

FROM CONTESTATION TO BUY-IN: THE EU'S COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY AS SEEN FROM EUROPEAN CAPITALS

National Approaches to the EU's Common Foreign
and Security Policy

A Collaborative Report



EDITED BY

Vladislava Gubalova, PhD

Senior Fellow, Centre for Global Europe

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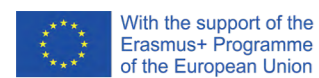
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GLOBSEC Policy Institute Vajnorská 100/B 831 04 Bratislava Slovakia

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Abstract

Though the European Union (EU) is a global actor in areas like trade and climate, the bloc has struggled to develop a coherent common foreign and security policy (CFSP). EU external action is rather often plagued by institutional inefficiencies and a lack of shared strategy. Recognizing these shortcomings, member states have agitated for the EU to become a more responsive and coherent actor and to acquire a more prominent international role.

Strategic coherence provides one vehicle to strengthen the EU CFSP through shared goals that are attentive to different national interests and contexts. Broader changes in the institutional framework of the EU (e.g. the extension of qualified majority voting in foreign and security policy), meanwhile, are considered unnecessary and unwelcome. Instead, available mechanisms (e.g. coalitions of the willing and constructive abstentions) are deemed preferable for overcoming divides between national governments.

This collaborative report includes 15 country chapters based on the responses of distinguished experts to four questions collected March-May 2021.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- ▶ What are the three main tasks in foreign and security policy that your country is dealing with?
- ▶ Do you see any possible coalition-building potential in managing these tasks within the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) framework? What are some of the most prominent member state disagreements? What are potential solutions to overcoming these divides?
- ▶ How does your country assess the CFSP from an institutional perspective? What changes should be introduced, if any, to ensure a more coherent EU foreign and security policy (e.g. a move to QMV, a modified role for particular institutions, enhanced compliance methods, 'sleeping beauties' [provisions in the EU treaties that are yet to be activated])?
- ▶ Does your country consider the EU Global Strategy from 2016 to still be relevant or should it be updated?

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Executive Summary

The international environment has been changing through global power shifts, with democratic values on the defensive and the liberal economic model enduring setbacks. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the shortcomings of the European Union's global standing. European member states often find themselves diverging rather than converging towards "common" policies. Yet the ambition is there for the EU to grow into a more coherent, agile and prominent international actor.

The EU's present institutional framework inefficiencies and its lack of strategic coherence have indeed been a frequent target of criticism by experts. While national governments emphasize the importance of the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP), they continue "muddling through". The consensus rather has been to concentrate on deriving shared strategic goals (a focus on content) even if this means reducing outputs to the lowest common denominator in lieu of institutional changes. Why do member states approach EU foreign and security policy so cautiously and how can ambition be optimally squared with action in the future?

AREAS OF CONVERGENCE

EU member states perceive the role of the bloc in global affairs, *firstly*, as an important multiplier of their own external activities. A commitment to multilateralism and the upholding of democratic principles and the liberal economic model underpin the EU's united position, an approach that can deliver results in a changing international environment through greater legitimacy, credibility and reach. This is particularly true for the majority of middle and small member states that are indirectly involved in the EU framework in geographical and issue-areas where otherwise they would not have the ability to act. While Latin America is not on Estonia's immediate radar of national priorities, for example, EU engagement in the region enables Tallinn to take part. A small member state like Croatia, similarly, contributes to EU missions in Africa even as it places its primary emphasis on ensuring security in its neighbourhood (the Western Balkans).

A *second* consensus point is reflected in the emphasis placed on the benefits of strategic coherence rather than an entire overhaul of the EU Global Strategy. Instead of reviewing the previous EU Global Strategy from 2016¹, member states are focused on preparation of the Strategic Compass².

EU Global Strategy

A strategic document outlining the EU's principles and priorities in its external action.

Main principles

- ▶ unity
- ▶ engagement
- ▶ responsibility
- ▶ partnership

Central priorities

- ▶ the security of the EU
- ▶ building state and societal resilience in the East and South
- ▶ an integrated approach to conflicts and crises
- ▶ cooperative regional orders
- ▶ global governance

Strategic Compass

An initiative to identify a common and coherent vision of the EU's strategic objectives and a shared understanding of the threats the bloc is facing.

Main categories

- ▶ crisis management
- ▶ resilience
- ▶ capabilities
- ▶ partnerships

Timeline

- ▶ "Strategic Dialogues" with member states in 2021
- ▶ Final document adopted in 2022 cooperative regional orders

According to the GLOBSEC survey, there is some overlap in the national foreign policy priorities of member states, congruences that also are included among EU priorities. This report identified the following non-exhaustive list:

Regional stability, integration, enlargement

- ▶ Mediterranean
- ▶ Black Sea
- ▶ Western Balkans
- ▶ Eastern Partnership

Relations with global actors

- ▶ USA (Transatlanticism)
- ▶ Russia
- ▶ China
- ▶ Others (Turkey, U.K., Indo-Pacific, Asia, Latin America, Africa, Middle East)

Security

- ▶ territorial security
- ▶ crisis management
- ▶ capabilities

Migration

- ▶ reforming Dublin

Most member states, *thirdly*, share a hesitancy towards the establishment of a novel CFSP legal and institutional framework – this is especially true with respect to the expansion of qualified majority voting (QMV). Germany, perhaps, is more open to change and France willing to discuss the matter but smaller member states are concerned that their national interests could be undermined through changes (even if they come with safeguards).

POINTS OF DIVERGENCE

Member states are meticulously guarding their national interests and holding firm to threat perception formulations based on the peculiarities of their histories, cultures, economies, societies and surroundings. This backdrop is not conducive for developing a comprehensive strategic outlook, as the Strategic Compass seeks to accomplish, or agreeing on a common strategy for addressing joint priorities and challenges.

Deep dividing lines between member states, for example, are emerging concerning how the bloc should approach other global actors. **Russia**, as one illustration, underlines this gulf. Member states like Poland and Estonia are ardent proponents of more stringent sanctions and adherence to the five guiding principles of EU-Russia relations³, placing Moscow at the top of their national threats list. Czechia and Bulgaria, representing another grouping, have seen their stances on Russia harden in response to illicit activities recently uncovered on their territories. Yet the pursuit of investment projects - such as Nord Stream 2 – with Russia underscore the willingness of other member states, like

Germany, to pursue mutually beneficial relations with Moscow on certain issue areas.

China's influence on different member states, meanwhile, has been augmented through the 17+1 format and the country's penetration into some market niches (e.g. new technologies and telecommunications, education, etc...). The European Commission has deemed China a "systemic rival"⁴ and some national governments (Poland, Slovenia, Czechia, Romania) have begun to reverse cooperation with Beijing. The Comprehensive Agreement on Investment was signed with China in December 2020, nonetheless, raising questions about the rigidity of the EU's policy stance.

Additional areas of member state policy divergence and incoherence pertain to the EU's approach towards the Mediterranean Region, integration and accession in the neighbourhood, and the migration challenge.

France, notably, has been seeking to advance initiatives targeted towards developing EU **strategic autonomy** but has faced resistance from numerous member states (e.g. Estonia, Slovakia and Poland) concerned about the ramifications of these proposals on their defence and security, currently guaranteed by NATO and the US.

