

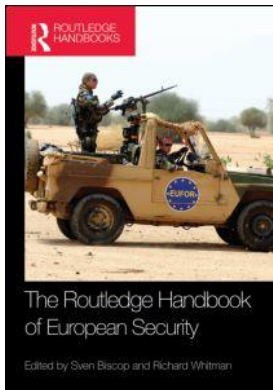
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4

THE EUROPEAN SECURITY STRATEGY

Towards a grand strategy?

Sven Biscop

On 12 December 2003 the European Council adopted the *European Security Strategy* (ESS), sub-titled *A Secure Europe in a Better World*, the first-ever strategic document addressing EU external action in the broadest sense and therefore key to understanding the Union's role in security.¹ Starting from an analysis of what constitutes the core of the ESS, this chapter will argue that although it represents a milestone, it is not the alpha and omega of European strategic thinking. For it to function as a fully-fledged grand strategy, it needs to be completed and EU strategic thinking needs to be deepened, particularly in the area of security and defence.

Strategy can be defined as a policy-making tool which, on the basis of the values and interests of the actor in question, outlines the long-term policy objectives to be achieved and the instruments to be applied to that end, which serves as a reference framework for day-to-day policy-making in a rapidly evolving and complex environment and which guides the definition of the means that need to be developed. A grand strategy, defined by Gaddis (2009) as 'the calculated relationship between means and large ends', defines an actor's fundamental objective and the basic categories of instruments it chooses to apply to achieve that. Grand strategy thus equals the choice to be a certain type of actor or power. Grand strategy moreover has implications for internal policies as well. The ESS operates at this level. To be a strategic actor, the EU requires not just a clear strategy, but in addition both the means and the political will to actively pursue it.

An incomplete grand strategy

The core of the ESS can be summarized in three principles, which together constitute an approach, a method, to deal with the international environment.

The core of the ESS

The first core principle of the ESS is *prevention*: 'we should be ready to act before a crisis occurs. Conflict prevention and threat prevention cannot start too early', as the ESS

states. A permanent strategy of prevention and stabilization, addressing the root causes of threats and challenges, aims to prevent conflict so that, ideally, coercion and the use of force will not be necessary. Addressing the root causes means closing the gap, both within and between countries, between the haves and the have-nots in terms of access to the core public goods to which all individuals aspire and are indeed entitled: security, prosperity, freedom and social equality. For this gap between haves and have-nots generates feelings of frustration and marginalization on the part of those that are excluded, as well as radicalization and extremism of various kinds, social and economic instability, massive migration flows and tension and conflicts within and between states. Effective prevention is an enormous challenge, for it means addressing a much wider range of issues, at a much earlier stage, across the globe, because as the ESS says ‘the first line of defence will often be abroad’.

Closing the gap between the haves and the have-nots of necessity demands a *holistic* approach, the second principle, for the security, economic, political and social dimensions are inextricably related – an individual cannot enjoy any one core public good without having access to them all – and all are present, in differing degrees, in all threats and challenges. In the ESS: ‘none of the new threats is purely military, nor can any be tackled by purely military means. Each requires a mixture of instruments.’ Therefore every foreign policy must simultaneously address all dimensions, making use in an integrated way of all available instruments: ‘Diplomatic efforts, development, trade and environmental policies, should follow the same agenda.’ The core phrase in the ESS is perhaps the following:

The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states. Spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order.

Such a holistic approach is best implemented via *multilateralism*, the third principle. ‘We need to pursue our objectives both through multilateral cooperation in international organizations and through partnerships with key actors’, according to the ESS. Only in cooperation with others can our objectives be achieved peacefully, and can global challenges be successfully addressed. ‘The development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective’, declares the ESS under the heading of ‘effective multilateralism’. Multilateralism can be considered ‘effective’ to the extent that the ensemble of regimes, mechanisms and institutions manages to provide access to the core public goods to citizens worldwide.

From these three principles it follows that the EU must be a *global* actor. As the ESS states: ‘As a Union of 25 [now 27] states with over 450 million people producing a quarter of the world’s Gross National Product (GNP), and with a wide range of instruments at its disposal, the European Union is inevitably a global player.’ In a globalized world, interdependence is such that none of these principles can be successfully applied at the regional level only, for the most pressing challenges are global challenges. The EU cannot insulate itself or its neighbourhood from the world.

