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# Europe at a Historical Crossroads: Grand Strategy or Resignation?

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**Abstract**

*The European Union is gradually emerging as a global actor, a role which the Lisbon Treaty aims to enhance. Yet the global order is changing rapidly, from the uni-polarity of the post-Cold War years to some inchoate form of multi-polarity. In that emerging world, both the traditional and the rising powers face huge responsibilities in defining the contours of a consensual new order which will deal effectively with the inter-connected challenges of the 21st century: regional stability, arms control, environmental protection, energy security, climate change, poverty and inequality and migratory flows. Most of the global actors are centralized nation states with well-defined national strategies. The EU faces additional obstacles in generating a “grand strategy” which effectively articulates the relationship between means and large ends. Yet in many ways, the EU has already trail-blazed the type of world order which appears to be emerging, one in which international law and institutions are primary, in which the limited utility of military power is recognized, in which failing states are more destabilizing than powerful ones and in which human security is as important as state security. If the EU can begin to address these problems with strategic clarity, it can have an important role to play in the striking of the grand bargains necessary to underpin the new world order. If it fails to define a grand strategy, it will be increasingly marginalized from the global stage.*

**General note:**

*Opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author  
and not necessarily those of the Institute.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global order has reached a major historical crossroads – which can be compared in scale and significance to 1648, 1815 or 1945. We are entering a complex period of power transition, triggered simultaneously by the end of the Cold War and by globalization. These processes reflect powerful movements of history's tectonic plates. The challenges they have thrown up are like nothing the world has seen before. The “Westphalian System” (Moore 2010) morphed, after the Napoleonic Wars, into the “Concert of Europe” which proved quite incapable of managing the rise of new challengers (Taylor 1954). The seventy-five year European civil-war (1870-1945) pitting France against Germany, which twice dragged the rest of the world towards Armageddon, could only be ended by the massive military involvement of the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR (Fergusson 2006). The bipolarity of the Cold War years succeeded, in part through the balance of nuclear terror, in preserving the peace between the major powers – yet at the expense of millions of dead in proxy wars across the Global South. For fifteen years after 1989, US uni-polarity preserved a tense and increasingly challenged form of global order (Brooks & Wohlforth 2008; Walt 2006; Joffe 2007), which nevertheless proved elusive in two main war-zones: Iraq and Afghanistan. Uni-polarity has been an unknown quantity in terms of international relations theory. Nothing like it has existed in the modern world. A theoretical investigation into its potential implications was conducted in the journal *World Politics* in January 2009. One conclusion is that the enduring uni-pole (the USA), far from being a *status-quo* power (as dominant powers in most world systems have tended to be), is more likely to behave as a *revisionist* power. We had a foretaste of this under George W. Bush. For those who believe that the system dictates policy, more revisionism is likely to come – no matter who is US president.

But uni-polarity has been challenged as an interpretation of the contemporary world by a variety of alternative theoretical approaches. A bi-polar vision has been expounded by the leading international economist C. Fred Bergsten who argued in 2008 that the US should “give true priority to China as its main partner in managing the world economy”, even if this

means displacing Europe (Bergsten 2008). Yet China and the United States appear to be having great difficulty stabilizing their relationship (Economist 2010). The President of the US *Council on Foreign Relations*, Richard Haass, has conjured up the notion of non-polarity, which foresees growing international chaos as US global preponderance is replaced by an unstructured congeries of influences exerted by a confusion of players: states, regional regimes, NGOs, MNCs, institutions, militias, individuals, large cities, media outlets, criminal gangs, to name but a few. Such an order, he argues “will have mostly negative consequences for the US – and for much of the rest of the world as well” (Haass, 2008). So far, from a European perspective, the picture looks bleak.

If we turn to those who detect multi-polarity as the system of the future, things do not get much better. Neo-realists have always argued that unbalanced multi-polarity is the most dangerous and war-prone international system (Waltz, 1979: 161-163; Mearsheimer, 2002: 44-45). Robert Kagan, pondering the Russian-Georgian war of 2008, proclaims that “the world has become normal again” with the return of traditional nation-state naked ambitions, the emergence of seven major powers all vying for status and influence, a rivalry overlaid by new forms of “the old competition between liberalism and autocracy” and by “an even older struggle” between radical Islam and modern secularism, all ushering in “an age of divergence” (Kagan, 2008: 3-4). For classical realists, any world other than one marked by zero-sum conflicts, balance of power manoeuvring and eventual major war is hard to imagine. Another vision of the multi-polar world is provided by the quinquennial survey of the US *National Intelligence Council* which predicts a world of “major discontinuities, shocks and surprises” and offers four illustrative scenarios featuring: 1) a “World Without the West” in which rising powers supplant the West as global leaders; 2) a “BRICS bust-up” in which a dispute over vital resources sparks a new World War pitting China against India; 3) an “October surprise” in which the world pays a terrible price for not dealing soon enough with climate change; and 4) “Politics is not always local” in which global networks eclipse governments in setting the international agenda (NIC, 2008). Most of this is particularly disturbing for Europeans, who were warned in 2006 by their own *Institute for Security Studies* that the world of 2025 will be

smaller, more volatile and more dangerous than that of today and that, in that world, the EU's current strengths and assets will have been significantly diminished (Gnesotto & Grevi, 2006).