Significant issue-specific divergences

How to deal with Russia

- ▶ sanctions
- ▶ Nord Stream 2

How to deal with China

- ▶ "systemic rival"
- ▶ Comprehensive Agreement on Investment

How to deal with Turkey

- ▶ financial support for controlling migration flows
- ▶ frozen path to accession

How to resolve the migration challenge

- ▶ shared solidarity within the EU
- ▶ focus on solutions outside the EU borders

How to balance Strategic Autonomy ambition and transatlantic relations

- ▶ standing on own feet
- ▶ US/NATO indispensable for European defence and security

How to ensure stability in the neighbourhood

- ▶ Mediterranean
- ▶ Western Balkans
- ▶ Eastern Partnership

1 https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf

2 <https://www.eu2020.de/eu2020-en/news/article/eu-defense-strategic-compass-foreign-policy/2377030>

3 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI\(2018\)614698](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2018)614698)

4 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655

THE WAY FORWARD

Some member states such as Sweden and Estonia see the EU as an equal partner or a secondary contributor with respect to their own foreign and security policies. Other member states including Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechia and Greece, among others, are interested in substantively moving forward with a more coherent CFSP. While no member state openly opposes a more cohesive EU foreign policy, Warsaw and Budapest have stressed that unity can only be achieved when national interests are always taken into consideration.

Strengthening the CFSP will necessitate the devising of a **comprehensive strategic outlook** incorporating shared threat perceptions and priorities. This entails development of a strategy that is ambitious, providing clear guidelines for future EU external action.

Implementation will also be paramount. The gradual expansion of already available instruments, including *constructive abstention* and *coalitions of the willing*, presents one viable path forward. These tools can enable “those who want more to do more” without setting the precedent of a two-speed Europe more broadly. PESCO has highlighted the potential value of this collaboration, with most, though not all, EU member states involved. However, widespread use of these tools, it should be acknowledged, risks drawing additional attention to disagreement between member states.

In addition to internal coalition-building, numerous member states (e.g. France, Sweden and Estonia) have actively pursued cooperation with non-EU states through flexible arrangements. These coalitions, notably, have proven beneficial to addressing specific issue areas where interests align. Examples include cooperation between Sweden, Estonia and the Nordic countries and French support for EU and US missions in the Gulf of Guinea.



AUSTRIA

“National approaches towards EU’s common foreign and security policy”

By Sofia Maria Satanakis, Senior Research Fellow and Velina Tchakarova, Director
Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES)

This report focuses on outlining Austria’s national approach to a coherent and common EU foreign and security policy. Austria aims to ensure that the EU plays a strong and visible role in the world and acts as a driving force of rule-based multilateralism. To this end, Vienna strives to improve the effectiveness of the CFSP and to fully strengthen its participation in the CSDP. In this context, Austria continues to focus on promoting existing norms and rights in order to enhance the Union’s credibility.

The constantly deteriorating security situation in and around Europe implies that the “ring of crises” is approaching Austria. Therefore, the country wants to reinforce a comprehensive approach to security. Thus, Austria sees its role to help the EU in emerging as a stronger and more unified foreign and security policy actor. In addition, it is interested in advancing cooperation among EU member states, which should result in a strategic compass and other civilian or military instruments and initiatives. It is also interested in further deepening cooperation with NATO, the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

As far as the U.S. is concerned, Austria shares the EU’s approach in having the closest possible cooperation for bilateral relations. The country also seeks to further deepen EU-NATO cooperation.

Considering Russia, Austria, like the EU, pursues a dual approach consisting of sanctions implementation on one hand, and the five agreed guidelines, including full implementation of the Minsk agreements, on the other.

Vienna welcomes the continued imposition of EU sanctions against Turkey and is also in favor of breaking off accession negotiations with Ankara, advocating for a European-Turkish neighborhood concept. It considers the blockade in the NATO PfP by Turkey as an undermining factor for the operational capability of Austria’s armed forces.

The Alpine Republic strongly supports the accession process and advocates for deeper cooperation between the EU and the Western Balkans. It is also firmly interested in bringing the four remaining Southeastern European accession candidates - Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo - closer to the EU. In connection, regarding the Eastern Partnership, the situation in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus continues to be monitored very closely by the EU, and Austria is convinced that sustainable peace solutions can only be achieved at the negotiating table.

In the context of managing illegal migration flows, Austria advocates for a unified migration policy that combines effective external border management, enhanced external measures and internal national actions.

Other important issues include the future of the Vienna nuclear agreement (JCPOA) and its implementation by Iran, as well as the establishment of a dialogue on its missile program. Austria will continue to offer Vienna as a venue for further dialogue on these significant international issues.

The Republic is strongly engaged in initiatives to strengthen the EU’s strategic autonomy, its military capacity to act and its crisis response capability. For Austria’s security, the EU remains the decisive framework for action. Austria’s role as a neutral country is reinforced by its function as a host for international organizations and as a mediator in conflicts and peace diplomacy.

For the second year in a row, Austria has seen an increase in its military budget, and the armed forces are undergoing a phase of modernization. Regarding the further development of the EU, the Austrian government is convinced that the Union must adapt its geopolitical strategies and adjust to the current changes in global power constellations. Against the backdrop of the new Security Union Strategy, the country is cooperating intensively with other EU member states in the fight against terrorism and organized crime, in the detection of hybrid threats and the prevention of new extreme events (especially blackouts), as well as in promoting cybersecurity and increasing the resilience of critical infrastructures. Ultimately, Austria wants to remain an important partner for the EU in all areas of security policy.

BULGARIA

“Bulgaria and the CFSP: Dead-ends and opportunities”

By Vessela Tcherneva and Gloria Trifonova, European Council on Foreign Relations, Sofia office

Bulgaria's foreign and security policy tasks at present are engulfed in uncertainty, given the recent parliamentary elections in April, which did not secure enough votes for one political party to form a majority government. However, points of consideration for any future ruling coalition will continue to be Bulgaria's European and Euro-Atlantic orientation. This conclusion is supported by the fact that (for the first time in years) no Eurosceptic party will enter the new National Assembly.

Most foreign expectations vis-à-vis the new Bulgarian government will be with regard to the ongoing dispute with North Macedonia, while the topic itself is not high on the Bulgarian society's agenda. The last government of Prime Minister Boyko Borisov has shifted its approach since the country's Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2018, when it brought the Western Balkans' European integration high on the agenda. It turned the hard stance on Skopje's EU integration into a domestically uniting sentiment in Bulgaria. However, if asked about priorities, Bulgarians are still mostly interested in jobs, better living standard, and stumping corruption. With the Macedonian side being comparably unconstructive, the bilateral process of expanding the Bulgarian-Macedonian relationship resulted in a dead-end. In addition, this is an issue where Bulgaria has found itself isolated within the EU in terms of its demands. Unblocking the process – or bringing it to further stagnation – will undoubtedly be a key task for the new government.

