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The EU as a global power

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The EUISS and the European Centre Natolin in Poland held a conference entitled 'The EU as a global power' in Warsaw/Natolin, Poland on 19 May 2006. The purpose of this event was to debate the future of EU foreign policy and to foster two-way (involving old-new member states) strategic thinking inside the EU.

The conference attracted high-level participants both from Poland and other member states, including Poland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Anna Fotyga, Director General for External Relations Robert Cooper, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the European Parliament Elmar Brok and Georgia's Deputy Minister for Euro-Atlantic Affairs Tamar Beruchashvili.

Key Points

- The structure of international relations is rapidly changing – the rise of new powers (India, China) means that the EU is becoming a smaller part of a larger world.
- The US intervention in Iraq demonstrated the limits of the effectiveness of traditional military power. If the world cannot be governed by power, it must be governed by the law.
- The EU needs to reform its instruments and institutions in order to become an effective foreign policy actor. It is debatable whether meaningful reform can take place without a new treaty.
- The future of the ENP continues to be a subject of debate – is the policy an alternative to enlargement or a step towards application for membership?
- The EU's strategic partners are the US and Russia. There is a space for *effective multilateralism* in energy matters.

I. The Changing World and the EU

The nature of the international system is changing in two fundamental ways:

Insufficiency of Military Power

The US remains the most powerful nation in the world and its military prowess is unrivalled. Nevertheless, despite dedicating huge military and material resources to the war in Iraq, the US has been unable to provide peace and stability there. The US's continuing failure in Iraq is yet another example that power alone is not sufficient to govern in the international system.

If the world cannot be governed by power it can only be governed by the law. The task of the EU is to promote the law internationally through the use of '*effective multilateralism*'. This is what the EU has been doing in various parts of the world, and most recently in DR Congo – preparing an ESDP mission for providing stability to facilitate the peaceful development of the political process and free elections there. On a smaller scale, similar activities have also taken place in Afghanistan and Iraq; in the latter case, the EU aided the constitutional process. The EU will also continue to support international institutions, both political and economic.

Emergence of New Powers

We live in a post-imperial age: China and India, both ex-colonies, are emerging as great powers on the world stage, for whom (this is especially true of China) the rule of law is not obvious. China is much more internationally involved than Russia has ever been, hence the rise of China represents a greater challenge to the world system.

What the EU needs to do

Cheer up - To address its global challenges the EU needs to have greater confidence in itself. It must shake itself out of its current mood of depression and self-doubt. The EU continues to expand its global role – a task that a vast majority of Europeans welcome and other nations also see as desirable.

Unite – The rise of new powers (China, India) makes it clear that ‘the EU is a much smaller part of a larger world’. In the sixteenth century, Italian city-states were the leading centres of the world’s scientific and artistic activities, yet they failed to unify and subsequently lost their position, influence and eventually their sovereignty. This historical precedent should teach the EU a lesson that it does not wish to repeat.

II. The EU as a Foreign Policy Actor – What way forward for the CFSP?

With the failed Constitutional Treaty in the background, this panel considered some specific policies, the scope of the EU’s outreach as well as institutional arrangements to be put in place in order to make the CFSP more workable.

Scope of the EU’s Outreach

Where should the EU act and which areas of the world should be considered its foreign policy priorities? One of the speakers called for the EU to apply a more modest approach to international security. Perhaps it is overambitious for the EU to define its role in global terms without identifying its priorities. It was argued in this context that EU citizens ‘do not have much time’ for foreign policy and they find it difficult to understand why they should sponsor the EU’s involvement in peacekeeping operations beyond the vicinity of Europe.

Instead, the EU should define its priorities in regional terms and forget about its ambition to become a global player. It is better to do something on a more modest scale but properly than to spread the EU’s ability thinly with little effect. It was suggested that the areas on which the EU should focus as a priority should be Africa, the Middle East and perhaps Eastern Europe.

However, this call for a more modest approach was rejected by many other participants who argued, often passionately, that both EU citizens and the world expect the EU to act globally. If the EU only sets itself modest goals in this area then its actual effectiveness will be commensurately limited.