The only relatively bright spot on the horizon in this brainstorming around the nature of the global system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century comes from the Italian policy analyst Giovanni Grevi, who has coined the notion of “inter-polarity” as the synthesis of multi-polarity and interdependence. He argues that every existing and rising power (not to mention the rest of the world) will be mightily constrained in the coming decades by the interconnectedness of all main policy areas (economy, energy, security, environment) and that the “existential interdependence” of all these issues argues inexorably in favour of cooperation. Multi-polarity must join hands with multilateralism to capitalise on positive issue-linkages and drive the move towards a more harmonious world order (Grevi, 2009). In 2010, the principal global players are continental-scale nation states (USA, China, Russia, Brazil, India, South Africa, Indonesia, Australia), plus a small number of international institutions (UN, IMF, WTO) and a handful of regional regimes – primarily the European Union. These actors are the principal stakeholders in a new world order which they – collectively – will put in place. The first requirement of this unprecedented feat of global engineering is a clear vision of the stakes, the objectives and the method. The European Union cannot avoid facing up to that responsibility if it wishes to be a consequential actor. The price of abstention will be irrelevance.

The challenges facing these global actors are unprecedented: the stabilisation of large areas of the globe marked by failing or failed states; the integration into a consensual new international order of large and powerful states marked by vastly different political, economic and social cultures but linked by dense networks of global interdependence; the elimination of global poverty and despair; the management of weapons proliferation and the triumph of arms control; the reversal of looming climate catastrophe; the generation of renewable and sustainable energy supplies; the success of inter-faith dialogue. What makes the challenge all the more difficult is that all these problems are inter-linked. As Einstein noted, “We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used in creating them”. A new approach, a new mindset is required to move forward. It is a truism that the EU was founded

to solve *yesterday's* problem – the one thousand year old civil war within and between Europe's barbarous member states. That narrative of internal peace, that message of reconciliation, that solution of integration are no longer adequate – or even salient – to the generation of twenty-somethings who will run the Union in 20 years' time. That generation takes peace for granted. There has to be a new type of motivation. The EU is in desperate need of a new narrative. Optimists may express confidence in the dynamics which the Treaty of Lisbon induces, suggesting that the EU can now become a consequential international player<sup>1</sup>. But Lisbon on its own does not amount to a new narrative.

It is true that Lisbon focuses intently on creating the structures intended to allow the EU to behave as an international actor. Of the 62 amendments to the previous Treaties introduced by Lisbon no fewer than 25 concern the institutions and procedures of foreign and security policy. These include the creation of the new positions of President of the European Council and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy as well as the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS). Scholars and analysts have diverged widely over the question of whether the EU can become a consequential international actor. For decades, the EU was analyzed purely in terms of economics and trade, international law and institutions, human rights and the environment. This changed massively after the Franco-British summit at Saint-Malo in December 1998, when the EU took on the project of developing an autonomous security and defence policy. A growing number of analysts have detected in the EU's global activities over the past decade the emergence of a new type of "superpower" (Haseler, 2004; Rifkin, 2004; Reid, 2004; Leonard, 2005; Schnabel, 2005; McCormick, 2007). Such analysts, who come mainly from the world of policy-formulation, tend to consider that the EU does have a conscious vision of its place in the world, of its policy objectives and of the way forward. Their vision is countered by a number of academics who are highly skeptical of the EU's capacity to emerge as an international actor

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Gordon, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs: speech, Washington DC, 15 December 2009 (<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2009/133583.htm>)?

"In view of all of the many ties that bind the United States and Europe together, the Administration welcomed the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on December 1. We believe that this treaty marks a milestone for Europe and for its role in the world."

and who, on the contrary, tend to see little in its global performance other than political ambivalence, empty rhetoric and even mythology (Zielonka, 1998; Allen and Smith, 2007; Menon, 2008; Manners, 2010; Toje, 2010). These scholars tend to predicate their argument on the notion that the EU will forever be hobbled by the tensions between the Union itself and its member states. Another group of academics which focuses on the EU as an international actor tends to believe that the EU can influence certain global outcomes, but only around the margins and only as a “civilian power” through the deployment of normative instruments (K. Smith 2008, Telo 2006, Laidi 2008).

Finally, there is a growing branch of scholarship which interprets the development of the EU’s common security and defence policy (CSDP) as clear evidence of its aspirations to play a proactive role on the world stage (Biscop, 2005; Howorth, 2007; Jones, 2007; Mérand, 2008; Peters, 2010; Rosato, 2011). Although there are huge differences between these scholars in terms of their analysis of the reasons behind this development, they all accept that the EU is an international actor which is here to stay. The Treaty of Lisbon has offered new prospects to maximize the EU’s performance on the international stage.

