

14 EU GLOBAL STRATEGY EXPERT OPINION

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The world has changed dramatically since the EU adopted its first security strategy in 2003. The biggest security risk for the EU and its member states now is not only military or non-traditional security threats from neighbouring countries or even environmental challenges, but also the degradation of the rules-based international order.

Although the slow decline has been almost indiscernible, particularly from Europe, it will prove to be one of the most serious threats to EU security in the long run. Therefore, it is this matter which the EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy (EUGS) should prioritise.

Countering erosion

Under the Lisbon Treaty, the principles of the EU external action are defined in Article 21.1. This reads 'The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental

freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.'

These principles are the same as those which underline the existing rules-based world order, established immediately after the Second World War. Since then, former antagonist nations Germany and Japan have been integral elements of this order, acting as its principal guardians as part of or alongside the European Union (or its predecessors).

Because of the shifting constellation of great powers, this rules-based order, including the freedom of navigation, has been challenged and is now at risk. When it comes to these principles, traditional notions of boundaries count for little: if EU members attach more importance to their individual short-term economic and trade interests, they will accelerate the decline of the rules-based world order. As such, they would be shooting themselves – and their international partners – in the foot.

In order to avoid the accidental neglect of the in-

terests of its like-minded partners, coordination activities in the EU's regional Working Parties, such as the Asia-Oceania Working Party (COASI) chaired by the European External Action Service (EEAS), should be strengthened.

Bilateral meetings with the EU's strategic partners should be carefully planned and outcomes should be implemented according to the second paragraph of Article 21.1 of the Lisbon Treaty. This reads 'The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations which share the principles referred to in the first subparagraph. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations.' This should be done primarily in order to ensure that the EU's security interests are not undermined in the process of developing strategic partnerships.

Seeking stability

Particularly in light of recent terror attacks, further efforts to curb the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and conventional arms, including illegal firearms, are required. The EU has been a long-standing and respected promoter of disarmament initiatives and a major contributor to various projects, including those related to nuclear safety. This should continue. Although EU member states hold differing views on nuclear weapons, this has led to both weaknesses and strengths in regard to EU-level policy. Incidentally, the same might also be said for EU energy policy. If policy margins could be further narrowed down, the EU would wield greater influence on the world stage.

Disarmament and non-proliferation have also

been some of the major areas of activity of the UN. Given that the EU and its member states have attached great importance to the UN, it is natural that they would seek for it to operate more effectively. For this to happen, however, a conscious effort to reform the organisation is needed, and in particular the UN Security Council (UNSC). Moves by the EU to work towards reforming the

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The EU and its member states have been the biggest contribu-

tors to global development, and while humanitarian assistance is based on impartiality and is not a tool of EU foreign and security policy, it has nevertheless promoted the significance of the Union across the globe. In addition, CSDP missions and operations have contributed to conflict prevention and peace building efforts from Africa to Afghanistan.

However, in order to continue promoting stability in the world – which would serve to strengthen the security of the Union and its member states – greater coordination among various external policy fields is required at the EU level.

Since the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the subsequent steps towards the unification of Europe have enhanced not only the wellbeing in the Union, but also world peace. Based on its impressive past achievements, with an invigorated EUGS the EU again can lead the world by example.