A middle view was that whilst it is important not to try to do everything at the same time, it is also not acceptable that the EU settles for the lowest common denominator. For example, the Congo operation would never have happened had the ‘modest’ approach been applied. But perhaps the EU should be careful not to spread itself too thinly and intervene in those parts of the world where it is unlikely to make a difference – for example, in Nepal.

Institutions

There was a consensus that the current institutional arrangements for the operation of EU foreign policy are not satisfactory and that more integration and better co-operation between the Council and the Commission is needed. Opinion polls clearly demonstrate that EU citizens are strongly supportive of a greater foreign policy role for the EU, yet the failure of the constitution has stalled any progress in the area.

Beyond this point there were, however, different views on how the EU should proceed further. Some speakers suggested that the situation is too urgent to wait for a new treaty and that some steps boosting the CFSP can be taken without it. Three types of changes were suggested in this context:

- Approving more frequent recourse to QMV.
- Inviting the SGHR Javier Solana to the foreign-policy related meeting of the Commission.
- Strengthening the role of the European Parliament in the ESDP and CFSP as well as in the ENP.

On the other hand, other speakers argued that no meaningful reform is possible without a new treaty. The most important CFSP reforms proposed in the constitution were the creation of an external service and the post of EU Foreign Minister – merging the foreign policy roles of the Council and the Commission. None of these innovations are possible without a new treaty.

Money

There was general dissatisfaction with resources made available for CFSP and ESDP missions in the recently approved budget. The Commission came in for a certain amount of criticism for proposing a reduced budget in the area (only one-third of what the Council recommended). On the other hand, the Commission representative argued that the budget for the ENP was actually increased by 20% by the Commission. The European Parliament representative also claimed that the Parliament has managed to repeal some of the Commission's budgetary cuts.

All in all, it was clear that the current resources are nowhere near sufficient to allow the EU to perform a more ambitious global role. It was also apparent that none of the institutions represented at the conference (Council/Commission/Parliament) were prepared to take the blame for this situation.

III. Enlargement and the ENP

Enlargement

- There was a dispute about the exact timetable for the entry of **Romania and Bulgaria** into the EU. The Polish Foreign Minister, Anna Fotyga, stressed that these countries should join in 2007 but there was some caution from other participants regarding their state of readiness and commitment to reforms, especially in the case of Bulgaria. It was stressed in this context that some difficult decisions have to be taken by these two candidates to allow the EU to proceed with the enlargement as scheduled.
- The future of the **Western Balkans** is also in the EU but much depends on the region's determination to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria which, according to the participants, should be strictly applied. There was a general consensus that the EU has poured more than enough money into the area and that the major problem remains with the Western Balkan states' capacity to absorb these resources.
- Despite the decision to start EU membership negotiations, the question of **Turkey's** EU membership remains far from being resolved. There was a general consensus that even if they are eventually successful the negotiations will take a long time and that the question of Turkey's EU membership is not imminent. It was also stressed that the current political climate in the EU (suffering from so-called 'enlargement fatigue') and public opinion in some EU member states would need to be addressed prior to this enlargement.

- Views on the **desirability of further enlargement** were divided along old-new Europe lines. The general line from new member states was that enlargement has been good for the EU and it should not stop. On the other hand, it was argued that it is undeniable that the 2004 enlargement has raised fears (whether rational or not) of economic insecurity and unfair competition in old member states – a key factor contributing to the failure of the Constitutional Treaty.

More importantly, the argument was raised that enlargement has complicated the decision-making process in the CFSP. This is not because the new member states are less supportive of the CFSP but simply because it is more difficult to arrive at an unanimous decision among 25 as opposed to 15. It would be therefore unwise to proceed with further enlargement (beyond Romania and Bulgaria) before the EU has been reformed in a fundamental way – which is not going to happen any time soon.

The ENP and Relations with the EU's Neighbours

- Promoting good governance and the rule of law in the states neighbouring the EU has been identified in the European Security Strategy as its main foreign policy objective. The ENP was planned as the key tool to achieve this objective. Yet, as argued at the conference, so far the policy has failed to fulfil this role.