However, if the EU fails to capitalize on the promise of Lisbon, if the member states continue to fiddle while Brussels burns, then the whole intricate tapestry woven over the last fifty odd years could well begin to unravel. Einstein defined insanity as “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”. How long will it take to recognise that, if the prime motive force behind the European story is narrow member-state national interest, then the Union as a global actor will remain merely a figment of the political imagination, a revolutionary new Broadway show for which there were many rehearsals, props and a script but which simply failed to open. The 2010 Greek crisis demonstrated that the member states ultimately understand that, in the words of Benjamin Franklin, they must hang together in order to avoid hanging separately. But it took them a damagingly long time to act upon that collective understanding. And the financial markets remained largely unimpressed. Andrew Moravcsik has argued that the EU enjoys a happy state of stable equilibrium which rules out with equal certainty *either* a collapse of the Eurozone *or* a great leap forward towards deeper



integration (Moravcsik 2010). This thesis is unconvincing. To argue that “the European style of muddling through may be unglamorous, but it works” is to miss the point about the profound historical shifts shaping and engulfing the world we are entering. The EU needs to go boldly forward on two fronts: its own internal functioning and its role on the global stage. Muddling through may have worked when the world was relatively stable. In 2010, it is simply no longer an option.

## 2. THE CASE FOR A GRAND STRATEGY

The literature on “grand strategy” in general is voluminous (Liddell Hart 1967; Paret et alii 1986; Luttwak 1987; Kennedy 1991; Murray et alii 1994). For several centuries, the concept was indissociable from discussion of military instruments and the art of war. Attempts at definition generally failed, the most widely cited probably being Liddell Hart’s Clausewitzian update: “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy”. This immediately fell foul of those critics who noted not only that strategy operates in a far broader context than simply the military but also that it is in fact “a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty and ambiguity dominate” (Murray & Grimsley 1994: 1). If those caveats were valid in the 1990s, they are even more so today given the interwoven complexities of the modern world which we outlined above. If a definitional approach is unavoidable, then the formula adopted by John Gaddis and Paul Kennedy is probably as concise as possible: “the calculated relation of means to large ends” (Brady-Johnson 2010). Such a definition avoids any circumscribed designation either of “means” or of “large ends”. But it does insist that these two elements are crucial and that the relation between them is “calculated”.

As far as the European Union is concerned, such an approach offers both positive and negative dimensions. The negatives derive mainly from the extent to which the urgency of the grand strategy agenda runs counter to the collaborative and iterative mode which is the essence of EU decision-making (Howorth 2009). Grand strategy requires the sort of intuitive overview which rarely occurs in EU settings<sup>2</sup>. It runs counter to the specialization logic which underpins much of the activity of EU officials and institutions – the ever greater mastery of highly focused dossiers. Grand strategy must be based on the extraction of key but limited information from a large range of sources and its quasi-instinctive (rather than scientific or systematic) evaluation. Secondly, grand strategy demands the type of bold decision-taking and implementation from which Europeans generally recoil. The iterations of EU decision-

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<sup>2</sup> The remarks that follow are adapted from John Gaddis’s lecture at Middlebury College, Vermont (16 May 2005) on “Why Grand Strategy is Tough for Academics”

making involve the constant weighing of pros and cons, bargains and compromises: a little bit of this for the Greeks and a little bit of that for the Poles. Grand strategy, on the other hand, requires the early fixing of an overall objective followed by its focused pursuit. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, a strategic approach must know how to respond to the unexpected. This requires agile leadership rather than iterative deliberations seeking common denominators. Leadership itself needs to transcend bargains and compromises and to demonstrate that followers are willing, indeed happy to be led. This again is foreign to the EU experience which goes to extraordinary lengths to incorporate the viewpoints of everybody, even of those who are hostile. And finally, grand strategy requires great discourse. From Pericles to Churchill, great leaders have known how to use words to transform strategic reality. And because words speak to the emotions, there tends to have to be an identity component in the magic. To date, no EU leader has so far asked its citizens to go “once more unto the breach”.

Yet the definition also carries positive dynamics for the European Union. What are the EU’s strong points as an international actor? There are several, and they are fundamentally important. They all relate to the context in which international relations is set to take place over the next few decades. In this context, the EU does have a comparative advantage. It needs to learn to leverage it. First, the world has now enjoyed sixty-five years of multilateral institutionalism and the progressive accumulation of a corpus of international law which has sought – with relative success – to regulate relations between states which operate under anarchy. The EU has blazed that trail as effectively as (if not more effectively than) any other actor. Second, we have an intensifying system of what Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane have called “complex interdependence” – the thickly woven, deeply intermeshed and structurally inter-related global networks of investments, exchanges, flows of every conceivable type – and even interests – between nation states and other actors (Keohane & Nye, 1977). In many ways, in terms of forging and managing complex interdependence, the EU is in a class of its own.