Secondly, striving for more active participation in European policy-making is likely going to remain a key focus. In terms of security, Bulgaria has a positive view of the EU Global Strategy from 2016, which outlines the fundamentals of preserving the security and enhancing the defence of the Union. However, Bulgaria seems to have been a PESCO participant more formally than other member states – and has quite different threat perceptions.⁵ The recently introduced EU Strategic Compass initiative is intended to fill the gaps by focusing on greater cooperation and conciseness in goal-setting between the Member States. Bulgaria has already submitted its national contribution to this analysis and declares that it is fully committed to the initiative. Filling it with substance will be a larger task for all. For Bulgaria, it will mean aligning its perceptions and strategic goals with allies and partners vis-à-vis bulky neighbors like Russia and Turkey.

Institutionally, Bulgaria would like to see a clarification on the issue of whether the EU's common foreign and

security policy (CFSP)'s main aim is the territorial defence of the Union, or external crisis management, which in turn can facilitate improvement of the integration of common policies.

Following from this, a third priority will possibly remain to approach migration in a more sustainable manner. This is deeply connected to bettering the defence coordination between EU states overall and executing more timely and efficient missions in crisis states as to tackle forced migration at the root. Bulgaria is an advocate for developing a working policy towards exploring how forced migrants can be settled close to their place of origin. Expanding solidarity operations might be one way to achieve this, however, any increase is ultimately hindered by the fact that over 80% of defence procurement remains at the national level. Integrating the European defence market would be a key step for creating confidence and joint European action in defence.

5 <https://ecfr.eu/article/the-end-of-tit-for-tat-politics-in-bulgaria/>

CROATIA

“Croatian approach towards more coherent EU foreign and security policy”

By Krsevan Antun Dujmovic, Senior Associate, Institute for Development and International Relations—IRMO

Croatia's tasks in foreign and security policy are primarily oriented toward its neighbor Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). Due to the fact that Croatia and B&H share almost a thousand-kilometer-long border and that Croats are one of the three constitutive nations in this country, this orientation is natural and legitimate. The preservation of the internationally recognized sovereignty and territorial integrity of B&H are fully supported by Croatia. At the same time, Croatia opposes any initiative leading to weakening of Bosnian institutions, sovereignty, or the carving up of its borders. Croatia emphasizes that as this is the position of the European Union, any different initiatives proposing dissolution of the country are to be rejected. Croatia's hands seem tied in getting more involved in the security of B&H, but it is expected to participate in EU missions overseas, mainly in Africa, together with other EU member states. Croatia's primary interest in overseas operations is in the field of training and the willingness of getting involved is substantial.

Croatia's interest for stability spreads also to other countries in the Western Balkans, including Montenegro and relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Here too Croatia supports the territorial sovereignty of the countries and their stable path toward EU integration.

Croatia believes that the EU should have a unified voice in the world, as the EU should not be just an economic power but also a geopolitical one. This is also needed in face of the threats coming from the outside, inducing the conflict in Ukraine, for example. An especially sensitive issue is the migrant crisis, which is of particular interest of Croatia as B&H hosts many migrant camps, causing a significant strain on the Croatian eastern border.

Coalition-building potential in the EU is strong but its forms could vary considering different issues and it should be developed with caution. The overall goal should be the creation of the unified CFSP. This is to be a challenging task in years to come as there are significant divisions in the EU in facing the outside threats like the conflict in Ukraine and Russia, or the issue of the construction of Nord Stream 2 pipeline, where approaches are diametrically different.

Apart from regional challenges, there is a global challenge represented by China. On the one hand there is the EU's Strategic Outlook from 2019 where China is identified as a “systemic rival,” and on the other hand, the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) with China, agreed in 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 crisis. While EU's sanctions are being introduced, trading between China and some member states is growing. This

undefined European policy toward China is particularly puzzling for countries in Eastern Europe gathered in the 17+1 format. Croatia takes part in this format, and it is a desirable destination for Chinese companies with the Chinese CRBC constructing currently the most important infrastructure project connecting the south of Croatia to its mainland, the Pelješac bridge. This lack of a clear vision and double standards will certainly contribute to existing divisions in the EU.

Croatia participates and fully supports initiatives like Central European Defense Cooperation (CEDC), including five more countries Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. Croatia currently holds the rotating presidency of the CEDC and supports further development of the Strategic compass and European defense fund.

In the case of the decision-making process within the CFSP, Croatia, like other smaller member states is wary to move to QMV in strategic decisions, and other provisions in the EU treaty that are still not activated, as these countries fear being overridden in important decisions, consequently losing their voice, while their national interests could be undermined. There is no firm position of the urgent need to update the EU Global Strategy, but there is conciseness of the necessity of this update coming any time soon.

CZECHIA

“Czechia: Overcoming the strategic incoherency”

By Vít Dostál and Pavel Havlíček, Association for International Affairs (AMO) in Prague

The recent development of the Common Security and Foreign Policy (CFSP) has shown that Europe is aware of the shift in the international order and its own role in it. The European Union is not anymore, a mere example and laboratory of best practices that attracts the attention of other countries and regions, initiating them to behave similarly. Such earlier prevailing self-perception has evolved through the previous decade as international politics were shaken up by aggressive and revisionist Russia, outward looking and domineering China and a less predictable US under Donald Trump.

However, the fundamentals of the European foreign policy are still multilateral cooperation and rule-based order. The question is how to intersect European thinking about the world—necessary for the success of the European integration project—with the competitive and hostile nature of today's international relations.

The EU has to assertively co-shape the multilateral international order and institutions in a direction favourable for itself. It should restrain from taking low hanging fruit of empty promises and jumping on illusive easy solutions for difficult questions like cheap restoration of relations with Russia or naïve engaging with China.

The key message is that Europe has much to offer in pivotal global issues of the 21st century. Europe has the highest quality of life which is an inspiration for peoples around the globe. It is the leader in science and technology, the cradle of peaceful cooperation, the largest economic bloc in the world, the pioneer in the protection of individual rights (including the digital ones) and it leads in the international effort for averting the climate cataclysm.

At the same time, it is essential for Europe to maintain the maximum of its openness, which has been the source of its power, while strengthening its resilience and assertiveness. The former is a part of the EU's DNA and the latter constitutes the needed response to the current direction of international politics. Finding a balance between these two priorities will be the challenge in which each Member State could play a positive role.

The place of Czechia as a mid-sized EU member in this narrative tends to naturally be in the Euro-Atlantic optimists camp, even if sometimes contested. Czechia plays the role of a bridge-builder among the Member States with a strong focus on the common approach and Single Market. Being centrally located both geographically and politically next to their strategically important neighbour Germany, Czechia often prefers band wagoning rather than strongly pushing for particular agendas and policy options.

This is reflected in its foreign policy stance which traditionally has a strong focus on Eastern Europe, Russia, the Western Balkans and enlargement or other regions, where it – for example – can make use of its transition intelligence. A major part of Czechia's foreign policy agenda is still driven by the appeal of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms such as support for the independent press, which has remained a niche of the foreign policy since the 1990s.

As a natural bridge-builder, Czechia is realising its potential in the EU coalition building even more when going beyond the traditional formats of CEE cooperation and focusing on particular policy issues, which might open doors to countries beyond the V4 cooperation and/or the CEE. Among those, it might be the group of Transatlanticist friends that are pro-market liberals, pro-democracy and rule of law agenda setters that should combine the Czech national interests with a stronger place of the EU in the world. The same goes for the traditional priority areas, such as the Eastern Partnership or the Western Balkans, which are then also approached in terms of green or digital agendas or the rule of law and democracy. These issues align well with the Czech approach when cooperating with relevant EU member states.