These are indeed *principles* of foreign policy, i.e. the EU pursues them as a matter of principle, because they reflect the values on which the EU itself is based; therefore they determine the EU’s soft power, i.e. the credibility and legitimacy of its foreign policy. From these principles, the ESS also draws certain implications for the means, notably the need to be more active, more capable and more coherent, and to work with partners.

These three principles constitute only a partial grand strategy, however. They represent an important strategic choice, but they mostly tell us *how* to do things – the ESS is much vaguer on *what* to do. The issue is not that the ESS is not valid or has been outdated – in fact, it already mentions all of the so-called new threats and challenges, e.g. climate change, energy shortages and large-scale migration, proof of the authors’ foresight. The issue is that the ESS is incomplete in terms of the fundamental objectives which the EU aims to achieve. It is so because to start with it is not clear about the values and interests to be defended. Even with an incomplete grand strategy, the EU could have been more of a global power, beyond the area of trade, if it had not been for the half-hearted implementation of the ESS and Member States’ reluctance to act proactively and collectively. A grand strategy must necessarily be translated into strategies, sub-strategies and policies for it to be put into action, but the objectives of ‘building security in our neighbourhood’ and ‘effective multilateralism’² have proved too broad, and Member States far too hesitant to act upon the strategy that they have adopted, to generate clear priorities. As a result, the EU has not become markedly more proactive, capable or coherent since the adoption of the ESS. In other words, the EU has yet to become a real strategic actor.

The 2008 Report on the Implementation of the ESS

A chance to revisit the ESS presented itself when the December 2007 European Council mandated High Representative Javier Solana ‘to examine the implementation of the Strategy with a view to proposing elements on how to improve the implementation and, as appropriate, elements to complement it’. The December 2008 European Council duly adopted a *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy – Providing Security in a Changing World*, while deciding to leave the ESS itself untouched. Unfortunately, the Report did not offer concrete recommendations to improve implementation, although it recognized that ‘despite all that has been achieved, implementation of the ESS remains work in progress’.

In view of the difficult circumstances, notably the delay in the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, it was probably for the best not to have a fundamental strategic debate in 2008, so as not to run the risk of ending up with a weaker grand strategy than before. Nevertheless, because the ESS *is* incomplete, a true strategic review is necessary. That would bring enhanced clarity, for although the Report – which is longer than the ESS itself – ‘does not replace the ESS, but reinforces it’, the existence of the two documents alongside each other tends to lead to confusion. A new exercise in grand strategy need not start from scratch, as the ESS makes valid choices, but a fully-fledged revision is required in order to complete it (Biscop, 2009b).

Completing EU grand strategy

The first rule of strategy-making could simply be: know thyself. It is actually not that clear which values and interests the EU seeks to safeguard and which kind of international actor it wants to be.

Universal values

The Treaty defines the values on which the EU is based and which it states should also guide its foreign policy. The Lisbon Treaty has extended this definition, putting additional emphasis on the values of equality, solidarity and human dignity:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

(Art. 2 TEU)

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.

(Art. 21.1 TEU)

These values highlight what is most distinctive about the EU model of society: the combination of democracy, the market economy and strong state intervention, at Member State and EU levels, to ensure fair competition and social security. This European social model can be conceptualized as a social contract between EU citizens on the one hand, who are all entitled to an integral whole of public goods, and the EU and the governments of the Member States on the other hand, whose responsibility it is to provide these goods, which are the concrete expressions of the values on which the model is based:

- security or freedom from fear
- economic prosperity or freedom from want
- political freedom: democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law
- social equality: health, education and a clean environment.

This social model as such is specific to the EU and thus not universal. Even within the EU there are obviously differences between individual Member States in how they have organized their democracy or social security. But the values *are* universal. Clearly, the more the values are respected within the EU and the stronger the cohesion of the European model that is based on them, the stronger the foundations on which to base EU foreign policy. Arguably, next to guaranteeing peace among its members, the European social model is Europe's most successful achievement, in material as well as in moral terms. The fundamental objective of EU grand strategy, both internally and externally, can thus be defined as the preservation and strengthening for its citizens of the security, economic, political and social dimensions of the European social model and the universal values on which it is based.

