

EU's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy: Implications for Eastern European Security

Upon proposal of the EESRI Foundation, a selection of experts commented on the probable implications of the adopted "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" for establishing a more peaceful, stable and secure environment in the Eastern European region.

** The views expressed by the experts are their own and do not represent those of any institutes or state bodies.*

Grigorij MESEŽNIKOV, *President of the Institute for Public Affairs, Slovakia*

Document "Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy" was prepared before the British referendum. That is why the main question that arises after its publication is how it would be implemented when the EU will be left by the member state, which in any consideration about a common European security and defence policy, its priorities and approaches, formed the core of the EU potential. Although in her preface to the document Federica Mogherini argues that the need to think strategically, to share a vision and to act together is for the EU even more serious after the British referendum, the document itself does not respond to the mentioned question (and frankly cannot respond).

Therefore, in answering the question whether the "Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security policy" can contribute to the establishment of more peaceful, stable and secure environment in the Eastern European region we should maintain a certain restraint, since it is a projection of practical steps that in the post-Brexit era cannot be (at least now) reliably estimated. To be fair, however, we should note that the document reveals a pretty good degree of awareness of the

seriousness of the situation to which the EU has got in the recent years. It quite adequately describes the security threats and the overall challenges for the EU further development and existence. The Strategy emphasizes the need to strengthen the defence potential of the Union and says about the strong and united Union challenges to be addressed.

In some parts the language of the document is too general and euphemistic, however, the part where it says about Russia ("The European Security Order") is clear and unambiguous. Russia is here rightly accused of violation of international law and destabilization of Ukraine that, according to the document, challenges the European security order. The EU will not recognize illegal annexation of Crimea nor it will accept the destabilization of eastern Ukraine, document says. If the EU, regardless of what the implications of Brexit would be, will adhere to this line and will persist in its sanctions imposed on Russia, then room for manoeuvre for the Kremlin's aggressive policy at least will not be extended. On the backdrop of current situation in the EU and its close neighbourhood (including Ukraine that has signed the Association Agreement with the EU and thus has established the specific type of relationship with the Union), it is not an insignificant matter.

Vera AXYONOVA, *Researcher and Lecturer at the Institute of Political Science, Justus Liebig University Giessen*

When analyzing the newly presented “Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy”, I would suggest keeping in mind several points.

First, the primary addressees of this document are the EU Member States and their citizens. When talking about the “shared interests and principles”, the Strategy puts guarantees to the security of EU citizens and territory to the fore. The first priority of the EU’s external action suggests “the EU Global Strategy starts at home”. Thus, the EU pursues an own-security-first approach and sees its relations with states beyond its borders through the prism of own security interests. To put it bluntly, the EU will not and cannot guarantee security of Eastern European states (e.g. Ukraine) that are not members of the EU. Nevertheless, the EU will certainly continue its crisis prevention and conflict resolution related activities, especially in the neighbourhood, in order to minimize threats to security of its own citizens.

Second, the EU Global Strategy states three priorities being of direct relevance to the current situation in the Eastern European region: State and societal resilience to the East and South, an integrated approach to conflicts, and cooperative regional orders. With these priorities in mind, the EU intends to continue exercising its comprehensive approach to security (including the focus on human security) in its neighbourhood and beyond. Yet, the EU has exercised this approach since its inception. And while it is certainly the EU’s specialty and an added value of the EU foreign policy, so far it has not been successful in preventing crises even in the immediate European neighbourhood.

Finally, the Strategy is a milestone in the historical development of the EU’s foreign policy and the first document of this kind since the European Security Strategy of 2003. It is expected to provide a common vision on external action of 28 Member States. Yet, foreign policy interests of the Member States are quite diverse. Agreeing on a common vision of the EU external policy is an extremely challenging task. And the creation of a truly COMMON Foreign and Security Policy would require a reform of the EU treaty structure, which the Strategy can by no means provide. In the times of multiple crises within the EU (financial, refugee and Brexit), the EU Global Strategy is an important statement and a signal to the international community on the role the EU promises to play in the global order. Yet, as a statement, it would need to be substantiated by actions, so the EU can actually live up to its promise.

Daniel SZELIGOWSKI, *Research Fellow at the Polish Institute of International Affairs*

Projecting stability and security beyond the EU’s eastern border proved to be more difficult than many in Brussels had long expected. Since it offered more pain than gain, and was unable to provide short-term wins, transformative agenda did not gain traction across the region. The EU itself, faced with tough choices within the last few years, has also lost much of its credibility. An over-optimistic assumption that EU’s eastern neighbours would be interested in applying EU bureaucratic model of governance per se, while denied the membership perspective, has thus fallen by the wayside. With ring of friends having become a ring of fire, it may seem that the EU has eventually woken up to the reality. But it has not.