This is also relevant for the EU Global Strategy, which is a relatively recent invention of the EU foreign policy architecture. Instead of looking for potentially risky and politically costly revisions of the Strategy, there are efforts to make the most out of its current state, including in the prioritised areas and regions. The revisited Eastern Partnership policy for beyond 2020, which should have resilience in its core, was strongly supported by the Czech foreign policy and elaborated in a specialised non-paper⁶ on the topic. Therefore, maximising the current strategic framework seems to be the preferred way forward, even if relations with global powers and the EU's place in a turbulent world are being contested on the everyday basis.

Finally, when it comes to the institutional aspects of EU foreign policy, Czechia is a staunch supporter of the unanimity principle in EU foreign policy, even if discussions appear from time to time about the limits of such an approach. Czechia's particular historical and political experience have led to serious concerns about being marginalised. Being outvoted might cause serious domestic anti-EU backlash. Moreover, mere qualified majority voting in some CFSP areas would not solve the problem of strategic incoherency in the sEU's foreign policy that we have to deal with at first.

6 Non-public document circulated among the member states.

ESTONIA

„National approaches towards EU's common foreign and security policy: Estonia”

By Piret Kuusik, Estonian Foreign Policy Institute/ ICDS

Estonia's foreign and security policy revolves around transatlantic relations, Russia and increasingly, China.

Estonia's approach to the EU's common foreign and security policy is driven by its specific interests and its size. Overall, European integration is seen as a multiplier of Estonia's interests, however, in foreign and security policy specific interests vis-à-vis Russia and the US prevent Estonia's willingness to share further competencies with the EU. The EU member states' differing assessments of Europe's threat landscape mean that Tallinn does not trust the EU to represent its interests, as CFSP often falls victim to the “lowest common denominator.” Nevertheless, the CFSP's value comes to the fore by expanding the global reach of Estonia's foreign policy. Though Estonia may not hold any specific interests in South America for example, CFSP allows Estonia to be indirectly involved in the region.

Estonia's overall hesitancy towards European common security and foreign policy is fed by the member states' lack of political will and shared perception of global dangers. Differing views on Russia is central to this. Since 2014, the EU's position more aligned with Estonia's interests as ever before and Tallinn is keen to maintain that. This means that the problem of CFSP is not about institutional fine-tuning, but rather about political will and agreement. This to some extent explains Estonia's hesitancy to sign on to the European Commission's proposal to apply QMV rule in CFSP. For successful common foreign policy, the buy-in by all member states is needed. Otherwise, it is not a common foreign policy. Thus, consensus based foreign policy is still the preferred modus operandi for Estonia.

Tallinn's current policy towards China has become an exception to Estonia's hesitancy to work within the EU common foreign and security framework. Namely, it wishes to deal with China in the 27+1 format, e.g. 27 EU member states and China. While views on Russia are homogenous in Tallinn, when regarding China, views differ, and the consensus is still in the making. In a topic where the Estonian government is hesitant to take a clear position, Estonia's strategy is to turn to the European framework.

In terms of security policy, Estonia feels that the EU serves its secondary interests. Estonia's understanding of security is defence and conventional war driven. External conflict resolution is a secondary objective. Thus, the EU's limited capacity to provide territorial defence support makes the EU a minor actor in the field. Recent developments in the EU's defence field (EDF, PESCO) are welcomed and supported, but in the scale of Nordic-Baltic region's security challenge, these developments are minor contributions to regional security.

The likeliest allies for Estonia are the other Baltic States – Latvia and Lithuania – and the Nordic countries – Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. While Estonia's interests match the Baltic States to large extent, the Nordic countries do not so smoothly align. While all consider Russia a threat, the countries' views diverge when considering how and to what extent. Interestingly, as Estonia is a strong supporter of transatlantic relations, Portugal is often a like-minded and somewhat surprising ally.

EU's Global Strategy is not in the centre of Estonia's foreign policy making and it is arguably largely forgotten. However, the upcoming Strategic Compass is anticipated. Shared assessment on Europe's security situation is one of the tools that Estonia sees useful for achieving a shared strategic outlook – the basis for a common European foreign and security policy.

FRANCE

“France pushes for a strong, but flexible, European foreign policy”

By Georgina Wright, Head, Europe Program and Anne-Cécile Legrain, Research Assistant, Europe Program, Institut Montaigne

Reflections on whether Europe needed a common foreign policy began very early in France. For President Charles de Gaulle (who was in office from 1959-1969), the success of the European community relied on strong intergovernmental cooperation and independent defence capabilities. President Macron's view is no different. With an emboldened Russia and growing trade protectionism in the world, EU countries have no choice but to work together to defend their values and interests.

France's view of European foreign policy rests on three pillars. The first is that Europe must stand on its own feet. It not only needs its own defence capabilities, but also more funding for research and development. There are two reasons for this. First, it is the only way that the EU can make its own rules without undue influence from the outside. But it's also borne out of necessity: European countries can no longer rely on the US as they used to for their security and action in their immediate neighbourhood. From France's perspective, dependence itself is a strategic weakness.

The second is that the Council of the EU, the grouping of the 27 EU governments, must continue to be the number one player in EU foreign policy – though it must work closely with the EU Commission and EU Parliament. For France, it is often the inability of member states to agree on the EU's common threats, and how respond to them, which is the greatest hindrance to CFSP.

That is why it supports the EU's work on establishing a Strategic Compass, which was launched in June 2020 and will hopefully be adopted during the French presidency of the Council of the EU in 2022. According to the current work plan, the strategic compass will rest on four different pillars, namely crisis management, resilience, capabilities, and cooperation with partners.

France is also supportive of the EU's global ambitions, such as its quest to have a clearer comprehensive strategy toward the Indo-Pacific that integrates the EU's trade and foreign and security ambitions for the region. This support extends to other areas of EU external policy too. France is one of the largest net contributors to EU development aid⁷ and wants French and EU development policy to be more closely aligned, as demonstrated by the new bill on solidarity development and the fight against global inequalities, which is currently under discussion by the French legislative chambers.⁸

The focus should be on content, rather than process at this stage. According to a recent study by the Hertie School of Government, France would only agree to the exclusive use of QMV for European foreign policy decisions if member states also agreed to changing voting processes for other EU policies, like tax.⁹

The third pillar is flexibility. France believes the EU should explore flexible coalitions that can act quickly and more efficiently to respond to challenges. If the EU cannot come to a common position, groups of EU countries should not be afraid of taking a project forward. In 2017, President Macron proposed the European Intervention Initiative, a joint military project between 14 European countries to explore joint defence initiatives. This project includes two non-EU countries: Norway and the UK.

France also believes the EU and individual member states should be open to working with non-EU partners on foreign policy, although this should not interfere with the autonomy of EU decision-making. That's why, for example, France supports EU NAVFOR Atalanta, an EU defence mission in the Gulf of Guinea, but is also an active member in the US Operation Inherent Resolve coalition in the same area.