Third, the bloody violence of war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century demonstrates conclusively that territorial aggrandisement no longer pays. And the recent wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that military power alone has very little utility when it comes to solving complex socio-political problems. Thomas Barnett has warned of the pointlessness, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world, of deploying naked military might – what he calls the “Leviathan Force” – without having in advance fully thought through what happens next (Barnett 2004; Barnett 2009). The EU understood this dilemma earlier and better than most other players. The EU as a military actor has trail-blazed integration of military instruments and “everything that happens next”. In many ways, it is because the EU is emerging as a military power that it is finally beginning to be effective as a civilian power (Risse & Börzel 2009). Fourth, the “international community” has arrived at a historical turning point where failed states have become more worrisome than strong states, where collective security becomes more relevant than territorial defence, where human rights become as important as states’ rights, and where multi-level bargaining trumps muscle-flexing.

In short, the type of international objectives which the EU is capable (and desirous) of promoting amount to the provision and strengthening of “global public goods”: regional security and stabilization, environmental protection, human security, the promotion of international law and norms, the prioritization of international institutions, dealing with climate change. Once again, in this radically new approach to IR, the EU has blazed an often lonely trail. The EU recognized before any other major player that, in this complex multi-polar world, every problem – and every solution – is in fact political.

But in order to deliver on the serious potential which it commands in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the EU needs strategic vision. This has now become a common-place among commentators and analysts (Gnesotto 2009; Biscop et alii 2009; Biscop, Howorth & Giegerich 2009; Witney 2008, Howorth 2010a). The December 2008 “Report on the Implementation of the ESS” recognized that, over the preceding five years, the threats facing the EU have become “increasingly complex”, that “we must be ready to shape events” by “becoming more strategic in our thinking”, and that this will involve being “more effective and visible around the

world”. Yet, disappointingly, the report makes no effort to outline what these laudable ambitions might require or how they could be achieved. The Reflexion Group on the Future of the EU 2030 noted in its May 2010 report the “urgent need for a common European strategic concept”. It urged the drafting of a strategic White Paper “to define the Union’s long-term priorities and become the reference framework for day-to-day external action” (Project Europe 2010: 37). In her wide-ranging Athens speech on “Europe and the World” in July 2010, Catherine Ashton referred in positive terms to the EU’s many interventions around the world, and added that “we need to make sure that we frame them in a strategy that makes sense, a strategy that gives us a Foreign Policy fit for the European Union of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Ashton 2010). How might such a strategy be formulated?

### 3. THE FUNDAMENTALS OF AN EU GRAND STRATEGY

The starting point for any EU grand strategy has to be the recognition, by the member states, that they can achieve more on the global stage collectively than they can as single actors. The Lisbon Treaty enjoins the member states to cooperate: “Before undertaking any action on the international scene or entering into any commitment which could affect the Union's interests, each Member State shall consult the others within the European Council or the Council. Member States shall ensure, through the convergence of their actions, that the Union is able to assert its interests and values on the international scene.” (Art 16/b). The Reflection Group report stated bluntly that “we will only overcome the challenges which lie ahead if all of us – politicians, citizens, employers and employees – are able to pull together with a new common purpose defined by the needs of the current age” (Project Europe 2010: 2). This new common purpose has to be the new narrative referred to above. This is easily stated but extremely difficult to operationalise. The majority of smaller member states have little difficulty identifying their interests with those of the EU. Most of them do not really have a “foreign” policy which reaches beyond their immediate borders. But the larger member states occasionally act as though they have national interests which are *incompatible* with those of the EU as a whole. The UK and France believe they are global players in their own right, although France has long identified the interests of the EU with those of France (rather than the other way about). Spain feels it has a unique relationship with Latin America. Poland has such a deeply-rooted culture of national resistance against all-powerful neighbours that it may take decades for it to feel relaxed in its new multinational framework. For over forty years, Germany sublimated its identity problem through enthusiastic self-sacrifice in the name of the greater European entity. More recently, there have been numerous signs that Berlin is no longer prepared to continue as the EU's paymaster or even to assume a leadership role in the Union. As Constanze Stelzenmüller reports, a recent poll by Germany's Ipsos Institute “showed that more than half of all Germans still want a return to the Deutschmark [while] some in the younger generation wonder whether any deeper European integration effort is really worth it” (Stelzenmüller 2010). And Ulrike Guérot, citing a recent Deutsche Bank research report, has demonstrated that Germany's trading, financial and other material

interests are now served far more effectively by concentrating on the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) than on the PIGs (Portugal, Ireland, Greece) (Guérot 2010). Assuming these national dynamics among the larger member states continue to operate, how prejudicial would such a reality be to the formulation of a collective strategy “at twenty-seven”?

