means to counter Western ambitions. In the decade since the ESS was drafted, France and the UK have frequently turned to the UN to stabilise former colonies such as Lebanon, Mali, and Sudan. EU security missions have co-operated closely, if sometimes imperfectly, with UN missions in trouble sports such as Chad and Kosovo.[10] But, as Richard Gowan and Franziska Brantner argued in 2008, the EU has also faced a "slow motion crisis" in the UN.[11] Non-Western powers have increasingly blocked initiatives on human rights in the General Assembly and Human Rights Council, and China and Russia have refused to cooperate on a series of first-order crises, culminating in their prolonged defence of the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

At the same time, looking for "effective multilateralism" elsewhere is equally frustrating. The World Trade Organization has been marginalised as the Doha Round has stalled, and a global cat's cradle of bilateral and regional trade deals is emerging in its place. In 2008 and 2009, European leaders including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy invested in the G20 not only to address the immediate financial crisis but also as a potential mechanism for assimilating China and other major non-Western economies into the global multilateral system. But this process has not gone smoothly. Inspired by their newfound prominence, the BRICs formed a new caucus to help drive G20 debates. They then teamed up with the US at G20 meetings in South Korea in 2010 to force EU members to give up some of their influence over the International Monetary Fund. At the G20 summits in 2011 and 2012, Europe was a problem to be solved rather than a solution to problems.

It is still possible for European policymakers to point to multilateral successes, such as the recent negotiation of an arms trade treaty through the UN General Assembly. But China and Russia (both of which abstained on the arms treaty) are unlikely any time soon to be neatly assimilated into the Western multilateral system as Europeans hoped. When EU member states are prepared to place a crisis in their neighbourhood on the UN agenda, as previously over Kosovo and Syria, Beijing and Moscow are liable to see an opportunity to constrain or divide the EU. Over the longer term, all of the BRICs countries appear intent on reducing Western influence in global institutions. Traditional multilateralism is, therefore, not a reliable basis for strategy in a neo-Westphalian world.

9 "Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy", p. 2.

10 Richard Gowan, "The case for co-operation in crisis management", European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2012, available at http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR59_CRISIS_MANAGEMENT_BRIEF_AW.pdf.

11 Richard Gowan and Franziska Brantner, "A Global Force for Human Rights? An Audit of European Power at the UN", European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2008, available at http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR-08_A_GLOBAL_FORCE_FOR_HUMAN_RIGHTS-_AN_AUDIT_OF_EUROPEAN_POWER_AT_THE_UN.pdf.

That does not mean that EU should give up on its multilateralist aspirations, but it will have to come up with different approaches to multilateralism. In the economic realm it is already doing so. In response to the gridlock of institutions, it is increasingly being forced to route round sovereigntist powers in order to change them from the outside. Through the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), Europe and the US are trying to stop China from using its vast domestic market to establish regulatory norms and standards and instead to set rules and present them to China as a fait accompli. There is, as yet, no equivalent to TTIP in the security realm: proposals that the US and the EU should act as the core of a "Global NATO" or Concert of Democracies come and go fruitlessly.

Nonetheless, Europeans may increasingly have to go "forum shopping" to find alternatives to the UN when it is gridlocked over crises. This may involve co-operation with regional partners such as the African Union – despite the tensions in such cooperation – or putting together ad hoc coalitions such as the "Friends of Libya", which effectively supplanted the Security Council in guiding the war against Muammar Gaddafi in 2012. But this à la carte multilateralism risks splitting the EU: France and the UK are typically more willing to manoeuvre around international legal obstacles than Germany. Europe's default position will probably always be to go back to the UN. But in a multipolar environment, the EU may have no choice but to rely on short-term alliances and regional partners to handle fast-moving threats – and even legitimise the use of force.

Liberal interventionism at a time of austerity and fatigue

After a decade in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is a palpable trend across Europe to take defence and the need for strong armed forces with diminishing seriousness – what former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates called the "demilitarization of Europe".[12] The long struggles to establish democratic political settlements and the rule of law in those countries – and the very uncertain results that have been achieved – have given European policymakers a vivid awareness of the difficulties of rebuilding societies after civil war and armed intervention. At the same time, the prolonged economic crisis has exacerbated the existing trend for EU member states to cut back their military spending.

These cuts have led to an erosion of European military capabilities. Total EU defence spending has been reduced from €251 billion in 2001 to €194 billion in 2013, while European governments more than halved their spend on defence research and development between 2001 and 2011.[13] Member states have taken decisions about cuts "strictly on a national basis, without any attempt at consultation or co-ordination within either NATO or the EU, and with no regard to the overall defence capability that will result from the sum of these national decisions".[14] Major sustained engagement such as many member states undertook in Afghanistan and Iraq in the previous decade is inconceivable in the foreseeable future. It must even be doubtful how much appetite or ability Europeans will in the future have even for short, sharp interventions such as those in Libya and Mali.