European interests

An assessment of the conditions that have to be fulfilled for this fundamental objective to be achieved allows us to identify the EU's vital interests, i.e. those that determine the very survival of its social model:

- defence against any military threat to the territory of the Union
- open lines of communication and trade (in physical as well as in cyber space)
- a secure supply of energy and other vital natural resources

- a sustainable environment
- manageable migration flows
- the maintenance of international law (including the UN Charter and the treaties and regulations of the key international organizations) and of universally agreed rights
- preserving the autonomy of the decision-making of the EU and its Member States.

These *vital* interests are common to all Member States, who no longer have national vital interests, i.e. vital interests different from those of other Member States. Moreover, not only do Member States share the same vital interests, they are also inextricably related, as a consequence of the ever-deepening political and economic integration within the EU. The vital interests of one Member State can no longer be separated from those of another; a threat to the vital interests of one inevitably threatens all. Even the two military powers in Europe, France and the UK, recognize this. In the Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation adopted at the 2010 Franco-British Summit in London, they state that '[w]e do not see situations arising in which the vital interests of either nation could be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened' (France and UK, 2010: 2). Finally, no single Member State any longer has the resources to safeguard all of its vital interests on its own – at the global level, all Member States are small states.

Although it is an issue about which the ESS largely remains silent, interests cannot be ignored. The negative connotation that the notion of interests has acquired in the eyes of many is neither justified nor rational, for interests are at the heart of policy-making. The EU evidently pursues its interests. In itself, that is neither positive nor negative – the question is *how* they are pursued, through which basic categories of instruments or, in other words, which kind of actor the EU decides to be.

Opportunities and threats in the global environment

The answer to the question which approach the EU can adopt to safeguard its interests is determined by the EU's adherence to what it judges to be universal values, which guide its foreign policy, but it is also conditioned by the international environment, i.e. the threats, challenges and actors which are analysed in the ESS and the Implementation Report.

In terms of threats, i.e. issues that imply a risk of violence and therefore may ultimately demand a military response, today's environment is relatively benign. As the ESS states: 'Large-scale aggression against any Member State is now improbable.' Other threats are 'more diverse, less visible and less predictable' – terrorism, proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, state failure – but today none of these constitutes an immediate vital threat. That does not mean that these threats can be ignored, for they do produce negative effects for the Union, and if left unattended they may again develop into more serious direct threats. There does today remain a direct terrorist threat against EU territory, but '[c]ompared to interstate conflict, terrorism ... is a minor menace'; it 'does not threaten our civilization, but our over-reaction to it could do so' (Gray, 2009: 24). In the long term, inter-state war between major actors cannot be excluded, unlikely though it appears today; even if the EU were not directly involved, the implications of war between the other great powers would be enormous. The risk of inter-state war in the near future either between the great powers or involving an EU Member State does seem limited, however. Consequently, the EU and its Member States, while obviously required to maintain a credible territorial defence as an insurance policy, fortunately can now afford not to focus on military power alone.

At the same time, today's environment contains a number of major challenges, which are all complex, global and interrelated, and which potentially have a multiplier effect on the threats: poverty, climate change, scarcity of energy, water and other natural resources, pandemics and large-scale migration. Because of globalization, the dependence of the EU and hence its vulnerability to these threats and challenges have greatly increased. Finally, in terms of actors, the environment is marked by growing multipolarity and a relative shift in the distribution of power: as the military, economic and soft power of other global actors increase (though not at the same pace in all dimensions of power or in all of these states), the relative importance of the EU declines, notably vis-à-vis the BRIC countries. Although in absolute terms the EU still is the major economic power, on par only with the USA, it is confronted with increasingly active other players, and thus sees its leverage decreasing, both in bilateral relations and in multilateral forums (Renard, 2009).