Shortly after his election, President Macron presented his vision for the EU at the Sorbonne, one of France's most prestigious universities.¹⁰ His message was clear: it is time for France to move forward with Europe, and France stands ready to work closely with member states to address common challenges. But some EU governments remain skeptical and complain about Macron's unilateral approach and his inability, as they see it, to compromise. It is not so much his ideas but his approach that have angered some EU capitals. In the Autumn of 2019, Macron was virtually isolated on the EU scene following an interview he gave to *The Economist* where he accused NATO of being 'brain dead.'

The 2022 French presidency of the Council of the EU could be an opportunity for France to change that narrative. The French government has yet to announce the Presidency's priorities – but finding new ways to strengthen the EU's global role, whether through a common threat assessment or new defence investment, may just be one of them.

7 <https://www.touteleurope.eu/l-ue-dans-le-monde/la-politique-de-developpement-de-la-france/?cn-reloaded=1>

8 <https://www.senat.fr/leg/pil20-404.pdf>

9 https://www.hertie-school.org/fileadmin/user_upload/20200210_Policy_Brief_QMV_Koenig.pdf

10 <http://international.blogs.ouest-france.fr/archive/2017/09/29/macron-sorbonne-verbatim-europe-18583.html>

GERMANY

“How Germany tries to lead from behind in CFSP”

By Roderick Parkes, Research Director and Head, Alfred von Oppenheim Center for European Policy Studies, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)

Germany's greatest problem with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is probably Germany, and that is everyone else's problem too. Berlin seems most comfortable to lead from behind - taking action under an EU banner and with a sufficient grouping of member states, but always as part of a crowd of partners who respect its own very specific limitations and interests. This rather reactive role in fact requires a lot of forward shaping. But other member states are reluctant to orient themselves around Berlin whilst questions about its own reliability as a partner remain. It is a circular problem.

Germany believes it would become more active in the EU if only it could fix the institutional machinery. The usual reference is the idea of introducing qualified majority voting (QMV) to CFSP decision-making. Berlin repeatedly returns to this idea, most recently pushing member states to agree unanimously to certain strategic goals which could then be undertaken by QMV. It raised and then dropped the idea during its 2020 presidency of the EU Council, but now intends to pursue the option of QMV at the Conference on the Future of Europe.

When Germany is not tinkering with decision-making structures, it is setting the world to rights on paper. The EU's 2016 Global Strategy (EUGS) chimed with the mood of glum Realpolitik in Berlin, where people believe that “history is back” after a geopolitical hiatus at the end of the Cold War, and that the EU's southern and eastern neighbourhoods have deteriorated into a “ring of fire.” But perhaps for the same reason, the Strategy has not inspired much in the way of European action.

Berlin feels it is too early to revisit the EUGS and to galvanize itself and the other member states by writing another grand European strategy. But Berlin has spotted a gap in the paper trail which it wants to fill: EU members, after signing off on the EUGS, began work on capability plans, and Germany believes the EUGS provides insufficient guidance as to the level of ambition. Hence its support for a European Strategic Compass, a new document based on a 360° analysis of all member states' fears.

Other member states, although they understand the reasoning, are left wondering what breakthroughs Germany is hoping for here. Can the Germans really be in the dark about what Poles, Estonians or Greeks fret about, or the kind of reassurance they require from Berlin? Is this just a prelude to Germany launching an EUGS Review? Or – worse - will it simply trigger another round of scenario exercises and tabletop war-games as the Germans picture themselves acting under crisis conditions but never quite follow through?

As for coalition-building, Germany focuses on its most

problematic friends: the French. President Macron has shown an appetite for acting outside the EU framework, most recently in his coalition of the willing in the Straits of Hormuz (EMASOH). Here in Berlin, it is taken as fact that the French politicise, polarise and ultimately set up European coalitions outside the EU toolbox. Seldom do Germans see that Macron is doing this in large part to prod Germany into action. It is another circular problem.

Finally, what really confounds Germans is that they are accused of double standards when they do take decisive international action. Damned if we do, damned if we don't, they complain here. But Germany is a rising power within a shrinking power: it is growing bigger within an EU shrunk by a decade of Germany's reactive crisis management. If Germany is accused of double standards it is because its foreign policy makers are exploiting this: they disguise the Realpolitik of a growing power with the glum constraints of a shrinking power.

GREECE

“Present and future of the EU common foreign and security policy: A view from Athens”

By Spyros Blavoukos, Associate Professor, Athens University of Economics and Business and Research Fellow, ELIAMEP

Greece has always been an ardent supporter of enhanced political integration, including a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Greece tends to focus on issues that unite rather than divide the EU family and enable the articulation of a strong and coherent foreign and security policy. For Greece, the pursuit of regional stability is imperative, especially in the Southern Mediterranean. Without ignoring the potential for a global EU geopolitical role, Greece prioritizes the need for the EU to employ its scarce political resources to foster regional stability to the benefit of all member-states. This means practically addressing revisionist efforts by third states that ignore the fundamentals of international law in a decisive yet self-restraining manner. It also means a stronger economic and political engagement with neighboring countries, keeping them on the path of democratic reform and sustaining the liberal norms and principles that underpin the European integration process.

Regional stability would also contribute to the mitigation of both security and migration challenges. In early 2020, Greece experienced an instrumentalization of migration flows by Turkey, where thousands of desperate migrants attempted to illegally cross the Greek (and European) land borders, as encouraged by the Erdogan government. The consolidation and further strengthening of a European border control force is a necessary condition for the alleviation of such a concern, together with more effective integration policies for refugees entitled to asylum.

Another priority is the advancement of defense integration. Greece actively supports the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) framework of closer military cooperation, participating overall in fifteen projects and leading five of them. Enhanced military cooperation does not entail the creation of a 'European army,' but its security semantics and political connotation are clear.

The smooth and successful *modus operandi* of the PESCO framework paves the way for the future institutional architecture of the CFSP. Enough flexibility has been already introduced in the existing foreign and security policy-making system of the EU over the years, from the 'constructive abstention' of the Amsterdam Treaty to the use of the protocol instrument in the PESCO case at the Lisbon Treaty to break the taboo of advancing military cooperation. The success of any institutional innovation opens up the perspective of becoming the new norm of conduct, establishing itself and eventually expanding to new policy areas. This has happened in the past with the use of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the context of the Single Market and its gradual expansion

to an overwhelming majority of policy sectors. Thus, the continuing success of the existing arrangements will make countries like Greece, that have been traditionally hesitant to majoritarianism in foreign policy, reconsider its views in a more positive and constructive way.

The roadmap of the EU international engagement, in the form of the 2016 Global Strategy, is still relevant for most of its parts. The mantra of 'principled pragmatism' especially captures the EU's need to stand up and fight collectively for its interests and principles in a context of increasing international polarization and frail multilateralism. The US's comeback as a strategic partner for the EU is a welcome return to normality and should continue as a cornerstone of EU foreign policy. Such a development is much appreciated by Greece, which follows a prudent security portfolio diversification, supporting European strategic autonomy while cooperating closely with the US. Greece stands by the view that the EU is not in need of a new security doctrine but should rather focus on the implementation of the existing one in a resolute and comprehensive way.