Globally, too, there has been a shift away from the idea of a "responsibility to protect" since the high-water mark of the 2005 UN World Summit. While the UN Security Council did invoke the doctrine in authorising the use of military force in Libya, the subsequent course of military intervention provoked a strong backlash from Russia, China, and other emerging powers, which argued that the military campaign against Gaddafi crossed the line from humanitarian protection to regime change. In the current global climate any suggestion that the UN Security Council authorise military force to prevent an assault by a government against its own population is likely to be blocked.

At the time of the ESS, Europe had recently overcome its conflict-aversion and successfully intervened in the Balkans. In the future, European governments face a higher threshold of legitimacy because of people's fear of entanglement. As a result, increasingly, interventions will be led by regional armies, peacekeepers and rebels with Western backing – rather than involving Western boots on the ground. Europeans need to come to terms with this change. One of the key demands for any intervention is international legitimacy but Chinese and Russian opposition will often make it impossible to get a Security Council mandate. This means that Europeans need to help build up regional organisations which will increasingly be the key to legitimating and executing interventions.

Some suggest Europe could effectively withdraw from geopolitics and become a "European Japan" – one without the ability or will to use military power except in self-defence. But, given the increasing instability in Europe's southern and eastern neighbourhoods, this is unrealistic. Moreover, whereas in the past the US could be relied on to provide military capabilities to help Europeans solve problems in their own neighbourhood – as it did in the Balkans in the 1990s and to a lesser extent in Libya in 2011 – this may no longer be the case in future.

12 US Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, "NATO Strategic Concept Seminar (Future of NATO)", Speech at National Defense University, Washington D.C., 23 February 2010, available at http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1423.

13 David J. Berteau, Guy Ben-Ari, Ryan Crotty, Joachim Hofbauer, Priscilla Hermann, and Sneha Raghavan, "European Defense Trends 2012", Center for Strategic & International Studies, December 2012, available at http://csis.org/publication/european-defense-trends-2012.

14 Nick Witney, "How to stop the demilitarisation of Europe", European Council on Foreign Relations, November 2011, p. 2, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR40_DEMILITARISATION_BRIEF_AW.pdf.

Transatlanticism at a time of US disengagement

In 2003, there were no major issues in the world that were not seen through a transatlantic prism. But US policy on everything from Syria to the debt crisis raises big questions for Europeans. As the US makes defence budget cuts and "pivots" towards Asia, President Barack Obama has taken a new low-cost approach to US leadership in an age of austerity. This involves use of drones, Special Forces and cyber warfare rather than large-scale interventions and a mix of soft power and sanctions as the substitute for deeper diplomatic engagement or military action, and "leading from behind" where interventions are perceived to be absolutely necessary. In particular, Obama's responses to events from Egypt to Libya to Syria have suggested a new US approach to the Middle East – a region of strategic significance to the EU.

US disengagement means that Europeans will be expected to take responsibility for sorting out problems in their own neighbourhood. Europe will not be left alone, especially if tensions with Iran lead to chaos in the Middle East. But US readiness to join Europeans in confronting problems which Washington will increasingly see as primarily European rather than American concerns will depend upon whether it detects any greater willingness on Europe's part to put more into NATO, and to fend for itself where it reasonably can. Europeans should focus on developing their own capabilities and in particular the "strategic enablers" (reconnaissance assets, smart munitions etc.) they will need to manage crises in their own backyard – and which the US was forced to supply in the Libya campaign.

Economic power in a strategic Asia

In 2003, Asian nations were already important to key European economies but today they are crucial. The EU is now China's biggest trading partner, India's second biggest, ASEAN's second biggest, Japan's third biggest, and Indonesia's fourth biggest. It has negotiated free-trade areas with Singapore and South Korea and has begun separate talks with ASEAN, India, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. But many European nations still act as if they will be able to continue to pursue their national economic goals in Asia without working together or developing a political or security stance towards the region.

Even in the economic realm, such an approach is counter-productive. In a region where many of the big economies are sustained by state capitalism, European countries could find themselves on the wrong side of an uneven playing field. As François Godement and Jonas Parello-Plesner highlighted in 2011, China has shifted from looking for a real "strategic partnership" with the EU to "exploiting Europe's soft underbelly" by investing and buying up assets in cash-strapped countries such as Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain – and even the UK.[15] It has managed to create rifts within the EU over trade and financial issues, as the recent spat over solar panels demonstrated. Increasingly Europeans will find that the only way to get access to growing markets on fair terms will be to develop coherence between member states and the EU institutions.

