

15 EU GLOBAL STRATEGY EXPERT OPINION

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An EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) is something Europeans have needed for a long time. National governments still cling to the idea that they have the ability to control increasingly transnational economic forces, while also believing that regional and global problems can be solved nationally.

However, this way of thinking is naïve, futile and, indeed, outright dangerous. Only by recasting the very idea of political community can we Europeans hope to harness the power that national politics has lost, thus giving new impetus and legitimacy to the project of European integration.

Internal-external crossroads

Thinking innovatively about who we are also means that we have to contextualise our presence in the world. Instead of presenting bold visions with feet of clay, we have to meaningfully connect the EU's local, regional and global contexts. This is exactly how the EUGS must proceed: it has to start with credible answers to the inter-

nal challenges of the EU as a political community, while simultaneously connecting these answers to the problems in its neighbourhood. Only from there can it proceed to identify its global goals and partners.

The EUGS finds itself at the intersection of the EU's changing internal dynamics and its changing external environment. Although the EUGS is focused on the external dimension of EU politics, there is an inseparable link to the internal developments of the Union. Virtually all the recent divisive issues in the EU have an external dimension – be it the question of (non-)enlargement, the eurozone crisis, sanctions against Russia, and most recently, the migration crisis.

Being able to address these internal contradictions is an essential starting point for a credible EUGS. How can we talk about solidarity with refugees when we ourselves are reluctant to welcome those fleeing war? How can we talk about the relevance of international law when we resign ourselves to the fact that it is being violated on our very doorstep? How can we insist on the principles of

liberal democracy in relations with our partners when authoritarian tendencies are clearly visible in several EU member states? Without a clear EU stance on these problems, the EUGS is doomed to become just another irrelevant document with no impact whatsoever.

A word of caution here: it may be tempting to recast all these issues as security problems. However, nothing would be more harmful to the EUGS than the securitisation of its priorities. Although the strengthening of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) is certainly a step in the right direction, such measures have to be complemented by ample attention to the broader socio-economic, cultural and environmental causes of current problems. The EU needs to be capable of protecting itself militarily, but this should not be done at the expense of its values. Accordingly, the EUGS must seek to promote the fundamental values of the Union.

Selecting relevant partners

As much as the EU would like to see itself as a global player, it should not be in denial about its own political and geographic position. As the refugee influx reminds us, we cannot ignore the problems on our doorstep.

At the same time, some (particularly the bigger EU member states) will certainly not want to lose sight of their own global commitments and special relations. As a result, the EUGS will either be selective or vague and non-committal.

But for a number of reasons, there is no doubt that the EU's neighbourhood will have to be the starting point. How could the EU be credible globally, if it lacks leverage in its immediate neigh-

bourhood? More specifically, the EUGS needs to provide a clear answer regarding the future of enlargement in the Balkans, and it needs to overcome the current comatose state of the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Of course, beyond its neighbourhood, the Union will need to cultivate strategic connections. But the task here is a simpler one as the EU is lucky in that – with the exception of an increasingly authoritarian Russia – none of the great powers of the day pose a direct threat to the EU or to any of its member states. Hence, unlike the US, it can not only define the best course for its strategic partnerships, but will also most likely see its plans come to fruition.

The EUGS' success will ultimately depend on the connections between three primary fields: the EU as a political community, the neighbourhood, and the world as a whole. Only an internally resilient Union, capable of re-affirming its core values and of inspiring the loyalty of its citizens, can project influence beyond its borders, and thus remain a role model for its neighbours. Only then can we expect to see the impact of the Union's once-praised transformative power; a power that these days is sadly absent.

Once this has been achieved, the Union must concentrate its resources on ways to re-create at least a semblance of normalcy in its vicinity. After all, only a stable and prosperous neighbourhood will allow the Union to project its influence globally.



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