Therefore, it is unlikely that the EU Global Strategy will mark a significant shift in EU’s stance on Eastern Europe. Quite the contrary. There is not much sense of ownership of the strategy among the EU Member States (it has not de facto been adopted by the European Council, which welcomed its presentation and called for taking the work forward). Preparations of the document also showed that there are still (and surely will be) serious disagreements over as fundamental issues as the diagnosis of the current situation (e.g. who is responsible for war in Ukraine). Labelling Russia a “strategic challenge” is hence a little more than the lowest common denominator. And with the danger of Brexit, migration, as well as upcoming elections in Germany and France, the EU will remain inward-looking, reacting to external pressure rather than setting the agenda in its neighbourhood.

If there is anyone spurred to action after the EU Global Strategy has been presented, it is the community of think tankers racking their brains over what “resilience” really means. Will it contribute to more peaceful, stable and secure Eastern Europe? Unfortunately, I do not think so...

Gražvydas JASUTIS, *Researcher at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, Vilnius University*

I am not very enthusiastic about newly adopted EU Global Security Strategy, which indeed addresses key challenges in the domain of European security. However, it does not provide solace for the Eastern European region and remains pretty meek with regard to concrete actions directed at curbing Russia. Primarily, the European Union will promote peace and guarantee the security of

its citizens and the territory. This is, in my view, the cornerstone and key sentence of the whole Global Strategy. This document is internally oriented and its priority is not ambivalent. The EU faces a plenty of challenges, and outspoken point on the Union's territory and population declares its internal priorities.

It is admitted that peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given, and Russia's violation of international law and the destabilization of Ukraine, on top of protracted conflicts in the wider Black Sea region, has challenged the European security order at its core. Nevertheless, I am overwrought that the EU does not intend and is reluctant to embroil their forces and capabilities in crafting credible solution. Of course, Russia is considered to be a strategic challenge and all-out efforts to be taken to handle the issue. The EU failed to heed warning about Russian activities in the post-soviet space, and there is a need for concrete measures to avert further expansionist policy from happening. The language on Ukraine seems to be consensual and policy interests driven ("... we will not recognize Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea nor accept the destabilization of eastern Ukraine...") that do not necessarily meet the needs of Ukraine. Furthermore, the Strategy sets forth that "we will therefore engage Russia to discuss disagreements and cooperate if and when our interests overlap" and this fact bewilders me especially. The document lacks in pre-conditions for dialogue to be re-established.

This is partly related to absence of credible capabilities of the EU to stay a real player in defense and security area. It is not arcane argument, however, the EU needs to develop their own capabilities and strengthen their muscles. With no capabilities, the EU will squander opportunities in the Eastern European countries.

Dušan FISHER, *Head of the International Security Program, Slovak Foreign Policy Association*

Although we can see certain ambitions on the side of the EU, the answer is no, not by itself, it cannot. "This is no time for uncertainty", wrote Federica Mogherini in her Foreword to the Global Strategy (GS) suggesting that it should put a lid on a geopolitical turmoil in Europe. Unfortunately, the level of uncertainty is not up to us. From its nature, the EU GS is too vague and too general to significantly influence the future of Europe.

It is an idealistic appeal, which rightly points out some of the crucial challenges and threats (Russia's aggression, hybrid warfare), but due to lack of a forcing mechanism one should doubt its overreaching impact on refurbish-

ing European security. It would be wrong to think the Strategy is a universal remedy for all dilemmas the EU is currently facing with.

First, it must be said that this strategy is a long overdue. Although we should appreciate the agreement on the future of the EU foreign policy, we cannot avoid criticism towards the responsible actors. The fact it took thirteen years since the last foreign strategy was introduced and six years since the establishment of the European External Action Service is questioning to say the least.

Second, let's take a look at the titles of both strategies. The one published in 2003 was titled "A Secured Europe in a Better World", which may, in today's context sound over-optimistic. If we look at the title of the new Strategy, the optimism does not seem to abandon the perception of the EU as a global actor. Nonetheless, it will be on the shoulders of the EU countries to take the responsibility in struggle with the threats. The last sentence of the Executive Summary states that "It is now up to us to translate this into action". Let's see which countries will answer the call.

Armen GRIGORYAN, *Analyst for "Eurasia Daily Monitor" of the Jamestown Foundation, and "Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst" of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program Joint Center*

The presented Global Strategy reiterates that instability and conflicts in EU's neighbourhood present a direct threat for the EU, and suggests that neighbour states and societies should be assisted in order to reform, so they would be able to find solutions for internal and external crises. At the same time, the Strategy states that the EU plans to engage in the resolution of conflicts in the Eastern Partnership countries with a multi-phased, multi-level and multi-lateral approach.