How to interpret this environment? Although it is undoubtedly very challenging, it also contains elements on which the EU can build constructive engagement with the world. For one, the EU has no enemies: today not a single state has the capacity or even the intention to directly confront it militarily. Second, the world is marked not just by increasing multipolarity, but also by increasing interdependence between the poles. All are increasingly interlinked economically, and all are confronted with the same complex global challenges that can be successfully addressed only in cooperation between them. This is what Grevi (2009) has dubbed 'interpolarity'. This context does not guarantee the absence of tension or strife between the powers, but it constitutes a great opportunity. For among the global actors 'controversy mainly revolves around the means and not the ends' (Grevi, 2010a: 5). There is a chance, in other words, to involve them in a comprehensive and multilateral strategy, as per the ESS.

Reaffirming the distinctive EU grand strategy

In the absence of enemies and in view of the need for cooperation to tackle common challenges, EU grand strategy need not be threat-based nor need it focus on the 'traditional', coercive use of power. Instead, it can continue to focus on values. The best way of defending our interests, in order to defend the EU model and the universal values on which it is based, is precisely to spread those universal values. For increasing the access of citizens worldwide to the same core public goods that are the concrete expression of these values (security, prosperity, freedom, equality) directly addresses the underlying causes of threats and challenges. The current global environment thus validates the preventive, holistic and multilateral approach of the ESS, the fundamental principles of which therefore do not have to be amended. If the fundamental objective of the EU is the preservation and strengthening of the European social model and the universal values on which it is based (its internal social contract), the best way of achieving that is to promote those universal values in the rest of the world (an external social contract). The idea is not to export the European model, for that is specific to the EU and the same universal values can inspire different models, as the variations within the EU itself demonstrate. Promoting the *values*, however, constitutes a positive agenda in its own right. EU grand strategy can thus be constructive, aimed at achieving objectives that are in the enlightened self-interest of the EU – that is what policy is about – but which also directly benefit others and thus express a feeling of responsibility for and solidarity with the have-nots.

Promoting democracy, human rights, etc. is extremely difficult, but the answer to these difficulties is not to abdicate when it comes to the promotion of values. The EU could not

do so, for those values are at the heart of what the EU itself is – no foreign policy that runs counter to them would be tenable for long. Second, promoting those values is essential to the EU's strategic objectives, for without security, prosperity, democracy and equality there can be no real stability – that has been proved by the Tunisian and Egyptian people. What has to change, though, is the method of promoting these values. '[The EU's] achievements are the results of a distinctive European approach to foreign and security policy', states the Implementation Report. Distinctiveness is not an objective per se, but this is a distinctive grand strategy, different from that of all other global actors. The EU refrains from the aggressive use of force and uses coercion (by diplomatic, economic and, as a last resort, military means) only when vital interests are threatened, and does not seek to establish spheres of influence, but pursues its interests through a preventive, holistic and multilateral approach based on the promotion of universal values. It does not seek to coerce other states into adopting those, not even merely to entice them through conditionality. The EU seeks instead to *convince* others of the benefits of respecting those values through concrete cooperation and support, on the basis of shared interests and common challenges, but in a manner that also respects the universal values that it aims to promote. Thus by marrying multilateralism and partnership to multipolarity, the recognition of the universality of these values can be gradually and consensually increased.

Priorities of grand strategy

Having established what the universal values are on which the EU is based and which vital interests it needs to protect, and having reaffirmed the preventive, holistic and multilateral approach, the next step would be to translate grand strategy into clearer objectives and priorities. Of course, even a more complete grand strategy is not an operational document – it will always be a guide for day-to-day policy-making. But the clearer the strategic objectives, the more they will generate purposive action. Therefore, on the basis of its vital interests the EU should identify its specific interests in all of the key areas of foreign policy and set more concrete objectives, in order to direct its sub-strategies, policies and actions.