The short answer is that it would not be helpful. The long answer is that it would complicate matters rather than render an EU grand strategy unattainable. From the very outset of the European integration story, the dialectic between coordination and integration, between supra-nationalism and inter-governmentalism, between the parts and the whole has constituted an important driver of the entire process. And that process has consistently led to ever greater integration across an ever greater range of policy areas. The fundamental explanation for this state of affairs is that, at each juncture, the member states concluded that their interests were in fact better served through collective rather than through individual approaches. Over the decades, we have witnessed a seemingly inexorable pattern of shifts from commonality to singularity. Where once the EU boasted a common market, it now enjoys a single market; where once member states all spoke within the GATT process around a common approach, they now speak with a single voice within the WTO (Meunier 2007); the common space of the four freedoms has now become the single space of Schengen (Bigo and Guild 2005); the common currency became the single currency (Dyson 2008). During the sovereign debt crisis of 2009-2010, member states, albeit belatedly and grudgingly, finally agreed on a significant degree of singularity in their approach to the governance of the market and the Eurozone (Donnelly 2010). Plans are afoot for a single energy policy, for a single policy on climate and on visas.

The same story emerges when one considers institutions. At the outset, member states attempted to keep a firm national grip on the institutions of the EU. This was particularly true of the institutions of foreign and security policy, which was initially dealt with in informal mode by peripatetic consultative meetings of foreign ministers outside of the community aegis (Nuttall 1992). Over time, the member states have come to see the wisdom of, and begrudgingly recognized the need for, ever more layers of central institutions in Brussels: the

Council Secretariat, the High Representative, the Political and Security Committee, the Military Committee, the Military Staff, the Council Presidency etc. The reality was that even the larger member states recognized the wisdom and indeed the necessity of these developments. Without lapsing into teleology, there is no obvious reason to assume that these processes will not continue (Beach, 2005; Hoffmann et alii, 1993). The EU boasts a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and, since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, has recognized a Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The one outstanding question in this regard, therefore, is whether, in time, these common policies will ever become single policies.

At one level, this remains a question of semantics. When does intense transnationalism and inter-governmentalism in fact become indistinguishable from supranationalism (Howorth 2010)? When does wholesale coordination in fact amount to integration? The precise label is unimportant. What matters is that a collective effort is being made. One way of testing this is to examine whether limited exceptions to common (or even single) positions render attempts to develop and implement collective policies ineffectual. The UK opt-out from the single currency is not optimal for the governance of the single market, but it does not prevent the European Central Bank from making effective policy. The Danish opt-out from ESDP/CSDP, while having the regrettable consequence of preventing highly competent Danish soldiers and civilian experts from contributing to CSDP, in no way compromises the smooth running of the policy area. A recent major study comparing the military-legal systems of all 27 EU member states, as well as divergences between them in strategic culture, concluded that, despite quite significant differences at many different levels, none of these “exceptions” had proved in any way prejudicial to the actual mounting of CSDP missions, or to their outcome (Klein 2010). Those who adopt an absolutist approach to this question will always be able to take refuge in the claim that anything short of absolute and total integration and singularity is unsatisfactory. Yet that is to load the dice in such a way as to rule out the very possibility of qualitative progress. In the real world, situations are inevitably messier. Even within the US administration (some might say especially within that administration) there are constant examples of turf war, inter-agency battles and non-joined-



up policy. The EU should therefore seek to achieve the maximum possible degree of strategic uniformity, without illusions about perfection but also without resignation before that which seems daunting. Churchill said that “a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty”. It is time for the EU to adopt a Churchillian approach to grand strategy.

The formulation of an EU-wide grand strategy would constitute a major step in the direction of exercising genuine influence on the world stage (European Council, 2008). How could this be achieved? Beyond the initial recognition by all member states that such an approach would be beneficial, there would need, in the first instance, to be agreement on the extent to which the member states have common interests and common values which they wished to preserve and defend.

As far as common interests are concerned, this is a highly controversial issue. Euro-sceptics (academics and journalists alike) tend to take the view that genuinely common positions between the member states are unattainable because their interests are national rather than European, and therefore incompatible. Germany and Poland, from this perspective, simply do not have compatible interests where relations with Russia over gas supplies are concerned. Those more favourably inclined to the EU project assert, on the contrary, that the very nature of the integration process renders the interests of the member states far more compatible than incompatible. Although Spain, Italy and Greece are more directly affected by Mediterranean policies than are Sweden, Poland or Germany, and although the latter three countries have a more direct interest in the Eastern Partnership than do the former three, at the end of the day, all six are nevertheless seriously affected by the outcomes of both sets of policies. These are extremely difficult issues to resolve “scientifically”. The Lisbon Treaty states boldly that: “Within the framework of the principles and objectives of its external action, the Union shall conduct, define and implement a common foreign and security policy, based on the development of mutual political solidarity among Member States, the identification of questions of general interest and the achievement of an ever-increasing degree of convergence of Member States' actions.” (Article 11/2). A recent study