The annexation of Crimea and the ongoing Russian invasion in the eastern regions of Ukraine are justifiably recognized as the top security challenges in the Eastern Partnership area, because the outbreak of this conflict clearly showed the probable threat for other Eastern Partnership countries, and also because a further expansion of the conflict could potentially threaten some of EU's easternmost members directly. So, as the Strategy mentions the imperative to enhance the resilience of the eastern neighbours and to uphold their right to determine freely their approach towards the EU, a further elaboration should follow, with appropriate measures vis-à-vis Russia and the Eastern Partnership countries.

Considering particularly the further engagement of the Eastern Partnership countries, there is a correct estimation that a successful development of countries committed to a closer relationship with the EU is important. From this point of view, also considering the perspective for a successful EU strategy in the South Caucasus, it is worth noting that Georgia is directly mentioned as one of key countries, whose success as a prosperous, peaceful and stable democracy would reverberate across the respective region. In this regard, the EU needs to be more consistent with conditionality and with rewards, so, for instance, visa liberalisation process should be completed for Georgia and Ukraine. Again, it is worth mentioning that the coming parliamentary elections in Georgia in October 2016 may be expected to become another important turning point for the continuing advancement of democratic reforms, so the EU should be ready for enlarging further cooperation with Georgia in different areas, also to demonstrate clearly that a sincere commitment to reforms brings tangible results.

Oleksandr TYTARCHUK, *Member of the Board at the East European Security Research Initiative Foundation*

No doubts that absence of an adequate EU Global Security Strategy has seriously influenced (and to certain extent will influence) the Union systemic approach to addressing current threats and challenges to European security. On the other hand, quite ambitious and declarative document also could not bring much benefit if lacking common vision and required resources at hand. It seems to be the case with a new EU Global Strategy having in mind current security developments both within and beyond the EU borders.

Despite of the introduced end of the era for “global policemen and lone warriors”, the Eastern European countries topped by Ukraine will likely further serve as a kind of the latter in continuous confrontation between Russia and the West.

One of the evidence supporting this consideration might be the lack of future perspective for strengthening practical cooperation within the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), especially in line with the EU enlargement process. Current EU engagement in security sector reform and development will remain at the top of the agenda, but it should be more practically oriented to deliver tangible output on the ground. Participation in CSDP missions and operations would probably remain the only instrument of practical cooperation with partnering countries, including Ukraine, to

enhance border protection and maritime security in the region. Frankly speaking, it's not enough to simply continue strategic dialogue, as a kind of further involvement in CSDP, as stated in the document, with general notice to “full participation in EU programs and agencies” (even without a word of “defence”). Therefore, in the Strategy there are no direct evidences for establishing and elaborating new forms of “win-to-win” defence cooperation between partnering countries and Member States, including in the field of defence industry, especially with the European Defence Agency. Such cooperation, if any, might be a critical element not only for Europe's, but also for partnering countries' “autonomy of decision and action” in joint countering Russia's aggressive policy.

Principle pragmatism of the EU external action towards Russia in general, and of engaging in the resolution of protracted conflicts in the Eastern Partnership area in particular – are also questionable with a dangerous bias towards diverting from the declared “dual” to possible “double” nature.

One of the positive tendencies to be fully used is the stated provision on the need for investing in cooperation among and within regions focusing on partnership with civil society as a key actor in a networked world, what we have already been doing particularly since the establishing EESRI a year and a half ago.

Zuzana NOVAKOVA, *Researcher at the International Institute of Social Studies in the Hague, Erasmus University Rotterdam*

Any impact of the EU Global Strategy depends foremost on its translation into concrete measures and their actual implementation. Firstly because it deals with what the policy should be, rather than reflecting what it is, secondly because EU's Foreign and Security Policy has not yet come close to a strong policy worthy its name. As long as some member states perceive EUFP as another multilateral platform to pursue their national interest, it remains hard to imagine the EU as a robust foreign policy actor. Stakeholders within member states could not care less for a strategy document which they won't feel bound by. The dissonance between member states (and the interest of the biggest ones) is unlikely to be much affected by the new strategy, despite its ambition to assert a “unity of purpose”. It yet remains to be seen how Brussels manages to stir a move from voluntarism to real commitment, even more so in areas where commitment of additional resources is a pre-requisite (such as the European defence cooperation).

The document in itself can at best be understood as an articulation of a much needed change in perspective. While the past European Security Strategy from 2003 built on an assumption that “Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure”, the new rhetoric is just the opposite, as “peace and stability in Europe are no longer a given”. The urgency amid series of crises, which the former ESS failed short to address, is recognized in an unusually sober manner. The presented strategy is much less idealistic, downscaled on ambition and recognizing the past overestimation of EU’s transformative power.