HUNGARY

“Walking alone, walking together”

By Balázs Kós, Founder and CEO, Blue Door Consulting

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Hungary fulfilled its historical ambition and finally joined the 'West' by becoming part of NATO and the European Union in 1999 and 2004, respectively.

Fast forward to today's realities, it is safe to say that both the European and transatlantic communities are faced with unprecedented challenges. Europe needs to find its place in an increasingly multipolar world dominated by the strategic competition between the USA, Russia and China. Initiatives at the EU level have been taken to these ends, which are however not the solutions themselves - only hopeful steps in the right direction.

This includes one of the last proposals of the outgoing Juncker Commission to introduce Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) to speed up decision-making in the area of Common Foreign and Security (CFSP) - a policy area which has historically been the domain of Member States, as issues cut to the very core of national sovereignty - requiring unanimity to make decisions.

HUNGARIAN PRIORITIES

Formulating a common EU position is not always possible on all topics - only if all 27 Member States can reach an agreement or a lowest common denominator. This means that with regard to fulfilling national priorities, Member States are sometimes prompted to explore alternative ways to implement their own foreign policy objectives. Hungarian foreign policy priorities can illustrate this well with the following examples:

Stronger together

EU enlargement and integration of the Western Balkan countries: this falls under Union competence (the Hungarian Member of the European Commission is currently responsible for Enlargement), but Member States can help uphold a European perspective for these countries. Hungary fully supports their aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration and provides technical assistance and valuable 'know-how' to these countries to help them successfully prepare for EU membership.

Separate ways

At the height of the migration crisis, Hungary refused to take in almost 1300 migrants and suggested the creation of 'hot spots' outside the EU's borders to decide who is eligible for asylum. This was an isolated position back then, but EU policy started shifting in this direction some years later and has become (almost) mainstream.

Alternative ways

In 2017 Ukraine passed a law to restrict the use of minority languages in the country, which has been adversely affecting about 150 000 ethnic Hungarians to use their language, especially in education. In response, Hungary has been blocking Ukraine's aspirations to join NATO. Although this should be a bilateral issue on paper, due to its key political importance and in view of the lack of appetite or framework to deal with it on EU level, an alternative forum is used to exert pressure.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the European Union as a whole is stronger than the sum of its parts if it can speak with one voice on the international stage. But walking together is rarely without conflicts. Moving to QMV would be detrimental to the national interests of some Member States, and just like no Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council would give up its veto power, EU governments would not want to cede any of their power in the field of foreign policy either.

If there is no common EU position on a certain issue, exploring solutions to fulfil national policy objectives outside EU frameworks can be a reasonable option, as long as this respects the principle of sincere cooperation. The Hungarian writer Sándor Márai's words are quite fitting here: 'Always keep West. And never forget that you came from the East.'

ITALY

“In search of an effective EU external action”

By Matteo Bonomi, Research Fellow at Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), Rome

Despite the Lisbon Treaty's ambitions to provide EU foreign and security policy with a greater degree of centralization, the widespread perception – in Italy and as in other member states – is that the Union has fallen short of presenting a more coherent and effective foreign policy. Confronted with an increasingly challenging external environment, EU common foreign and security policy has demonstrated a number of flaws. These include the EU institutional fragmentation, an ineffective system of decision-making and lack of consistency between a common EU and different (sometimes conflicting) member states' national foreign policies.

From the perspective of Italy, these shortcomings of the EU external action have been particularly evident in its southern dimension, especially since the Arab uprisings after 2011. Since then, Italian disappointments regarding the achievements of EU external actions have been rather acute. The perception is that the EU has not only been unable to provide an adequate framework for the articulation of a common European response to the multifaceted crises along the Mediterranean, but that it has also left EU southern member states to bear most of the burdens that ensued the security, humanitarian, social and economic crises in North Africa and the Middle East.

Against such background, the relaunch of a more effective EU external action – seen from Rome – will have to be (at least) a threefold exercise. First, it should show added value in the division of tasks among EU member states and between the member states and EU institutions. This is the case especially in relation to the Mediterranean, where a common approach is urgently needed and where divisions among EU countries have appeared particularly pronounced, leaving space to other geopolitical actors. In this respect, the EU framework should help overall coordination and complement individual national foreign policies, reflecting different degrees of ambition of member states and facilitating a compromise when conflicting European strategic interests are at stake, from Libya to Eastern Mediterranean.

Secondly, the relaunch of a more effective EU external action cannot be conceived in isolation, but it should be part of a broader relaunch of the EU integration project. In other words, it is crucial to provide the Union with an institutional mechanism able to deal with largely asymmetrical external shocks that have characterized the last ten years of EU multiple crises and that have been the driver of internal fragmentation. This is clear, for instance, in Justice and Home Affairs, where the reform of the Dublin system and the introduction of burden sharing mechanisms is also a precondition of more coherent external actions for the Union.

Lastly, the strengthening of EU's external role and the debate about EU strategic autonomy should not leave any ambiguities about the importance of strengthening the Transatlantic bond, which alongside the EU integration process will remain a key Italian priority.

POLAND

“Poland's views on CFSP: priority for Eastern Neighbourhood and transatlantic relations”

By Elżbieta Kaca, Senior Research Fellow, the Polish Institute of International Affairs

For Poland, CFSP is one of the tools to realise its foreign policy objectives if it comes to the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region or Russia for instance. Therefore, it supports strong EU foreign and security policy on a condition that it considers the interests of all Member States (MS). Polish authorities back greater involvement of MS in EU diplomacy, in a way of deputisation of the High Representative by ministers of foreign affairs or the use of coalitions of willing parties. Such formats should be established based on consent of all Member States and they should operate under the control of the Foreign Affairs Council and the High Representative. Poland supports more frequent use of constructive abstention as long as it does not lead to visible manifestation of the EU's lack of unity. Poland is sceptical to extend the use of QMV in CFSP, as it could strengthen the dominance of some MS in shaping the CFSP and consequently undermining EU political unity. However, as Poland is a country that supports the use of EU sanctions in EU external relations, the introduction of QMV in this area would in fact serve its interests.

The main task for Poland in CFSP is to ensure an active EU engagement in the Eastern Neighbourhood to stabilise it and restrain aggressive Russian policy. Poland is a proponent of strong EU responses towards Russia, including the use of possible deterrence mechanisms (i.e. sanctions), and it advocates for an ambitious EaP policy. The core coalition of like-minded countries has been relatively stable over the years and it includes Baltic States and Sweden. Other countries support some proposals depending on the issue (i.e. Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria). MS division lines relate mainly to their positions on EU policy towards Russia and the approach to EU enlargement. Both factors impact their views on EU engagement in EaP countries. While the EU enlargement agenda faces a stalemate, on the question of Russia, the status quo has been already worked out in 2016 by the EU's adoption of “five guiding principles” towards Russia. Any attempts to soften this approach will trigger further divisions in the EU.

