

THE GLOBAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Gunilla Herolf

Board Member of the Trans European Policy Studies Association

A process is now underway, led by the EU's High Representative, Federica Mogherini, to formulate a Global Security Strategy, to be completed by June 2016.

This is not a new idea: in 2003 a much praised EU Security Strategy was presented. While demonstrating a highly needed European unity, it was, however, not a real strategy since it lacked guidance for acting in crises. Later attempts to form a strategy have failed. Considering the changes in Europe's strategic context there is, however, general support for the idea that now is the time to try again.

Federica Mogherini's view is that the security strategy should include a common defence and counter-terrorism policy but also policies on energy, migration, the economy and climate change as well as covering a range of instruments. *"We need a sense of direction, and a common one; we need conflict prevention and post-crisis management, we need a strong narrative to underpin our day-to-day work. ...and at the same time we need to prioritise"... "Strategy matters to provide us with a sense of direction; to help us navigate choppy waters; to be proactive in the protection and in the pursuit of our interests..."*

2003 and 2015

These goals are certainly a tall order, not least when comparing the situation in 2003 with the one of today. We see new internal problems such as the UK contemplating leaving the Union, lack of cohesion and trust as a consequence of the financial crisis, lack of solidarity in the refugee crisis and the growth of euro-sceptic and extremist parties. The external ones include war in Syria, big problems in Africa and the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Terrorism, both an internal and external threat, presents a huge increasing problem.

Realistic alternative?

Even a full-fledged and comprehensive strategy would, however, hardly solve all problems. In spite of preparations surprises would still occur and change circumstances. Also, member states would keep the option of being involved themselves, especially in acute situations.

A more realistic alternative is a strategy on a lower level, relevant for certain regions and problems. Even this will however prove difficult considering the huge differences among us, depending on history, geography, vulnerabilities, trade and energy issues. Is it possible to bridge such differences?

It seems impossible and yet it has been done – the proof is our common sanctions policy, lasting for more than a year. Still, it is doubtful that a strategy could achieve this.

Will urgency help?

Urgency has on occasions been beneficial in order to facilitate compromises. However, when external threats dominate the focus may well be on the immediate future rather than long-term solutions. Ultimately therefore, urgency may therefore lead countries to act on their own.

Difficult choices

The attacks in Paris in combination with the downing of the Russian plane in Sinai may lead to a common policy towards ISIL. Such a strategic alliance may be necessary but also a huge challenge for a developing security strategy.

The crucial issue is what price would have to be paid to get the support of Russia. Would the EU have to reduce its criticism against the Russian behaviour in Ukraine? Would a common strategy if existing be of any value in such a situation?

There are other similar choices: Turkey deserves help in the present refugee situation. But which price are we willing to pay? Are we so eager to avoid a massive influx of refugees that we give Turkey all it wants, thereby abandoning criticism concerning human rights, the media situation, corruption etc?

These are acute choices but also relevant for a security strategy. They are about how seriously we should take values. Which compromises can be made? What effect would leniency have vis-à-vis those EU countries that also have deficiencies when it comes to corruption and the media situation?

At the same time an EU strategy must be realistic. The EU of today is built on interests and the forming of a security strategy is therefore also about reconciling seemingly contradictory interests.

Can we make the creation of a security strategy easier?

In the long term, avoiding hard choices by reducing vulnerability will be helpful for a common strategy. One example is to create an energy union.

Above all, however, we need cohesion. In the EU we need to share our national analyses and develop a common view on the world around us. This is the best starting point and the only way for Europe to meet its innumerable challenges.