The European Security Strategy: Changing the Global Security Environment?

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The Treaty of Maastricht, 1991, established the European Union including the Common Foreign and Security Policy, CFSP, to deal with the challenges of a changing security environment: the fall of the Soviet Union and the emergence of several new nation states in Central and Eastern Europe. CFSP provided policy procedures and institutions to analyze global and regional developments, formulate strategic options, and implement and organize EU operations. The goal was to foster coherence among the foreign policies of member states and to leverage their resources for common policies. Despite the treaty amendments of Maastricht, Amsterdam, and Nice CFSP lacked the strategic outlook to deal with the violent end of Yugoslavia in the 1990s and its aftermath or to create unanimity toward the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Biscop 2008, 5, 16 and Dover 2013, 247).

The EU needed to specify its foreign policy goals and how to secure them. In 2003, Javier Solana, then High Representative, formulated the European Security Strategy (ESS), entitled 'A Secure Europe In A Better World' (European Council 2003). The Lisbon treaty of 2007 and the ESS were designed to alleviate the lack of coherence of EU foreign policies by creating a strategic framework and reforming the institutional structure of CFSP. The ultimate goal was and is to change how security challenges are tackled globally. CFSP's complicated nature is the dominant problem the EU faces in its attempt to create a stronger European voice and a system of global security governance: not only do the member states have a say, but the array of institutions involved includes the Commission and its Directorates General with various portfolios relating to external action, the High Representative and the European External Action Service, and numerous more specific institutions (Dover 2013). External difficulties add to the EU's internal coherence problem. One of the principles enshrined in the EU's security strategy is enlargement and more general European cooperation to increase the European security community (Dannreuther 2008, 62 and Cameron 2007, 62-5). As neorealists point out, this expansive strategy threatens to alienate neighbours, especially Russia (Mearsheimer 2014a and 2014b, Dannreuther 2008, 77-8). The ESS is aware of the problem that enlargement might "create new dividing lines in Europe" and therefore requires the EU to reach out to all its neighbours to reduce misunderstandings (European Council 2003, 8).

How does the EU want to change the approach to security? As the 2008 review of the ESS states, which confirmed the findings of the 2003 document, the ESS "for the first time […] established principles and set clear objectives for advancing the EU's security interests" (European Council 2008, 3). The ESS provides a guiding strategy, a policymaking and -management tool, to ensure the foreign and security players in the EU act coherently (Biscop 2011, 133, Biscop 2008, 19). As Sven Biscop and Jan Joel Andersson point out, the ESS is more than a purely 'operational document'. Instead, it provides a strategic framework to tackle various global threats (2008, 2-3). The ESS identifies the EU as a "global player" which must "be more active, more coherent and more capable." It calls for the EU to "develop a strategic culture that fosters early, rapid, and when necessary, robust intervention" (European Council 2003 1, 11) The ESS identifies five key threats to the EU: terrorism, the proliferation of WMD, regional conflicts, state failure, and organised crime, none of which are limited to one single state and which the document therefore treats as transnational. The ESS's strategic approach calls for an integration of military measures into a holistic set of measures:

"None of the new threats is purely military; nor can any be tackled by purely military means. Each requires a mixture

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of elements. The European Union is particularly well equipped to respond to such multi-faceted situations" (European Council 2003, 7).

It attempts to change the concepts of strategy, security, and power, to move away from the use of force, such as outright military engagement, and toward creating an environment in which violence is prevented through civilian and crisis management tools. It tries to overcome the lowest common denominator that, as realists and liberal intergovernmentalists believe, is the result of the quintessentially intergovernmental CFSP style which promotes the specific interests of powerful EU member states, such as the UK, France, or Germany (Hyde-Price 2007, 109 and Delcourt and Remacle 2009, 235).

The ESS commits the EU to effective multilateralism, a centre-piece of the strategic framework designed to change the global security environment. Effective Multilateralism means that the interconnected and transnational security issues identified by the ESS must be tackled with a tailored set of actions and policies by groups of states. It rejects unilateral approaches. Effective multilateralism calls for broad coalitions, not only with the USA, but also other states, such as Russia, China, and India (Telò 2013, 47, 56-7). Other international organisations also feature prominently in the ESS as part of effective multilateralism. For instance, the EU attempts to legitimise its security role through a recourse to the United Nations Charta, whose values it purports to defend and uphold through nation-building, crisis prevention and crisis management missions (European Council 2003, 7-9, Gowan 2008). However, the UN-EU relationship faced difficulties as early as 1999: while Europeans believed they were interpreting UN norms adequately in tackling Slobodan Milosevic's Serbian campaign in Kosovo, the EU lacked support for its engagement from the UN due to the reluctance of the permanent Security Council members China and Russia to support the dissolution of Serbia. Even when the EU believes it is acting in accordance with UN norms and furthering effective multilateralism, it might be undermining the United Nations as such, acting without its support (Gowan 2008, 42-3). In addition, the EU does not contribute considerably to UN missions, undermining European rhetorical support for the UN (Biscop 2011, 138-140). Effective multilateralism and its recourse to the UN Charta is not as straightforward as the ESS might wish to suggest. The UN on the other hand is reluctant to grant regional organisations such as the EU full membership, further undermining the UN-EU relationship (Telò 2013, 61).