has drawn up a list of vital interests which it insists are common to all EU member states: defence against any military threat to the territory of the Union; open lines of communication and trade (in physical as well as in cyber space); a secure supply of energy and other vital natural resources; a clean environment; manageable migratory flows; the maintenance of international law and universally agreed rights; autonomy of EU decision-making (Biscop et alii 2009:16). These are vast objectives, and it may well be that in the ensuring of some of them, one or another member state may wish to steal a march over its neighbour(s). However, it is difficult to argue that any individual member state does not share these vital interests with all others. Britain and France, for a thousand years the bitterest rivals in Europe, announced as long ago as 1992 that their vital interests are seen as indissociable. This was reiterated by President Sarkozy in April 2010, when he proposed joint patrols by French and British nuclear submarines: “Together with the United Kingdom, we have taken a major decision: it is our assessment that there can be no situation in which the vital interests of either of our two nations could be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened” (Information 2010). If the UK and France can make such a statement, the same has to be true for the other EU member states. Naturally, a given member state may see the conclusion of a major commercial contract with one of the rising powers as a national victory over community commercial rivals. But to the extent to which the single market eventually works to the benefit of all EU citizens, this is simply a short-sided and partial view. What is undoubtedly required is a major research project, to be funded by the Commission and all the member states, to demonstrate to what extent the collective interests of the E-27 are objectively compatible or incompatible, to what extent they are convergent as opposed to divergent. However, pending the outcome of that study, the Union and its members should seek to define an overall strategic approach. This will also include normative and values-based considerations.

The Lisbon Treaty contains many references to the principles and values which guide the EU’s internal and external action. The Preamble states that the EU’s action

“draw[s] inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law”.

Article 1a states that:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”

Article 2 (1) states that:

The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.

Article 2 (5) states that:

“In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.”

Chapter 1, on “General Provisions of the Union’s External Action” goes into great detail concerning the underlying principles and values of CFSP and ESDP. The Lisbon Treaty’s Article 10a states that:

“1. The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. The Union shall seek to develop relations and build partnerships with third countries, and international, regional or global organisations which share the principles referred to in the first subparagraph. It shall promote multilateral solutions to common problems, in particular in the framework of the United Nations.

2. The Union shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to:

- safeguard its values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity;
- (b) consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law;
- (c) preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, with

the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and with the aims of the Charter of Paris, including those relating to external borders;

- (d) foster the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty;
- (e) encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade;
- (f) help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources, in order to ensure sustainable development;
- (g) assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters; and
- (h) promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance.”

The lengthy articulation of these rather grandiose principles and values makes it very clear what the EU formally considers to be the underlying normative framework for its interaction with the rest of the world. Herein already lies the foundation stone for any hypothetical grand strategy. These are the “large ends” referred to in the definition noted above. The problem, however, lies in the implementation of these principles, in the attainment of these large ends. There are two fundamental issues here. First, a distinction needs to be made between, on the one hand, the EU as a powerful institutional bargaining mechanism, where bargaining gains can be achieved through Europe’s sheer weight within negotiating frameworks; and, on the other hand, situations in which the EU explicitly strives to deploy its principles and values in an endeavour to change third state behaviour. An example of the former case would be negotiations within the WTO; an example of the latter case would be sanctions policy against a country like Belarus. The second fundamental issue is: what leverage does the EU actually enjoy with the rest of the world and how successful is it (or can it be) in promoting and extending to others its explicitly articulated values and interests?

A recent collective study with which the present author was (comfortably) associated, argued that the EU “pursues its interests through a preventive, holistic and multilateral approach based on the promotion of its model and values (my stress). It does not seek to coerce others into adopting it [...] but to convince them of the benefits of our model and

values through cooperation on the basis of shared interests and common values.” The study went on to suggest that “the recognition of the universality of our values can be gradually and consensually increased” (Biscop et alii 2009: 19). I do not entirely agree either that the EU does primarily seek to achieve its strategic objectives through the promotion of its values, or that it should seek to do so, or indeed that one should take for granted that the EU’s values are a reflexion of universal values. In a post-colonial, post-imperial world, the very concept of universal values is deeply problematic. The EU should avoid any overly explicit attempt to project itself as a normative model. The “brand EU” is not for export. Other actors may wish to emulate the EU, but that must be their choice. Rather, what the EU should seek as a basic strategic objective is a world of cultural and political diversity in which, nevertheless, stability, security, prosperity, development, environmental sustainability, solidarity and self-determination are considered in holistic terms as key elements of global interdependence – of inter-polarity (Grevi 2009).

This presents a quadruple strategic challenge to the EU in terms of intervention in global affairs. At the first level, it requires a pragmatic approach to the coming challenges of institutional design. Since the end of the Cold War, the EU has been relatively successful in helping to adapt the international institutions of interdependence to the new globalised and liberalised environment (Hoffmann et alii 1993). Its approach has been reminiscent, at the international institutional level, of the quest for “milieu goals” theorised by Arnold Wolfers (Yalem 1960). However, this tactic is currently facing some more serious obstacles as the world’s most powerful actors attempt to modify the institutional framework which has dominated for the past half century. At the second level, the consolidation of inter-polarity requires lucidity and tenaciousness in seeking to persuade other international actors to accept a principled foreign policy which they might not otherwise be prepared to embrace. In any case, the EU very often violates its own precepts where ethics in foreign policy are concerned and it is important to keep a sense of perspective (Vine 2009). At the third level, it requires a sophisticated approach to values-competition. The Council, Commission and Parliament have all set up committees or working parties to monitor human rights situations in third countries. Yet the “human rights card” is applied and enforced with considerable elasticity

and selectivity and it is very difficult to detect a principled thread running through the EU's approach to these issues. Different member states frequently adopt diametrically opposite policies to deal with the same problem, each arguing that their particular approach is more likely to further the cause of human rights and democracy. Rosa Balfour has cogently demonstrated how complicated it is to promote human rights and democracy issues –even in the EU's “near-abroad” (Balfour 2007).

