

21 EU GLOBAL STRATEGY EXPERT OPINION

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Any debate on a common security and defence strategy has always been difficult in the EU. Many member states have preferred to promote an EU security policy based on global security and the Union's role as a force for good in the world, rather than a policy revolving around the security of the EU's own territory and people.

The result is reflected in the existing security strategy. As long as the main threats to common security can be defined so that they can best be managed well beyond the EU's borders, the political conclusions are easier to draw. The key question now is whether this still applies to the new EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS).

Focus on the EU's homeland

In the current international environment, the EU cannot maintain its focus on distant problems, as the foundations of its identity and very existence are being challenged closer to home. Given the multiple challenges that currently threaten the Union's unity and cohesion, the EUGS should sig-

nal a firm willingness to address all of them jointly and in a coordinated manner. It is of paramount importance that the strategy should be assertive and unambiguous in this respect.

The EUGS should thus first of all confirm the Union's approach towards the key principles of the European political order, as the system of cooperative security in Europe is being increasingly challenged. The EU should assume a clear stance on how it aims to resist Russia's renewed aggressiveness as a geopolitical player and contribute to upholding the principles of the sovereign equality and territorial integrity of European states.

In an atmosphere of escalating political and military confrontation and tension, the EU should seek to stress the value of both the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the non-negotiability of the key pillars of joint security.

Second, the EUGS should identify the key security challenges facing the EU as a result of the changing political environment, and provide a credible perspective on how to tackle them. A long-term

policy aimed at eliminating the root causes of unmanageable flows of migrants or international terrorism cannot be formulated overnight and presented as a panacea in the midst of an acute crisis.

The EUGS must therefore provide a concrete view on how the EU's existing resources – both joint resources and those provided by the member states – can be deployed to address the challenges and protect the Union from further destabilising consequences of the current crisis in world affairs.

Tackle security threats

Traditional security threats emanating from inter-state conflicts and regional power struggles are usually the most difficult ones for the EU to deal with in its strategy. The fact that the main preparation and planning for addressing such conflicts takes place in NATO cannot, however, absolve the EU of the task of assessing the security risks that they pose.

First, for its part, the EU should recognise – in the spirit of its mutual defence clause (Art. 42.7 TEU) – that armed aggression against any of its member states implies an attack against the Union's key values, its internal market and common currency, as well as its joint political institutions.

Second, it should acknowledge that a broad range of tactics and technologies are being used in today's inter-state conflicts in order to identify the vulnerabilities of the EU system, and use the full panoply of instruments it has at its disposal when preparing to respond to them.

With the security risks against the EU's territory and citizens escalating, there is every reason for the EUGS to finally create a better link between

the threats that exist and the Union's defence dimension, which thus far seems to have evolved separately from the Union's immediate strategic needs.

If the new security strategy document takes this into account, it will hopefully strengthen the political framework underpinning the EU's nascent strategic planning, including capability development and defence-industrial cooperation.

It should be stressed that a new EUGS based on a more self-centred vision of the EU's security interests and goals will not curtail the EU's aspiration to be a force for good in the world. To promote its own security, the EU needs multilateralism and effective partnerships. The weaker and more vulnerable the world becomes in this respect – and the more it is dominated by rivalry and power politics – the more exposed the Union will become. The EU's own internal model thus continues to be a valuable instrument for promoting peace and stability in the world.

But when the effectiveness and validity of the model is being tested in the Union's own backyard, the response has to be firm.



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