Another task relates to ensuring that CFSP does not hamper the transatlantic relations and NATO cooperation. This is relevant for current debates on building EU strategic autonomy. From Poland's perspective, the development of the EU's ability to act in the field of global security should be carried out in close cooperation with countries sharing EU values, in particular the US. It seems that strengthened military engagement in crisis resolution in the whole EU neighbourhood as well as stronger EU contribution at the level of NATO would be welcomed developments. Moreover, for Poland it is important to involve the EU's neighbours into the implementation of the strategic

autonomy instruments. For instance, some countries might be included in the projects under Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), depending on their value added for the EU. As the discourse on open strategic autonomy evolves and MS are working out its approaches, it is too early to discuss possible compromises in this respect.

In this light, Poland wants the EU to have a geopolitical look at its relations with China and supports an assertive EU position towards this country. Polish authorities join the US assessment that China and its companies' actions might pose some security risks. For instance, they were against the rapid conclusion of the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), supported cooperation with the new Biden administration on this issue, and are eager to implement 5G Toolbox. This shift in Poland's position also results from weak economic gains under the strategic partnership forged with China in 2011, the Belt and Road Initiative or 17+1 format. Poland is close to other countries highlighting security concerns over China's actions, such as Lithuania, Romania, Sweden, Czech Republic. Currently, MS are divided in terms of CAI adoption and it seems that a compromise will depend on a level of coordination of the EU position towards China with the US.

ROMANIA

“From policy follower to policy maker: Romania’s quest for regional relevance”

By Ionela Maria Ciolan*, Visiting Research Fellow at the European Policy Centre (Brussels), Researcher at the Centre for Strategic Studies, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (Bucharest)

While the rationale of a “geopolitical” EU is new, geopolitics have always influenced the foreign policy and security decision making in Bucharest. As such, Romania’s foreign policy can be described by its strategic triad: its EU membership, its NATO ally status and its Strategic Partnership with the US. Driven by a predictable, constant, and stable international stance, the past couple of years are showing a change in Romania’s foreign policy and security agenda. More than a decade since joining the Euro-Atlantic institutions, Bucharest is shifting from the position of a policy follower to a policy maker.

Within the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy and since Romania’s Presidency of the EU Council in 2019, the state has pushed for a recognizing of the Black Sea security as strategically important for Brussels as the Mediterranean. A strong supporter of the European integration of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, Bucharest has initiated an internal debate among member states on the protracted conflicts in the Black Sea region and is advocating for more assertive EU involvement in securing the Eastern vicinity. Moreover, Romania and ten other EU countries have expressed their support for an EU vaccine-sharing mechanism with the Eastern Partnership countries. Until now, within the EU vaccine diplomacy goal, Romania offered to send 200,000 COVID-19 vaccines to Moldova, and most of the doses have already been delivered.

As the world moves toward a multipolar order, where great power rivalries and politics are dominating international relations, Romania is an engaged proponent for multilateralism. The continuation of the ruled-based order is in Bucharest’s interest; therefore, the country is involved in building the Three Sea Initiative (an informal political platform of 12 EU member states from the Baltic, Adriatic and Black Seas to boost economic development in the region and increase their cohesion and convergence within the EU), the security trilateral format with Poland and Turkey, and the support for the France and Germany Alliance for Multilateralism. To sum up, Bucharest’s objective is to foster synergies around the regional multilateral initiatives and to support Brussels’ geopolitical ambitions, while increasing its status as a regional security and power broker.

The past few years saw the creation of PESCO, European Defence Fund, European Peace Facility, and European

Defence Agency. Fostering the European Defence integration is the signal that Brussels will push for the creation of a security policy that will decouple the European security dependence from a NATO-umbrella towards the desired objective of self-sustained territorial protection. This new level of ambition in foreign policy and security is dominated by the push for “European sovereignty,” “strategic autonomy,” and “self-reliance.” These developments are perceived with ambivalence in Romania. Even though Bucharest is supportive of an increased EU security and defence agenda, there is a constant concern about defence overlapping goals between NATO and EU, political competition, the excluding narratives of some member states (France), and the risk of duplication. Since Romania’s security includes primarily two main pillars (NATO and the US), these new EU endeavors are supported only if they are complementary to the security provisions of NATO.

In conclusion, Bucharest was a follower of Brussels’ foreign policies, but more recently the country started to be more assertive in promoting its strategic interests and in establishing its geopolitical position. Therefore, Romania wants also to influence the EU Foreign and Security Policy by growing its regional status. It has a unique chance to do so if Bucharest uses its good relations with the US to mediate and help with the renewal of transatlantic relations and the strengthening of EU-NATO cooperation.

*The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the European Policy Centre and the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration.

SLOVAKIA

“Slovakia: perspectives on foreign and security policy in the EU”

By Ivan Iliev, Research Fellow, Strategic Analysis

Slovakia is dealing with various tasks in the field of foreign and security policy. The effort to support neighbouring cooperation with V4 partners has always been of crucial importance. Also, Slovakia seeks prosperous and stable relations with partners from the European Union and countries in the EU neighbourhood, such as those from the Western Balkans. The task is to support the region’s capabilities to progress towards the EU and assist in the transformation process. Additionally, maintaining NATO as a critical pillar of collective security and defence is one of Slovakia’s main goals, especially when several threats challenge the alliance. Slovakia is devoted to increasing the share of defence expenditures to 2% of GDP by 2024 and keeping an active level of participation in EU, UN and NATO activities.

Building coalitions between member states might be a way to allow specific countries to seek their shared interests that align with those of the EU. Most importantly, the EU should ensure that coalitions do not undermine the Union’s cohesion and unity. The EU members must understand that opponents who have emerged in the last years possess economic power that surpasses the potential of each separate EU member. To be an international actor, the EU states must act in unison. Otherwise, they find themselves in the role of a spectator of world politics.

However, there is a lack of unity and consistency between EU and member states; their foreign policies, the reluctance of member states to hand over powers to Brussels, and the scepticism about the EU as a framework for foreign policy actions. All disagreements mentioned above make it difficult for the EU to act as a unified international actor. To overcome these challenges, the EU should strengthen the execution of European foreign policy interests by utilizing the EU’s legal framework’s potential or supporting the creation of “interest” coalitions of member states.

In this regard, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA SR) mainly creates the institutional assessment of the EU’s CFSP. The Slovak position is to strengthen capacities and cooperation with the EU partners, to reinforce the EU’s potential to act and to boost the EU’s strategic autonomy and ability to cooperate with partners. Slovakia is also active in the Permanent Structured Cooperation, where it leads one project and actively participates in five others. However, NATO remains to be a key pillar of collective defence and security for Slovakia. In relation to achieving a more coherent EU foreign and security policy, it would be appropriate to speed up the decision-making process by using some of the instruments introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. Besides, as already mentioned, the EU should

also support a so-called coalition-building. A group of EU members could act on the EU’s foreign and security interest’s behalf when it is unlikely to reach unanimity, while avoiding the introduction of QMV.

Additionally, the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) has been a critical document for Slovakia and its strategic aims. It was explicitly named in the provisional update of the Slovak Security Strategy in 2017. Even today, Slovakia considers aims mentioned in the EUGS as crucial for the foreign and security direction of the country. It is confirmed by continuous participation in the EU missions and a document published by the MFEA SR called the Slovak Republic’s foreign and European policy in 2021. It endorses Slovak support to the EU in securing peace, security, prosperity and democratic values. The EUGS is considered a relevant document, but as new threats have been emerging, Slovakia is open to adjusting the Strategy to keep itself and the EU ready to deal with future challenges.