At the fourth level, it requires lucidity in terms of the principles and means underlying the (muscular) promotion of human security. Since the EU, by virtue of its founding principles and values, has effectively turned its back on military force as a means of resolving the first three types of differences (institutions, principles and values) and their concomitant tensions, it will need to devise an original strategy for managing them. This will involve a complex set of calculations about necessary compromises and trade-offs (more on this shortly). All too little thought has so far been given to this issue. As far as the fourth level – the promotion of human security – is concerned, the EU will from time to time be called upon to use military force. It will need to be much clearer than it is at present about how, when and why such force might be used. In the most general sense, the EU will need to come to terms with the concept of power – a word it refuses to use in the European Security Strategy – and also properly to appreciate the difference between power and influence and to borrow from an increasingly sophisticated business community a number of strategic tools for achieving the latter without actually having to wield the former (Dilenschneider 2007; Kotter 2008).

#### 4. THE INSTRUMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS OF GRAND STRATEGY

There are currently sufficient agencies and institutions within the EU framework and there can be little justification for the invention of further ones. However, existing agencies can easily be re-grouped or re-configured to reflect the needs of a grand strategy. The 2010 Reflection Group calls for the establishment of “a European forecasting and analytical unit, as part of the European External Action Service and working in close cooperation with national centres under the principle of shared intelligence”. Intelligence is a domain which goes to the very core of state sovereignty. Attempts to develop some formal EU intelligence sharing agency (or even procedures) have been bedevilled with suspicion and mistrust (Muller-Wille 2004). Small states with no intelligence-gathering facilities of their own resent their dependence on the large states. Large EU states which do gather their own national intelligence (there are seven of them) are traditionally reluctant to share it fully either with one another or (still less) with smaller states. The result is that the EU has had to make do with whatever scraps of intelligence its member states are prepared to give it. There are two main intelligence operations in the EU, the Situation Centre and the EUMS Intelligence Division. The former involves about one hundred analysts from all member states, working 24/7. It feeds intelligence, garnered from agencies around the world, to the Council, via the Political and Security Committee. The Intelligence Division, which is the largest single component of the EUMS, involves several dozen senior officers working in three main branches: Policy, Requirements and Production, supplying focused intelligence reports for the purposes of operational planning and early warning (Antunes 2007). Smaller units in the Council Secretariat (Policy Unit) and the Commission also carry out limited situation assessment. All these agencies liaise with and receive data from the EU’s Satellite Centre in Torrejon, Spain.

In February 2010, it was announced that these activities will progressively be merged into a single unit operating under the aegis of the External Action Service – precisely the development called for in the Reflexion Group report. This is a bold step forward, but for the EU to generate a serious intelligence-gathering facility of its own would require two major developments. The first would be for the large member states which enjoy their own

intelligence-gathering facilities to agree to pool the results in a comprehensive and transparent way. The second would be for the United Kingdom radically to revise its intimate relationship with US intelligence – the price of which is a US-imposed prohibition from sharing most data with EU partners. For the moment, the EU's intelligence arrangements are relatively satisfactory for the limited purposes of overseas crisis management. But if the EU were to become serious about developing a grand strategy, a qualitative leap towards an entirely new intelligence framework and practice would be essential.

Beyond the generation of strategic intelligence, the second step in the direction of a grand strategy would be to re-organise some of the existing EU decision-shaping agencies so as to create a European Security Council. Such an agency was first proposed by James Rogers in 2007.

“The European Security Council's role could be to provide a unified institutionalised setting at the European level for the relentless assessment of security threats and strategic challenges. It could give advice to the president of the Council of the European Union, the high representative and the Member States. It could be a centralised agency for Member States to exchange and assess global and domestic intelligence. The Security Council would provide a platform for input from the European Union Institute for Security Studies and the European Defence Agency, as well as from foreign offices and defence ministries in the respective Member States. Finally, it could bestow a podium for the formal exchange of ideas about foreign, security and defence policies between academics and think tank personnel with European practitioners and officials.” (Rogers 2007)

The key to the strategic value-added of such a body would be its capacity to synergise the inputs from a wide range of policy areas: trade, aid, development, diplomacy as well as the requirements of both the military and civilian dimensions of international crisis management. It would, in short, become the primary platform for the formulation and regular updating of an EU grand strategy, akin to the quadrennial US *National Security Strategy* documents. This would then, as a third step, require further developments in terms of operational planning.