The structure of the international system has repercussions for the EU's security approach as well. The ESS itself describes the world as multipolar. It believes multipolarity can be stable, but only through a certain approach to the new security environment – again the document refers to effective multilateralism as the solution. It stresses that the Union should have an "effective and balanced relationship with the USA" (European Council 2003, 13), in other words as equal partners. In a highly complex and interrelated world, "Europe must lead a renewal of the multilateral order" with a "distinctive European approach to foreign and security policy" partnering with sovereign governments around the world as well as international and regional organisations such as the UN, the OSCE, or ASEAN (European Council 2008, 2). The ultimate goal is a "stronger international society" with "well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order" (European Council 2003, 9) exporting the governance model the EU uses internally to the outside world and thereby, crucially, defining it as norm to which it is worth to aspire. Here we glimpse an attempt to legitimise the EU as a global actor. International organisations, such as the EU, are seen in the ESS as responsible for upholding the rules of the international society and sanctioning violations. For this, the EU needs the structures and capabilities of CFSP. Through a ordered international society, the EU wishes to promote democracy and the rule of law globally as it believes that a system of democratic governance best suits its own security needs. The Lisbon Treaty, too, stresses the value of a multilateral approach in that the EU must "promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance" (European Union 2007, 22). A model of security governance through international society, in short, pervades the relevant documents.

The 2008 review of the ESS formulated the motivation behind CFSP very succinctly: "Faced with common problems, there is no substitute for common solutions" (European Council 2008, 12). The ESS is a well formulated guide. It calls for an active, coherent, and capable EU committed to changing the regional and global security order, ensuring the multipolarity it diagnoses does not lead to instability. In order to do that, the EU promotes a rule-based international society solution, based on the UN Charta, and in which the European values of democracy, the rule of law, and human rights are spread gradually through development and cooperation with organisations and states to strengthen the security community. An example of the EU's attempt to spread regional governance cooperation,

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democratic government, and free trade is its partnership with MERCOSUR, a regional organisation comprised of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. MERCOSUR, which the ESS expressly mentions (European Council 2003, 9), is dedicated to economic and political integration in South America. The EU financially contributes to the further development of its South American partner's institutions such as its Parliament and Secretariat.

There are difficulties though. So far the EU and MERCOSUR have failed to agree on a free trade regime and bilateral relations – good or bad – between members of the two organisations tend to preclude more substantive inter-regional cooperation (Santander and Ponjaert 2009, 292-3). Nevertheless, this is an expression of the EU's holistic approach to security, promoting regional stability and democratic governance to ensure development through a regional, cooperative approach (Delcourt and Remacle 2009, 235). It highlights the difficulties of including numerous aspects into the concept of security and trying to forge a unified EU position while attempting to help another regional organisation to develop similar policymaking structures: the complexity of issues and streamlining these makes progress very difficult.

In conclusion, CFSP needs further simplification. Instead, the treaties have increased the number of institutions and thus complexity. Attempts at creating a stable and secure European continent have so far failed, with flawed neighbourhood programs and difficult EU-Russian relations leading to insecurity and instability rather than a mode of governance based on cooperation. Reform is necessary if the EU is to be an attractive partner for effective multilateral action capable of creating the (Western) rule-based international society the ESS envisions (Witney et al. 2014). The divide between 'Atlanticists' and 'Europeans', those in favour of a strong transatlantic security partnership and those in favour of a more independent European voice both within NATO and outside it (Biscop 2011, 136, 144), reminds us of the fact that, in the end, the EU relies on its member states and can only act as effective global player if united behind the goals of ESS.

The ESS tries to redefine international politics, but it does not move beyond power (Bailes 2009, 27-8). Insofar as the ESS incorporates military measures, as part of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which is part of CFSP, as a last resort in its holistic security governance concept, if suffers from a major defect: even the EU's strongest military powers, the UK and France, are cutting spending on their militaries and EU member states are reluctant to engage in comprehensive defence integration (Telò 2013, 33). The still unresolved EU-NATO relationship also complicates the matter: how can NATO and CFSP be combined and who is ultimately responsible for defence (Howorth 2013, 65, 72-76 and Biscop 2011, 136)? That the EU lacks credible military capacities means that all other measures suffer from the notion that EU pressure or even threats will not be easy to go through with. Expectations and capabilities continue to diverge, including in areas of multilateral crisis management (ECFR 2014, 96-112). So far, the EU is not one of the poles in the multipolar world it identifies and so long as this is the case it will not be able to effect the change in global security governance it wants.

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