For those that wish to see the EU expanding further eastwards, the ENP is simply not enough. On the other hand, for those opposed to any further expansion of the EU, the ENP has too much of an enlargement-related dynamic and it should instead be turned into a proper foreign policy tool. Finally, the ENP is also not seen as satisfactory by recipient states where it is criticised as void of meaningful substance.

- The conference discussed both the Eastern and Southern neighbours. The discussion about the East focused on the question of relations with **Ukraine**. Three types of opinion were presented regarding the EU's relations with Ukraine:
 - 1) A tendency, strongly expressed by Polish participants, to put the status of Ukraine on an equal footing with that of Turkey – with the assumption that, however remote, Ukraine's future is in the EU.
 - 2) Treating the ENP as an alternative to further enlargements and developing it into a more permanent foreign policy tool – this would imply closing the EU's doors to new prospective members.
 - 3) Arguing that 'the ball is in Ukraine's court' – it is really mostly up to Ukraine to shape its relationship with the EU. Should Kyiv successfully and consistently implement domestic reforms, the EU may find it 'irresistible' as a candidate for accession. At the moment, however, Ukraine seems to be losing the momentum gained during the 'Orange Revolution'
- Considering the policy towards the **southern neighbours**, much attention was given towards the situation in the Palestinian Authority and the future of political Islam in North Africa and the Middle East. The biggest question that remains to be answered in this context is the relationship with Hamas.

It was argued that the issue of dealing with radical Islamists is actually more general and not just confined to Palestine. If genuinely democratic elections were being held in North

Africa and the Middle East, it is likely that they would deliver Islamist governments in the whole region, with the exception of Iran. It is therefore imperative that the EU works out an appropriate and consistent method of dealing with Islamist movements – they are there and will not go away.

- The good news about the impact of the ENP in the South is that the policy is deeper and potentially **more effective than the Barcelona Process**. The latter was only concerned with economic issues and it lacked conditionality and differentiation. The ENP emphasises the political process and as such it may become an instrument of democratisation.

But there are also numerous problems with the policy, most importantly the lack of clarity about its end result and its weak economic package. The East European states have a sense of common destiny with the EU and see themselves as its future members. No such sense exists for the southerners. This weakens the southern states' resolve to implement reforms.

IV. Strategic Partners of the EU

Despite the proliferation of the EU's official 'strategic partnerships' in recent years, its real strategic partners are the United States and – for different reasons – Russia.

- **The US.** The EU and the US now co-operate closely in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Balkans and even in Africa. However, despite this transatlantic *rapprochement*, Iraq continues to divide the allies. Perhaps even more worryingly, the relationship is no longer as effective as it used to be. For example, although the US and the EU broadly agree on how to deal with Iran, this congruence has so far made little difference.

One of the key structural issues for the relationship is the role of NATO. Officially the US sticks to the line that security relations with the Europeans must be conducted through NATO and only in co-operation with the EU. However, most topical issues in transatlantic relations – such as Iran, Eastern Europe, the Caucasus – do not involve NATO and are conducted on a bilateral EU-US basis. This tendency is likely to increase in the future

- **Russia and Energy Security.** There was a general consensus that a 'strategic partnership' between the EU and Russia is both desirable and achievable. However, some major problems in the EU-Russia relations remain, especially in energy-related matters.

New member states, which are dependent up to 90% on Russian gas, are concerned about Moscow's tendency to use its energy policy for political purposes. Russia's signature under the EU **Energy Charter** would have addressed those perceptions; however, so far Russia refuses to endorse the Charter.

Both old and new member states desire greater diversification of their energy supplies but they are to different degrees dependent on Russian sources. For new member states, it is imperative that they reduce their almost absolute dependence on Russian gas. The older member states, on the other hand, who have more a diversified structure of energy imports, do not view increased imports from Russia with undue concern. However, despite these

differences, all EU member states are concerned about their dependency on external sources. Hence, there is scope for joint action, for example developing LNG (liquefied natural gas) terminals and adopting the principle of solidarity in energy matters. In a case where one of the member states experiences shortages in energy supply, the rest of the EU should come to its rescue. In other words, there is a space for *'effective multilateralism'* in energy matters.



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