It bids farewell to the past rhetoric of democracy promotion as well as the idea of a somewhat coherent space of EU’s neighbourhood. (In fact only Georgia remains mentioned as a positive example of EU’s achievement in Eastern Europe). The focus will be instead on increasing “resilience” and applying “principled pragmatism”. Both are very flexible terms and their implications for any EU action in Eastern Europe remains open to political contestation. “Principled pragmatism” adds a further challenge: Does the EU really have sufficient resources and skills to work with all sorts of regimes against common external threats without further strengthening their domestic grip on power?

An apparent step forward is identifying Russia as the key strategic challenge for the EU and an upfront honesty about Russia’s role in destabilizing Ukraine and breach of international law. However, the suggested approach of strategic patience on Russia is yet to be fully shaped, not least upon operationalization of “principled pragmatism” and “cooperative regional orders”.

Overall, while the new EUGS offers some analytically strong insights relevant to the EU relations with neighbours to the East, its impact will be a function of implementation. Thus it largely depends on political will in national capitals.

Rusif HUSEYNOV, *Baku-based independent Researcher, Co-Founder and Editor-in-Chief of “ThePoliticon” online journal*

Following the refugee problem (and disagreements between the EU member-states over refugee intake), terrorist attacks in the key cities of the continent and Brexit referendum, the European Union lost much of its prestige and seems quite weakened. In such hard times, the EU needs a consolidated foreign and security policy which will hopefully not remain on paper.

The European Union should take a more decisive stance in Eastern Europe through:

- Admitting Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova into the EU sphere of influence and taking concrete steps on deeper cooperation. If Brussels fails to accept Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova under its wings, fearing to anger the Kremlin, then security and stability in the Eastern Europe will not be complete.

- Providing real support to the territorial integrity of Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan, denouncing the breakaway regions in the mentioned countries, imposing sanctions against persons and companies for any contacts with those regions.

- Becoming less hesitant against Russia until the latter ceases supporting the separatist movements in the breakaway regions in the Eastern Europe despite some calls in European ruling and business circles to stop the sanctions against Russia and restore economic ties.

The newly presented “Global Strategy for the European Union’s Foreign and Security Policy” looks a good document. But if the EU keeps distancing from the former Soviet countries that aspire westward integration and does not provide to them anything real other than promises, this document will certainly fail.

Maksym KHYLKO, *Chairman of the Board at the East European Security Research Initiative Foundation, Senior Research Fellow at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv*

The newly presented EU’s Global Strategy outlines the general framework for security policy of the Union in whole, without paying particular attention to any certain region, including the Eastern Europe. Probably, the issues of the Eastern Europe will be considered in more detail later – the Global Strategy envisages that new thematic or geographic strategies are to be devised in line with the priorities of this Strategy. This may provide the Eastern European countries with opportunities to make their security concerns considered more closely.

The EU’s Global Strategy clearly aims at building Union’s own security and defence capabilities to gain the so-called “strategic autonomy”. While it is stated that the U.S. would continue to be the core partner “on the broader security agenda”, and the partnership with NATO would continue deepening, the EU is set to enhance own “credibility in security and defence”.

On the one hand, it is good that the EU has finally realized that investment in security and defence “is a matter of urgency” because “in this fragile world, soft power is not enough”. On the other hand, it remains to be seen

how exactly the Union will implement its intention to win the “autonomy of decision and action” in security issues. Currently, EU’s security and defence are critically dependent on the U.S. capabilities; and overhasty attempts to win independence in these issues might result in emergence of security vacuum in Europe. Without the U.S. assistance, the EU will not be able to complete the installation of the ballistic missile defence; and without (very unlikely) sharp increase in military budgets Europe will not be able to keep the strategic balance with Russia, which sharply builds up its military presence near the EU borders.

EU’s Global Strategy envisages more active Union’s policy in conflict prevention and resolution, and promises to not recognise Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea nor accept the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine. But actually Kyiv should not count on any additional practical support measures, given that the EU’s “key tools” in conflict prevention and resolution would remain the “carefully calibrated” sanctions and diplomacy.

A good signal for Ukraine is that in Global Strategy the EU declares intention to strengthen its contribution to peace and security in the region, noting that the weaknesses of the EU’s neighbours leads to the Union’s “own weaknesses”. Therefore, the EU is going to “enhance the resilience of our eastern neighbours” that naturally will include assistance to Ukraine and other Eastern Partnership countries (but most probably not a military aid).

Overall, the EU’s Global Strategy proves that the Union continues to primarily focus on its own security, and all assistance to the third parties will be considered with view to its effect on the EU. So, when requesting assistance or proposing cooperation in security and defence spheres, the non-member Eastern European countries, including Ukraine, should be ready to clearly substantiate advantages of such steps for the Union’s own security.

East European Security Research Initiative (EESRI) is a discussion, analytical and information-sharing international platform aimed at uniting efforts of the experts and researches from various countries to find effective ways for strengthening security in the Eastern Europe as the most vulnerable region of the contemporary Europe.

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