

## SEMINAR

# EUISS — Spanish Presidency of the European Union

## EU external policy under the Lisbon Treaty: The principle of coherence and the challenges of global governance

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### Overview

The 24-25 June 2010 EUISS Conference on 'EU external policy under the Lisbon Treaty: the principle of coherence and the challenges of global governance' organised in cooperation with the Spanish Presidency of the EU constituted a particularly well-timed opportunity to reflect on how foreign policy under the Lisbon Treaty should respond to global and regional challenges. The Conference was built on the premise that with the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and institutional reform almost done, the EU now needs to concentrate on the substance of its foreign policy. The EUISS Annual Report 'A strategy for EU foreign policy', which was released for the occasion, is intended as a contribution for this necessary exercise; and indeed it served as a good basis for intense discussions during the Conference. Over 60 participants from different EU member states and EU institutions attended the Conference and contributed to the debates.

For the closing session, Claude-France Arnould, Deputy Director of the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate of the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, depicted recent developments in EU civilian and military crisis response capabilities as well as prospects for the future. Her reflections also served for the launching of the EUISS book 'Quelle défense européenne en 2020?', which is the French version of a recent publication with a new preface written by Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and vice-President of the European Commission.

### Summary of the Debate

#### 1. INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CONTEXT

During the first session, the panellists and participants offered differing but not necessarily contradictory views on the world today, generally reflecting a decline of the Western relative influence: are Westerners still under the impression of being able to shape the world order? The prevailing disconnects between European values and policies were evoked here, but also the expansion of a new sentiment – or rather a reaction – in particular of emerging international actors. In certain cases these new global actors can be driven by the intention to counter-balance Western views (the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change was mentioned in this regard) and not so much by the aim of genuinely attaining common interests together. Other participants considered that European influence is declining irrespective of the sentiment of others, and not always as a consequence of disunity – Copenhagen being a good example.

The difficulties facing the EU in the prevailing international context make this all the more necessary, even if more difficult for the development of a genuinely autonomous foreign policy under the Lisbon Treaty. The prerequisite for success, however, is to demonstrate to global actors – it was suggested to start with the US – that the EU as such has become a global actor. The value-based approach that roughly characterises EU foreign policy, at least on paper, is no longer sufficient even if it is effectively implemented. A comprehensive agenda making full use

of the EU's comparative advantages needs to be implemented in a coherent and consistent way; although the capacity of the EU to overcome its economic and financial difficulties is paramount in the present circumstances. Innovation entailing heavy and concerted investment in technology was considered essential in this regard. But even more importantly, EU Member States should first see the EU as a global actor. The fact that Member States continue to pursue individual goals, be they perceived as national interests, helps other international actors to take the lead in the dimensions Europe has been championing until recently.

Is the EU's internal context adequate for taking full advantage of Lisbon? Although the participants mentioned the trend of the re-nationalization of policies which particularly affect external action, it was also stressed that the economic crisis can, paradoxically, offer a good opportunity in so far as the Member States recognizing the benefit of pooling resources and reaching common positions. The crisis has shown that European States are no longer able to cope with their own internal problems individually, so joint European solutions and even international ones – the IMF was called for help – are needed. The euro-zone has recently suffered strong but uneven tensions, occasionally based on rumours, without quick and determined responses being delivered. Economic governance and adequate mechanisms for financial surveillance are necessary to restore conviction.

The challenge that remains then is that of implementing internal solidarity and re-energizing common interests and values through flexible decision-making mechanisms. This is a precondition for credible common external action. It was a recurrent argument of participants that substantial homework needs to be done before enhancing EU performance worldwide in the spirit of Lisbon.

## 2. THE EU AS A GLOBAL ACTOR

The role of the EU as a (potential) global actor was examined at length. The need for a common voice of the EU *vis-à-vis* third states and international organisations at large was strongly advocated, but a margin of dissension in the form of 'constructive cacophony' was not only considered non-harmful but even desirable by some speakers. Exhausting efforts to achieve one voice may in fact impede reaching out to other actors, but basic consensus on guidelines for action was deemed necessary by most participants. A distinction between coherence and consistency, which is stated in the EUISS Report, helped clarify the terms of the discussion on the degree of unity required for effective common action: coherence not only among

institutions but also with all Member States and consistency of policies with EU principles and values.

The establishment of mechanisms for achieving a relatively objective and 'depoliticised' analysis of the situation on which political decisions (and thus action) should be taken could help in overcoming this dilemma. This will entail, in practical terms, recourse to intellectually independent experts/bodies in the first stages of the EU decision-making process on certain issues.

The EU can only become a global actor by acting multilaterally. As one of the core values of the Lisbon Treaty, but also as a matter of fact, the EU is bound to enhancing multilateralism in order to survive as a *sui generis* global actor. The question is thus: how can the EU pursue a rule-based global order more effectively and more consistently in a new context which particularly includes emerging powers with a prevailing power politics perspective of international relations? Far from being a military power (the limits of military power have already been proven in the post-cold war era), the EU's influence in the world order will almost certainly decline if the new institutional mechanisms of the Treaty of Lisbon do not converge along a unifying foreign policy strategy. It is time for the EU to work at all levels. It should make full use of the multilateral dimension of the strategic partnerships with countries such as India, China and Brazil, so that UN action is strengthened. It should help shaping and expanding a G20 agenda that is fully connected to the work of the UN, including on sustainable development worldwide. In sum, and according to most participants, the EU will become more relevant as a global actor in as much as the UN's central role in the global order is enhanced.