Moreover, it would be shortsighted for Europe to view Asia through an economic prism alone or to assume Asia will follow Euroope's model of regional integration. Asia is one of the few regions of the world where a great power conflict seems possible as a result of the combination of rising military spending, territorial disputes and nationalism. The US "pivot" confirms that the most important strategic competition of the twenty-first century will be between China and the US. Though because of the interdependence between them, both sides are keen to avoid confrontation, competition could easily slide into confrontation. Such a confrontation would obviously be disastrous for the region itself, but also for Europeans, who would see their newfound growth and employment prospects evaporating as the global economy was plunged into recession.

Thus Europe cannot leave Asian security to the US. Europe shares with the US an interest in an open, peaceful, democratic, rule-governed Asia where countries are allowed to exercise their affairs free from the threat of external aggression or coercion. But many Europeans distinguish between those goals and America's assertion of primacy in the Asia Pacific region. So rather than contracting its interests out to others, Europe should set out its own ideas for Asian security and work with Asian partners as well as the US to promote them.

Beyond Asia, China's reach has expanded phenomenally over the last decade and, as François Godement has written, its "policy choices no longer affect only its neighbourhood but every issue from trade and the global economy to climate change and nuclear proliferation, as well as every region from Africa to the Middle East".[16] This will increasingly mean that the EU cannotcannot be a strategic player in its own neighbourhood or anywhere else while persisting in viewing China simply as an export market and source of finance. It is hard to see EU member states craftingcrafting more effective joint policies towards cases such as Belarus and Libya (and Iran, which also has close ties to Beijing) if they cannot agree on how to deal with China in each case. In other words, whether Europe likes it or not, its strategic identity will be affected by what happens in Asia.

15 François Godement and Jonas Parello-Plesner with Alice Richard, The Scramble for Europe, European Council on Foreign Relations, July 2011, available at http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR37_Scramble_For_Europe_AW_v4.pdf.

16 François Godement, "A Global China Policy", European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2010, available at http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR22_CHINA_BRIEF.pdf.

The failure of convergence

Given the changed (and still changing) international environment, some strategic reflection on how Europe can remain an impactful global actor is not only desirable but also unavoidable. Coming up with collective answers to these new dilemmas would be challenging for a community of 28 countries even if it were sailing through untroubled waters. Obviously, however, the EU is far from being in this position. In particular, the financial and euro crises have shaken the EU to its core. Although since the summer of 2012 the situation has become less acute and the eurozone has restored some of its credibility, the crisis has not yet been solved and growth is likely to remain sluggish.

For the foreseeable future, economic security seems likely to remain the number one concern for European citizens and to crowd out more traditional security concerns as well as the EU's normative and values agenda. In 2010, ECFR conducted a unique survey of the foreign-policy elites of all 27 member states, which included more than 250 interviews. We found that, in the minds of security elites, the main preoccupations were not classical threats but rather standards of living, the impact of the financial crisis, energy insecurity, climate change and immigration. As EU member states struggle to restore growth they increasingly focus on a foreign policy that opens markets beyond Europe's borders and encourages investment within Europe.

However, economic interests vary from member state to member state. Moreover, the single currency itself, was meant to produce economic convergence among eurozone countries and therefore, it was hoped, a convergence of foreign-policy interests. Instead it is increasingly dividing Europe into surplus countries such as Germany and the Netherlands which depend heavily on exports for economic growth and therefore seek above all to open markets beyond Europe, and deficit countries, which tend to prioritise investment, whether in their sovereign debt, their infrastructure or their companies. Some member states also have particular economic interests in the eastern and southern neighbourhoods. For example, member states such as Italy, Spain, and France depend on North Africa for energy.

While the single currency failed to produce convergence among eurozone economies, the ESS failed to produce the hoped-for convergence in strategic culture among EU member states. All the EU member states have now produced something approximating to a "national security strategy". But when ECFR conducted the first systematic examination of these documents, we found a "strategic cacophony" rather than a common security culture.[17] A small number of member states emerged as real "strategists". But the rest were either "globalists" (who concentrate more readily on shifting balances of power and general policy objectives without unpacking the practical consequences they entail); "localists" (for whom preoccupations on their borders tend to crowd out broader strategic considerations); "abstentionists" (who have chosen to forgo strategy in security matters altogether); or "drifters" (whose strategy is simply outdated).

There are several specific steps that Europe could take immediately in order to accelerate a convergence in strategic culture. First, EU member states could share national defence plans – that is, tell each other how much they plan to spend on defence and on what – in the same way as eurozone countries now share their budget plans. Such a European "defence semester" would highlight the extent of the waste and duplication in European defence expenditure; the size and nature of the capability gaps; the incoherence of national programmes; and, crucially, the opportunities for getting more from less by pooling efforts and resources in new co-operative projects.[18] Catherine Ashton's input to the December summit suggests that the European Council might "promote" this sort of activity; instead the Council should require it.