Implementing the Lisbon Treaty

To start with, the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009 is an argument in itself in favour of continuing the strategic reflection process, in order to incorporate its innovations in the field of foreign and security policy. The Lisbon Treaty provides the EU with more and better tools for foreign and security policy – a grand strategy should tell us when and why to use them. It should also be clear where the institutional ownership of the ESS lies and who is responsible for its implementation. Experience with the ESS shows that an institutional follow-up structure is required, ensuring that a specific body is responsible for monitoring implementation, and setting deadlines for reporting back to the European Council. For lack of it, the ESS, although omnipresent in the public debate, failed to have sufficient impact on actual policy-making: officials habitually referred to the ESS when having to explain to various publics the EU's role in the world, but did not seem to refer to it very often in their own work. Most importantly, the remit of grand strategy must be perfectly clear. As it is, the ESS is too often seen as 'the Solana paper', pertaining only to the CFSP. Now that the Lisbon Treaty has entered into force, the High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission, Catherine Ashton, supported by the External Action Service, should be formally entrusted with the development and implementation of strategy

and take the lead in the Council and in the Political and Security Committee. As the High Representative will chair the Council when it deals with foreign policy, she will have a much greater impact on agenda-setting, which should allow her to schedule strategic-level debates as required, supported by a strong policy-planning branch with which the External Action Service should be endowed.

Eventually, a systematic ESS review process could be instituted, e.g. every five years, with clear follow-up and reporting mechanisms, in order to ensure that the EU, at the level of Heads of State and Government, regularly assesses and if necessary amends its grand strategy, which must be a dynamic document. A true strategic review would allow us to identify in which areas the grand strategy has yet to be translated into sub-strategies, policies and actions, to assess their effectiveness in areas where this has taken place and to establish where they overlap and contradict each other.

Lessons learned from implementing the ESS

Strategy development should take into account the lessons learned from implementing the ESS until now.³ Although the principles on which the ESS is based are by now well established and the EU has sincerely sought to implement them in its foreign policy, their translation into practice has raised questions which the Implementation Report did not address. At least three core issues demand a thorough debate.

The EU has pursued its agenda mainly via ‘positive conditionality’, establishing comprehensive partnerships that promise benefits in function of reforms undertaken by the partner country in a variety of fields. In practice, except in the case of enlargement, that approach has seldom yielded the hoped-for results. On the one hand, the proverbial carrot on offer is not always what interests the partner the most, e.g. access to the EU’s labour or agricultural market, while on the other hand it is often accorded quite regardless of the partner’s performance. The EU too often applies double standards, condemning in one country what it discreetly overlooks in another, and too rarely manages a coherent approach, without one EU policy undercutting another. In combination with the fact that as a result of the rise of other global powers, the envisaged partner countries can now shop around and seek partnership with actors that are less demanding when it comes to human rights, for instance, EU leverage appears limited, especially vis-à-vis authoritarian regimes.

The fundamental dilemma that the EU has yet to solve is what to do when its interests (e.g. energy supply, managing migration, the fight against terrorism) generate short-term demands (e.g. cooperation with authoritarian regimes) that clash with its inherently long-term preventive, holistic and multilateral method of promoting the core public goods outside the EU. The EU cannot afford to continue to ignore this dilemma, for already the contrast between high-flown rhetoric about human rights and democracy and mostly rather hesitant policies in practice has greatly damaged its credibility and legitimacy. Too many perceive the EU as a status quo actor, prioritizing economic and security interests and not sincerely committed to promoting reform.

To begin with, serious debate is in order, about the objectives which the EU should set at the grand strategic level, and about how to translate those into strategies, sub-strategies, policies and actions, in order to ensure that the emphasis on the promotion of public goods does not lead to weakness. How can the EU dialogue with a regime and foster cooperation and reform while simultaneously remaining sufficiently critical of all violations of the values which cooperation and reform are to promote? Which ‘carrots’ can be offered to increase the effectiveness of conditionality? How can conditionality be more strictly applied? What is the minimum

threshold below which the EU cannot agree to deal with any regime, even to the detriment of short-term interests? How can democratization movements be fostered and supported? That the EU, while it cannot hope to engineer democratization from the outside, must support any internal democratization movements is in any case beyond doubt. In doing so, it will not only stay true to its values, but it will then also have positioned itself as a partner of choice for any democratic regime that manages to establish itself, whereas otherwise it can only be put to shame by its previous all too uncritical support for the preceding authoritarian regime.