SLOVENIA

“Slovenia: strong union of strong member states”

By Marko Lovec, Assistant Professor, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences

For over a decade, Slovenian EU policymaking has suffered from the impact of EU crises such as the Eurozone and migration crises, which have negatively affected Slovenia as a small country and open economy—resulting in substantial domestic political turbulence. More recently, the government led by Janez Janša, which came to power in 2020, has set a more specific European policy agenda that has been characterised by growing nationalism and domestication of foreign policymaking.

The Slovenian government, which will be taking over the EU presidency in the second half of the 2021 (as the last in the trio with Germany and Portugal), has been highlighting the need to make the EU more resilient to various crises, including a broad array of challenges ranging from cybersecurity threats to the migration challenge.

Slovenia has recently been increasingly aligned with the Visegrad Four — especially with Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic, as well as with Austria. Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia have started to cooperate within the format of the ‘Central Five’ initiative. Slovenian current government has been underscoring the importance of the changing political configuration in European integration after Brexit, where Central European countries could step in by playing stronger roles on the portfolios such as transatlantic relations. The idea was initially shaped in the Trump era, but since the victory of Joe Biden at the US elections and the growing engagement of the EU in the renewed Euro-Atlantic partnership, the idea lost some of its impetus.

Slovenia is in favour of a stronger role of the EU on the global stage. A stronger common foreign and security policy should simultaneously pay respect to the vital national interests of the individual member states. In other words, Slovenia is reserved towards widening the application of the qualified majority voting without providing proper safeguards that would equally protect the interests of the small members. The EU's stronger approach should build on credibility, effective and efficient action.

Slovenia supports strengthening the activities that are based on the Lisbon treaty. Specifically, it points at the cooperation within the common defence policy, such as the permanent structural cooperation (PESCO), cooperation on the European defence industry and technological base, as well as certain civil and humanitarian aspects of cooperation to proactively address external crises before they impact the EU and its neighbourhood. Slovenia is specifically interested in the projects aiming to advance the joint operational capacities (i.e., transport and mobility of armed forces). The activities in the areas of security

and defence should take place in close cooperation with NATO.

In a context increasingly characterized by a multi centric world and divisions over key norms and values, Slovenia advocates for a more strategic, coordinated and proactive approach by the EU towards the other key players as well as towards its neighbourhoods. From a Slovenian perspective, EU should deepen the transatlantic alliance. It should build on the existing dialogue with Russia and China. EU control over armament, including nuclear arms, is essential for global peace. Slovenia also supports the accession of the Western Balkans countries to the EU and expects to engage more in cooperation with the Asian democracies. The EU should be able to prevent crises before occurring and should develop capacities for an effective collective response, which includes being able to respond to any new threats.

SWEDEN

“Sweden and the European Union (EU) common foreign and security policy (CFSP)”

By Dr. Ian Anthony, Programme Director, European Security, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

THE CFSP IN THE CONTEXT OF SWEDISH FOREIGN POLICY

In presenting the guidelines for Swedish foreign policy, the Swedish Foreign Minister described the United Nations (UN) as the cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy and the EU as the most important framework in which foreign policy is conducted.¹¹

Swedish foreign policy is based on the principles and rules in UN documents, and Sweden has played a role in creating the UN acquis out of proportion to its size. As a small country with limited resources, cooperation is needed to realize foreign policy objectives, and among operational frameworks the EU is ‘first among equals’.

In the security field the situation is different. In January 2017, Sweden published a National Security Strategy (the first of its kind for the country) outlining multi-dimensional challenges and describing Sweden's multi-faceted response.¹² Protecting Swedish borders from external military threat is a core task, but not enough to make people in Sweden safe. The strategy requires diverse partnerships and new patterns of cooperation inside and outside Sweden.

The EU provides an important security policy framework through progressive development of common legislation on issues such as border security, cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection. However, the EU is not more important than bilateral cooperation with neighbours, common arrangements with Nordic countries and partnerships with key states such as Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. Sweden is an Enhanced Opportunity Partner of NATO, recognizing shared objectives and the ‘particularly significant contributions’ that Sweden makes to the alliance.¹³

KEY QUESTIONS IN FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

The two most urgent Swedish foreign policy priorities today are only indirectly connected to the EU. First, the suppression of the COVID-19 pandemic and the facilitation of a post-pandemic recovery. Sweden has given priority in its foreign policy response to COVID-19 where it assists and works with non-EU states that are part of the Schengen travel area: Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. Second, Sweden must perform as an effective and efficient Chairperson-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The main tasks Sweden emphasizes for EU foreign policy are:

- Preserving deep and comprehensive cooperation with the United Kingdom.
- Developing continuously closer relations with the Western Balkans.
- Supporting democratic development in Turkey.

Sweden has argued against the EU becoming an armed actor in international affairs, and the armed forces have been concerned about diverting resources from their main task of restoring territorial defence capabilities. The cautious Swedish approach to EU military projects has been driven by political solidarity rather than any expectation of significant results. In creating Permanent Structured Cooperation in defence matters (PESCO) Sweden argued for an inclusive initiative with limited ambition, and only joined the French-led European Intervention Initiative (outside the EU framework) when it was clear that PESCO would broadly match Swedish expectations.

In the security dimension of CFSP the main Swedish priorities have been:

- Promote civilian CSDP operations.
- Ensure that PESCO remains open to non-EU partners (in particular Norway, the UK and the USA).
- Ensure that highly internationalized Swedish defence industrial partnerships can benefit from EU financing.

Through Brexit, Sweden lost an influential partner that saw eye-to-eye with them on most issues. Cooperation with Finland and the Baltic States is more important in a post-Brexit EU, and Sweden is building on already close ties with Germany.

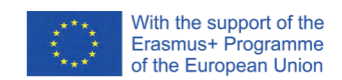
As key policies are increasingly interwoven, differentiating an inter-governmental CFSP from activities managed through common EU institutions is becoming more difficult. The boundary between the internal and external dimensions of foreign and security policy is also increasingly blurred. Nevertheless, the Swedish preference is to make EU institutions and instruments work more coherently without modifying the legal basis for action. Sweden's reaction towards the 2016 Global Strategy presented by the High Representative on Foreign and Security Policy was lukewarm.

The Swedish parliament has been hostile to expanding the use of qualified majority voting (QMV). Although EU efforts are more influential on the world stage, in general, Sweden would prefer to preserve flexibility and national freedom of action in foreign and security policy.

¹¹ Foreign Minister Ann Linde, Regeringens deklARATION vid 2021 års utrikespolitiska debatt i riksdagen, [Government Statement to the Annual Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs], 24 February 2021.

¹² Government of Sweden, Nationellsäkerhetsstrategi [National Security Strategy], January 2017.

¹³ NATO Press Service, Relations with Sweden, 4 November 2020, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_52535.htm





▶ Polus Tower II
Vajnorská 100/B
831 04 Bratislava
Slovak Republic

▶ +421 2 321378 00
▶ info@globsec.org
▶ www.globsec.org