But the EU also needs to take full advantage of two global trends that are closely connected to its own nature: regional organisations (even if based on cooperation rather than on sharing sovereignty), and even more importantly non-state actors that play a prominent position in the world order. With regard to the latter, the EU needs to work more closely with other actors world-wide, particularly with civil society actors, in order to more effectively support human rights and democratic processes. Now is not the time for a declaratory policy in this regard, but a time for devising ways and means for the operational implementation of agreed principles and guidelines. In order for its instruments and programmes to have a greater impact on the ground, which is largely lacking, the EU needs to understand the local political dynamics of the countries in which it is present. It needs to balance bottom-up and top-down approaches, as well as state capacity and state accountability, including by differentiating good-govern-

ance and the promotion of human rights. The need to boost the EU's role in crisis management and humanitarian issues, disarmament, international justice, migration regulation and other global challenges was also advocated by the participants. Migration, ranging from the managing of migration flows while respecting human rights and international refugee law to permanent integration, was identified among the critical issues for the future of the EU. The principle of coherence may display its full potential in this light, since the internal and external dimensions of EU action are blurred.

With respect to regional organisations, the EU as a global actor has a vested interest in strengthening multilateral, and thus regional, cooperation beyond its borders with a particular emphasis on the resolution of conflicts and tensions. A certain 'regionalisation' of its global strategy is in this sense required. On the one hand, the EU directly and indirectly promotes a model of regional cooperation and regional integration which is compatible with universal values, and should thus pursue a policy of constructive engagement with all regional organisations. On the other hand, effective multilateralism indeed imposes limits to a policy based on regional preferences and geographic interests, especially when they conflict with global commitments such as the Millennium Development Goals. Although proximity is an obvious criterion for a more comprehensive EU engagement, it needs to be reconciled with efforts for enhancing sustainable global, and therefore regional, peace as well as sustainable development worldwide.

### 3. THE EU AS A REGIONAL ACTOR

In the region, the EU should come to terms with a new reality which entails the configuration of two or even three poles, if indeed Turkey is to be considered a regional power in Europe. European security can not be conceived without Russia. But there are differences as to how Russia and the EU actually perceive multilateralism and modernisation – the former being more issue-oriented and the latter rather status-oriented. The EU can not gain credibility if it does not effectively contribute to solving conflicts in the neighbourhood, for which Russia is also needed. There is therefore a requirement to reach an agreement among member states on the need to understand that close political and economic relations with Russia should be pursued in order that security and stability are strengthened in the Eastern Neighbourhood. Since Russia also aims to become a global actor while maintaining its traditional sphere of influence as a regional platform, tensions may always arise. Some participants claimed that the EU should not compromise on the neighbourhood and should avoid being manipulated by certain neighbours.

The Eastern and Southern neighbourhoods and the challenge of integrating the Balkans were discussed in detail. The so-called 'transformative' power of the EU should not be overestimated, although it obviously tends to be more effective when the countries concerned have a tangible membership perspective. Without clear prospects of integration as a major incentive, the ENP can only – and should – provide multiple small incentives to this group of poor countries in which good governance is generally lacking. Can the EU merely say to them: 'reform first, in the manner suggested, and we will then see what the reward is'? The EU continues to contribute to the initiation and sustainability of the reform processes in the Euro-Med countries with the hope that it will allow for the opening-up of local societies. A selective use of EU instruments and a primarily economic focus of the implementation of the Action Plan characterises this network of merely bilateral relations with countries which are in fact very different in terms of democracy and functioning of civil society, but whose structural problems do not differ as much. It was also pointed out that whereas democratisation of the Eastern neighbourhood is being pushed by the EU, stability remains the core (limited) goal regarding Southern neighbours. EU policy towards the Southern neighbourhood needs to be comprehensive; it is particularly lacking conflict resolution tools. As a way forward, the extension of the enhanced status that Morocco already enjoys above other countries in the Mediterranean should be delivered without undermining its impact in the respective political reform process. In particular, such a status cannot be granted in cases of soaring records of human rights violations and international law. A comprehensive policy should indeed encompass efficient conflict resolution tools, particularly as regards the so-called frozen conflicts in the East as well as in the Middle-East, the Western Sahara and in the South.

In this regional context, NATO was specifically analysed from an EU perspective. The general opinion was that NATO should not become a global actor but remain a regional organisation, and that it should not develop civilian capabilities but a culture of cooperation with international civilian actors. NATO should focus, however, on transatlantic military cooperation, and should work more efficiently with the UN. The need to re-establish the principle of full subordination of military action to international civilian authorities in the field was recalled in this sense. A lucid EU perspective on NATO-EU relations necessarily involves renewing the pan-European security architecture, which in turn calls for a thoughtful response to Medvedev's related proposal. The process towards the adoption of a new NATO Strategic Concept is a good opportunity to deal with these fundamental questions for the EU foreign and security policy.