Second, the EU must in any case be conscious of the limits of conditionality: vis-à-vis other global powers it is not an option, for interdependence is too great and the scale of things too vast for the EU to have any serious direct leverage. Trade relations with China were not cut when Beijing refused to release the winner of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo, from prison. Such actors can only be *convinced* of the value of the public goods which the EU promotes on the basis of shared interests and common challenges. The incomplete state of current EU strategic thinking and its lack of strategic actorness is made all the more evident by contrasting it with the much more purposive action of other global powers that do act strategically in terms of explicit interests, notably the BRIC countries, and of course the USA. Most of them do not regard the EU as a strategic actor, and are adept at playing off one Member State against the other, as the EU is all too good at ‘divide and rule’: by dividing itself, others rule. Naturally, the EU is hampered by its collective decision-making when compared with presidential or even authoritarian regimes: all the more reason to deepen its collective strategic thinking and give more direction to decision-making. Every analysis points in the same direction: the future will be dominated by large, strategic players (Howorth, 2009). If they want to safeguard their interests and not be pulled apart, Europeans have no choice but to act as a ‘large, strategic player’ themselves, i.e. to act collectively and with a clear sense of purpose. The second debate therefore concerns EU objectives as regards its strategic partnerships with these other global actors, as well as with regional organizations. That in turn implies a debate about the EU’s view on the future of the multilateral institutions.

The third debate is more directly linked to CSDP: what to do if, in spite of all positive intentions, prevention fails and conflict does erupt? What is the EU view on the threat and use of force? The ESS remains vague. It calls for ‘a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention’. Such intervention is put in a multilateral context, as regards who is to act – ‘The United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security’ – and why to act – ‘We want international organizations, regimes and treaties to be effective in confronting threats to international peace and security, and must therefore be ready to act when their rules are broken.’ The EU and its Member States evidently see the use of force as an instrument of last resort, which in principle is used only with a Security Council mandate. Yet although a shared strategic culture seems to be emerging, this has never been translated into clear priorities for CSDP.

Towards a strategy for CSDP?

Why does Europe develop the military and civilian capabilities that it does? Why does it undertake the military and civilian operations that it does? And why in other cases does it refrain from action? The answers to these questions would amount to a specific civilian–military CSDP or crisis management strategy (Biscop, 2011). Starting from the EU’s vital interests, an analysis of the threats and challenges to these interests, and the EU’s foreign policy

priorities, a CSDP strategy would outline the priority regions and issues for CSDP and, in function of the long-term political objectives and the appropriate political roadmap for those regions and issues, scenarios in which launching an operation could be appropriate.

The absence of a CSDP strategy has not stopped the EU from being active, witness the more than twenty civilian missions and military operations undertaken. But too often, action has been reactive, ad hoc, ill-thought-through – the result of the Boy Scout mentality: we should do something. And indeed, the EU should – but not in each and every case. Because the means are limited, choices must be made and priorities set. Without strategy, the EU can never be sure that the operations that it carries out are actually the most relevant and important that it could undertake. It cannot direct the operations that it does undertake to achieve the desired strategic effect. And it cannot focus capability development if it does not know its strategic priorities.

Priority regions and issues

The regions and issues on which CSDP ought to focus are those where the EU's vital interests are most directly at stake (Biscop, 2011). That does not mean that the EU will disregard other regions and issues, but it does provide the focus for early warning and prevention, and for permanent contingency planning.

In defining priority regions and issues, geopolitics is crucial. Because of its proximity, the most important priority area undoubtedly is the Neighbourhood: any crisis in the area from the Baltic to Gibraltar will have immediate spill-over effects on the EU, in terms of political and economic disruption, refugees and possibly even violence. Lines of communication and energy supply are obviously at stake; migration is also an issue, especially but not exclusively in the Southern Neighbourhood. In this region, the EU itself is the most powerful actor, hence it should take the lead in safeguarding peace and security, which is, not coincidentally, what our most important ally, the USA, expects from us.

