

European Union Foreign Policy Options: European Security Strategy

The FIIA launched on 10 January 2013 the fourth edition of its EU Foreign Policy Options round table series, or EFPO. The EFPO seminars bring together smaller groups of experts and policy-makers to debate policy options for the EU in external affairs.

This spring edition focuses on the debate around the need to renew the European security strategy and related questions of substance.

The first debate of roundtable was based on presentations of Dr Björn Fägersten, Research Fellow at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI), and Dr Constanze Stelzenmüller, Senior Transatlantic Fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

It focused on the initiative taken by the foreign ministers of Sweden, Spain, Poland and Italy last summer to launch a think-tank based project on the [European Global Strategy](#) (EGS). The purpose of the roundtable was to gain insights into this project as well as to reflect on the informal political process in the background and to map out key drivers for, and important features of, a proposed new strategy.

This report is based on the roundtable discussions as a whole.

What is at stake at the European Global Strategy project?

The ongoing work on the formulation of the European global strategy is structured around several workshops hosted by the four think-tanks. The process is open for contributions from a broader academic and expert community.

Several analyses have already been published on the EGS website. These will pave the way for the final report of the project – a concise strategy-like paper published in May 2013.

The aim of the project is to highlight the added value of a new EU strategy. A new strategic narrative would enable the EU to re-articulate its identity and utility. It would help to prioritize and increase transparency and predictability of the EU policies. This, in turn, would translate into efficiency and influence.

The EGS's scope is broad. Its point of departure is EU's values and norms rather than perceived risks and threats. It covers all areas of EU's external relations and expands to related internal policy fields such as migration and agriculture.

The conflict between values and short term interest is acknowledged, and at least partly averted by focusing on EU's longer term vital interests. These include global flows, stable neighborhood and sustainable ecosystem. Securing these and other interests underlines the need for strategic action, which aims to manage and shape the changing global order.

Is there a need for strategy renewal?

Several arguments support the re-thinking of the EU's strategic action. The world and the EU are in a state of flux. The EU's external environment is characterized by increasing interdependencies and competition among advanced and emerging economies. This complicates the attempts to find common solutions to common problems globally and regionally. Concurrently, new technologies propel new kinds of networks, which shape political communities. The role of the individual and of the middle class is rising, yet large proportions of world's population remain disconnected and disadvantaged due to poverty.

These developments and attached tensions are currently manifested also inside the EU. European social contracts and key political institutions are under significant stress, and in some countries on

the verge of collapse. While many still believe in the “European model”, increasing number of Europeans are seeking new opportunities outside Europe.

Consequently, old and new dividing lines have emerged in Europe and some EU member states, in particular Great Britain, are reviewing their commitment in the European project. A new European global strategy could highlight a sense of common destiny and restate the purpose of the EU in promoting security, stability and prosperity.

Externally, a new strategy should first and foremost address the EU’s southern and eastern neighborhood including Russia. It must take into account the changing perceptions of other actors – Russia, Turkey and China, for instance – on the EU’s soft and hard power. It should promote greater situational awareness and foresight capabilities. Importantly, it should establish much needed external and internal clarity on the division of labor (competences and vertical power relations) between the EU and its member states.

The danger that current European divisions and differentiation turn out to be detrimental for a new European strategy should be taken seriously. An unofficial but structured debate on the EU’s global strategy is therefore a useful exercise in mapping out and establishing common ground. One of the outcomes of the EGS project might be another, Europe-wide strategy process among expert and academic communities. This process could also encourage “outsiders” to express their views on Europe’s role in the world.
