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Why the European Union needs a new global strategy

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Why the European Union needs a new global strategy

Bonn, 20 May 2015. The EU's Foreign and Defense Ministers have met in Brussels on Monday. One point on their long agenda was the strategic review of the EU's security environment and the challenges and opportunities arising for the EU. During the next European Council in June, the EU's heads of state and government are expected to mandate the High Representative and Vice President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini, to launch the process of drafting an EU strategy for external relations.

Two scenarios are possible: The EU decides to review the 2003 European Security Strategy. This strategy was widely regarded as a milestone in establishing a clear direction and ambition for the EU's foreign policy. However, both, the EU and the EU's security environment have changed fundamentally since then and the strategy certainly needs a fundamental update.

The alternative to revising the Security Strategy is developing a broad, 'global strategy' that analyses the global challenges the EU faces. It defines how different areas of EU external action such as foreign and security policy, trade, climate and development policy can and as well as should contribute to tackle these global challenges, on the basis of guiding principles and common objectives for all these areas. In a second step, the EU could then develop specific strategies for individual policy fields, as for instance review the 2003 Security Strategy and the 2005 European Consensus on Development.

In our opinion this second option is what the EU and the world need most of all.

Why the EU should develop a global strategy

Increasing multipolarity, global interdependence and insecurities pose different challenges to the EU than 15 years ago. The Lisbon treaty has initiated a number of institutional reforms to make the EU's external action more effective and coherent. In November 2014, the new European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has tasked Mogherini to revitalise and chair the Commissioner's Group of External Action. The EU thus has the institutional foundation to become a more coherent and effective global actor. A new global strategy has to define and prioritise how the EU wants to articulate and promote its values and interests in the world and which instruments it wants to deploy for this purpose.

Coherent and pro-active external action in all areas mentioned above is in the EU's own interest: Greater prosperity and equality beyond European borders also contribute to inclusive and sustainable growth in Europe. Stability and security in Europe will only be guaranteed if peace, based on inclusive develop-

ment, can be maintained or strengthened in other parts of the world. EU migration, asylum and security objectives can only be assured when guided by an overarching objective of promoting human mobility that transcends populism and promotes the EU's long-term interests. Environmental sustainability in Europe requires a credible and convincing external climate policy that secures a global consensus. The EU and its member states thus have to develop a strategic vision for the future that redefines Europe's interests, its global role and its global responsibilities in the twenty-first century, secures European influence in the world and guides its contribution to global public goods. A new strategic global direction for the EU therefore has to go beyond a narrowly defined security strategy and include the different interconnected external and domestic policy areas of the EU that are relevant to address inter-related and complex global development challenges.

Key parameters for an EU global strategy

The Lisbon Treaty states that the EU commits not only to the protection of its own citizens but also to sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, free and fair trade and democracy and human rights. The EU's new strategy has to do justice to these commitments.

The current negotiations for a new universal global development agenda and Europe's own position set the international framework for this strategy as it aims to develop universal targets for all countries in the world. Implementing the agenda in the EU thus not only requires an external global strategy, but also an internal strategy (which could either build on the existing EU strategy for sustainable development or on a substantially revised and expanded set of goals and indicators of the EU2020 strategy), and both have to be coherent with each other. A main implication of the new agenda is that the EU's development policy will definitively become a strategic part and parcel of EU public policy, thus requiring optimal integration and promotion through the EU's foreign policy.

The development of a global strategy is an opportunity for a discussion and closer cooperation among EU institutions and EU member states and all actors related to external and domestic action (including Security, Development, Climate, Trade). An EU global strategy could then also guide future institutional reforms and review of the instruments of external action, in particular the negotiations for the next multi-annual financial framework and the expiry of the Cotonou Agreement in 2020.