- 1 The Eastern Neighbourhood (the Baltic to the Black Sea). With the persistence of the 'frozen conflicts', which, as the Russian–Georgian War of 2008 showed, can easily be sparked into open war, the region remains fundamentally unstable. The priority is to step up conflict prevention and stabilization efforts, but crisis management may be required, as in 2008. In view of Russian aspirations to maintain a sphere of influence, any operation or mission will be highly sensitive. Nevertheless, crisis management, including extricating EU citizens or civilians deployed on a CSDP mission, must be planned for in addition to preventive measures and peacekeeping.
- 2 The Southern Neighbourhood (the Dardanelles to Gibraltar). The everlasting Israeli–Palestinian conflict, but also disputes between Southern states and the inherent instability of authoritarian regimes and their unpredictable succession all contain serious potential for conflict. While we rejoice at the Arab spring, it does not automatically solve any of these issues and might complicate some of them even more. Here too, any intervention would be highly sensitive and ideally would take place with political, and preferably military, support from the region. Besides stepping up prevention, crisis management, evacuation and humanitarian operations must be planned for, as well as peacekeeping, notably in the event of a solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Three regions immediately adjacent to the Neighbourhood also merit our particular attention. The Gulf and Central Asia are of obvious importance for energy supply, and the

former also for trade routes; furthermore, crisis in either region risks generating important spill-over effects. In security terms, both regions probably form part of the EU's 'broader Neighbourhood'. In sub-Saharan Africa vital interests are less directly at stake, but Europe does have essential interests there as well as a continued responsibility, in view of its historical legacy, to assist the African Union in maintaining peace and security.

- 3 The Gulf. The emphasis has rightly been on preventive diplomacy, notably in the Iranian nuclear dossier, but the fact that some actors might see a *casus belli* here, even if the EU does not, should inform prudent planning. As in the Southern Neighbourhood, inherently unstable authoritarian regimes are a potential source of conflict. While our leverage is more limited, notably as compared to that of the USA, and operations at the higher end of the scale less likely, various scenarios may demand some contribution to crisis management. The EU could build on coordination between British and French pre-deployed assets.
- 4 Central Asia. The region is somewhat off the radar screen, but the same instability that comes with authoritarianism applies. While high-end operations are unlikely, other operations and missions might be called for.
- 5 Sub-Saharan Africa. There is as yet no end to the security problems from which Africa itself suffers, first and foremost. The EU can support the African Union and local actors with operations and missions across the spectrum, but would probably have more impact if it concentrated its efforts on a limited set of priorities rather than contributing piecemeal. In the long term the key is of course development.

Finally, two less region-specific issues also demand to be prioritized. The security of shipping lanes worldwide is vital to Europe as a trade power; migration and trafficking are issues, too. Because maintaining international law is a vital interest, the EU must contribute to its enforcement by the UN when it is violated.

- 6 Maritime Security. Except to the east, the EU has maritime borders, but planning ought to have a global focus, notably on the crucial zone from 'Suez to Shanghai' (Rogers, 2009), and increasingly on the Arctic. The EU should build a presence and contribute actively to the patrolling of key maritime routes in order to prevent other powers, or conflict between them, from dominating or disrupting them. Supporting operations and missions on land is another key task.
- 7 Collective Security. The collective security system of the UN can only work if it addresses everyone's security. In view of its vital interests as well as its values, the EU must shoulder its share of the burden, but cannot of course contribute to each and every operation. The 'Responsibility to Protect' can guide setting priorities.

If the main focus of CSDP is on the external security of the Union, it does have a complementary role to play in our internal security as well, notably in the implementation of the Solidarity Clause and in the future, perhaps, in our collective defence.

Conclusion: from strategy to action

Adopting a strategy for CSDP will not in itself guarantee resolute action in each and every crisis. But forging a consensus on priority regions and issues and drawing the conclusions from that for capabilities, including planning and conduct, will focus the Union's preventive,

long-term efforts, and will certainly make it better prepared for action in any contingency. Being more prepared and knowing in advance what its priority regions and issues are, and why, will then hopefully also strengthen the political will to generate action under the EU flag by the able and willing Member States, and will thus make for an EU that carries its weight on the global stage. CSDP is only an instrument, however, a tool, hence a CSDP strategy only makes sense if it serves an overall EU grand strategy.

Notes

- 1 For an analysis of the origins of the ESS, see Bailes (2005) and Biscop (2005).
- 2 Under the heading of 'strategic objectives' the ESS also mentions 'addressing the threats', but rather than setting future-oriented targets, this section is limited to listing past actions and outlining the need for a preventive and holistic approach.
- 3 For an analysis of implementation during the first years of the ESS, see Biscop and Andersson (2008).