The absence of any significant EU planning capability, and in particular of a dedicated Operational Headquarters (OHQ) has long been seen as a major handicap to the development



of CSDP (Biava 2008). France has consistently sought to promote such a facility (in the name of empowering and autonomising CSDP) and the UK has equally consistently opposed it (arguing that this would “duplicate” existing planning facilities at NATO, and that CSDP should in any case prioritise civilian planning where it can add value). Germany has hidden behind this stand-off to avoid taking any decision, conscious that it has misgivings about France’s military ambitions for the EU and, for its own different reasons, not unsupportive of the UK’s somewhat disingenuous support of civilian planning (Simon 2010). The UK has always prioritised national headquarters as the most appropriate facility for EU-only operations almost certain to be led by a “framework” nation, as was the case with the French-led mission in Congo. The model here is the UK’s permanent joint headquarters (PJHQ) at Northwood in Middlesex, which has been the OHQ for the anti-piracy operation in the Indian Ocean. French operational planning has always assumed rather more ambitious objectives, explicitly presented as only being achievable at EU level. Most other member states, while supportive of France’s logic, are suspicious of her motives and have no wish to confront the UK. Any EU grand strategy would have to bring about a reconciliation of these contrasting approaches.

The arrangements agreed upon at the European Council in December 2003 involved an initial compromise. An EU cell was established inside NATO ensuring transparency between the two entities in preparation for operations taking place under the Berlin Plus procedures. NATO also established liaison arrangements alongside the EU Military Staff. In addition, an autonomous EU “civ-mil” planning cell was established within the EUMS and attached to that cell was a new Operations Centre, “a sort of embryo of an OHQ that could be activated at the request of the Council on a case-by-case basis” (Simon 2010). However, these arrangements remain temporary and voices have continued to be raised for the establishment of a significantly sized OHQ. Luis Simon, in early 2010, put forward a pragmatic compromise between a fully-fledged OHQ (SHAPE, for example has a permanent staff of 3,000) and the embryonic and inadequate cell currently on offer within the EUMS (Simon 2010). Ultimately, however, there seems little alternative to the development of a fully staffed, strategically oriented EU OHQ combining the inputs currently supplied by both the EU Military

Committee and the Committee for Civilian Crisis Management (Cross 2010; Cross 2011). This will undoubtedly require further adaptation of the newly created Civil-Military Planning Directorate within the Council Secretariat.

These would be the major indispensable pre-requisites for the development of an EU grand strategy. Other initiatives would include growing cooperation between the recently created External Action Service and the diplomatic services of the member states; a lucid appraisal – by the European Security Council – of the strategic objectives of the EU’s many “strategic partnerships”, and their calculated coordination; major further development of the EU’s capacity for the mounting of international crisis management missions, both civilian and military; the creation of new configurations of the European Council, allowing for joint meetings (on the model of the recent meetings of defence ministers and overseas development ministers) between, say, foreign and interior ministers, trade and development ministers etc; a significantly upgraded role for the European Defence Agency, working in close cooperation with the Security Council and the External Action Service. There are many other initiatives which will need to be explored. But the key is to move resolutely forward towards the formulation of a grand strategy.

## 5. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A GLOBAL GRAND BARGAIN

In this brave new emerging world, what are the available options for the major global actors? It is unlikely – though not impossible – that they will revert to zero-sum jostling and militarized conflict. All players recognise the advantages of cooperation over conflict in a world where climate change, environmental degradation, migratory flows, regional instabilities and commercial and investment interdependence have significantly reduced the scope – and even the meaning – of national sovereignty. The choice, then, boils down to two scenarios. Either the rising powers will be persuaded, as some American liberals believe is possible, to embrace the existing international liberal order essentially in its current form (Ikenberry 2008). Or the major players will agree to devise – collectively and cooperatively – a new global order which better manages and harmonises the multiplicity of preferences, the diversity of cultural realities and governance systems, the asymmetries and imbalances which still persist between East and West, North and South, rising and declining powers, rich and poor. Robert Hutchings has trail-blazed the notion of a “global grand bargain”, involving a necessary series of trade-offs, some bilateral, some multilateral, between the rising and the declining powers. These trade-offs will be required in all major policy areas – governance, security, finance, trade, agriculture, energy, climate, development, proliferation, cultural exchanges and intellectual property. It will, in effect, lead to the creation of a new international system (Hutchings & Kempe 2008; Hutchings 2009). If the EU is to participate constructively in that historic shift, it will of necessity have to develop a grand strategy.

This author considers the EU to be an amazing success story, the most important experiment in international relations since the Roman Empire – and infinitely less bloody. For more than fifty years, the Union has muddled along, accumulating an *acquis* and creating a *praxis* which has brought it to the verge of international actorness. But the curtain has not yet gone up and the show has not yet really begun. Much of the progress towards actorness is attributable to the sheer determination and commitment of the founding fathers and their waves of successors. There have been as many failures as successes. But, to quote Churchill once again, “success consists in going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm”. The

new enthusiasm will derive from the EU's strategic participation in the peaceful transition towards a new global order. Such a move would create the new narrative, the new motivation which will fire the new generation of EU leaders in search of a meaning and a role for the Union in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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