Second, the European Council could initiate one or two major, exemplary, integrative projects. Ideas aired in the past include common policing of European airspace. This could save hundreds of millions of euros by culling redundant combat aircraft and infrastructure across Europe. Such ambition now looks out of reach for this December's meeting, but a serious European effort to make up for the past decade's neglect of remotely piloted air systems is an open goal. Not just European military capability but Europe's pre-eminence in civil aerospace depend upon it and everyone – industry, the European External Action Service, and the European Commission – is calling for it. But the Council should go further than just blessing the idea and returning it to ministers and institutions to progress; it must specify what it wants and demand that a detailed plan to achieve it is brought back to it in 2014.

For the experience of the last decade – in which pooling and sharing has been endlessly discussed while levels of co-operation in research and procurement have actually declined – has demonstrated the futility of relying on "bottom-up" approaches. Top-level political direction is needed – as well as top-level political insistence on the strategic case for more cohesive European defence efforts. Defence practitioners understand that their efforts must be set in, and conditioned by, the broader context of foreign and security policy. In the absence of a shared strategic vision, inertia will rule the day.

Thus developing a new European strategy is not a distraction from the achievement of "concrete results": it

17 Olivier de France and Nick Witney, "Europe's Strategic Cacophony", European Council on Foreign Relations, April 2013, available at http://ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR77_SECURITY_BRIEF_AW.pdf (hereafter "Europe's Strategic Cacophony").

18 For more on this proposal, see "Europe's Strategic Cacophony", p. 9.

19 For more on this proposal, see "Europe's Strategic Cacophony", pp. 9–10.

is a precondition. The agenda for the European Council in December will focus on military capabilities and industrial issues. But an increasing number of governments across Europe are rightly urging that the opportunity be grasped to commission a major strategic rethink – in other words to initiate a broader debate about the role that Europe can and should aspire to play in the fast-changing world around it; the strategies that that will best promote European interests and values; and what contribution European defence efforts should make.

The necessity of choice

Behind the rhetoric, the current reality is that Europe is losing power and influence, at odds over how external policy should be framed and implemented, and increasingly disposed to see the rest of the world primarily as an export market. The shift in the global distribution of power from west to east and shrinking political and military resources mean that the time has passed, if it ever existed, in which Europe can have it all. There is now an urgent need for a process of intergovernmental reflection at a senior political level to make some tough decisions about priorities. In a resource-constrained environment, Europeans will increasingly have to make difficult choices about where in the world they want to have influence and how.

These choices are obvious in the realm of defence, where increasingly Europeans will have to choose between pooling capabilities and losing them. But there are also tensions – between normative, economic, and security interests; between the national interests of different EU member states; and even between Europe's roles as a regional power, a global power, and a transatlantic partner – that a strategic rethink will need to address. Therefore the process will be as important as the product. In particular, it will need to address the fear that some member states have that strategic reflection may not deliver as much as is hoped.

Given that in 2014 a new European Commission will be appointed, a new European Parliament elected, and a new High Representative for CFSP chosen, there is a case for a two-stage process. In the first stage, the current High Representative, Catherine Ashton, would be tasked by the December European Council to produce a review of challenges and choices to hand over to her successor. (This process could in fact shape inter-governmental and public debate about how to select the best person for the job.) In the second stage of the process, the new High Representative would lead the drafting of a new EU global strategy on the basis of Ashton's review. This could give the new appointee a platform to lay out a vision for his or her term.

A small reflection group of wise men and women from like-minded member states could be convened in order to inform the current High Representative's initial review of challenges and choices in 2014. The review should consider probable global developments over the coming decades, taking a broad definition of security to include forthcoming economic, demographic and environmental challenges. It should then assess the implications of these changes for European interests and values, and the economic, diplomatic and military power resources Europe has to influence these developments. Finally, it should reflect both on Europe's key partnerships and how Europe should best engage with these partners at a bilateral and multilateral level, through global, regional and hybrid institutions, in order to maximise the impact of its resources.

However the exercise is managed, the key point is this: that it is past time to get Europeans thinking strategically again. Since the end of World War II, Europeans have lived in a world of institutions shaped by them and their allies. But a decision to ignore the growing recognition in European capitals that this is changing could consign Europe to being the object of global developments in the coming decades rather than able to shape them. For the European Council to ignore the growing calls across Europe for a new global strategy would be to opt for the reactive, ineffective and haphazard in place of the active, capable and coherent external policy to which the EU claims to aspire.

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