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A shift in European security interests since the EU Global Strategy?

The strategy process that preceded the publication of the EU Global Strategy in June 2016 was a thorough and lengthy one. The eventual EUGS document highlighted five broadly sketched foreign and security policy priorities for the European Union. They were: 1) the security of our union; 2) state and societal resilience to our East and South; 3) an integrated approach to conflicts and crises; 4) a cooperative regional order; and 5) global governance for the 21st century. It is now approximately a year since the Global Strategy was presented. At first sight it has been a very eventful year: the United Kingdom is in the process of exiting the EU, Donald Trump became the 45th President of the United States, there were terrorist attacks in Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, Manchester and London, and the Turkish referendum had its fallout in cities in Western Europe. A good strategy document is obviously not obsolete only a year after the fact, but still it seems that some priorities have gained even more urgency while others have faded in comparison.¹ The question that is addressed in this brief paper is to what extent new security interests have emerged and to what extent interests as identified in the Global Strategy are seen in a different light.

Emerging new security interests in the EU and NATO

The remarks of the newly elected President of the United States, Donald Trump, on NATO during the election campaign and in the early days of his Presidency cast doubts on the sturdiness of the transatlantic relationship. Despite statements of the Vice-President and the Ministers by Foreign Affairs and

Defence on reassuring the American commitment to European security in the run-up to the NATO mini-Summit in May, President Trump's own remarks in Brussels were less satisfying.² Although, practically, the US continues to invest in NATO's Article 5 defence - with an increased budget from \$ 3.4 (2017) to 4.8 \$ billion in 2018 - European allies are nevertheless uncertain about this administration's commitment

1 This is also recognised in the EUGS Review, *From Shared Vision to Global Action. Implementing the EUGS, Year 1*, Brussels, June 2017, https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/full_brochure_year_1.pdf

2 Donald Trump, 'Remarks by President Trump at NATO unveiling of Article V and Berlin Wall Memorials', Brussels, 25 May 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/05/25/remarks-president-trump-nato-unveiling-article-5-and-berlin-wall>

to European security and, more generally, its support for the multilateral system. To placate the American concerns as to NATO's effectiveness in the fight against terrorism, NATO has put more emphasis on counter-terrorist strategies. It has now joined the anti-IS coalition in Iraq and Syria. European Allies will also have to step up their contributions to NATO's training mission in Afghanistan, now that the US will send an extra 4,000 troops. While there has been continuity in the pressure from Washington on the European members of NATO to invest more in security, the purely transactional view of President Trump on the Alliance has the potential to weaken the normative fibres of the transatlantic community. More than was the case a year ago, there are concerns about various forms of transatlantic solidarity and therefore about NATO.

The Russian attempts to influence the US and French elections highlighted the necessity for resilient democracies, a free and balanced media and trust in institutions. The EUGS mostly emphasizes the need for resilience in our neighbourhood, but offers little concerning that of our own societies. Although the EUGS acknowledges the intertwining between external and internal security, it put little emphasis on the issue. There is only a brief section on the EU's desire to react swiftly to disinformation included under the heading 'Strategic Communications.'

The failed coup in Turkey in July 2016 resulted in a state of emergency in Turkey that is ongoing and concerns that the country is on its way to authoritarianism. This puts enormous pressure on EU-Turkey relations as well as on the NATO-Turkey relationship. Turkey is blocking some decisions on NATO cooperation with non-member states such as Austria. In the EUGS, the accession process of Turkey to the EU is mentioned as an important factor to enhance the resilience of EU neighbouring countries. Seen in the light of recent events in Turkey, however, the accession process seems to be further away than ever before.

Changes in the priority interests of the EU Global Strategy in the EU and NATO?

Of the five priorities mentioned in the EUGS, most emphasis has been put on the first, 'the security of our Union.' The 'Common Action' part of the subtitle of the EUGS was followed up quickly by an Implementation Plan on Security and Defence. The goal was to strengthen the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) through creating a Military Planning and Conduct Capability, establishing a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence and the intention to wake, as Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker named it in his speech in Prague, "the sleeping beauty" of the EU Treaty, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).³ Moreover, a major breakthrough is the European Defence Fund as proposed in the Commission's European Defence Action Plan. It opens the door for the allocation of substantial funds and various financial incentives from the Union budget for defence research, the capability development phase and capability procurement. With these developments the EU's role in defence is not limited to an operational one, but even more so ventures into a vehicle for the generation of defence capabilities and the evolution of the European R&T/D and defence industry that needs to go with it.

Since Russia's increased assertiveness, NATO has veered back to its collective defence task. It led to the United States reinvesting in troops and funds for Allied defence, in particular of the countries in Eastern Europe. Since the election of Donald Trump there has also been a shift of focus to counter-terrorism and increased attention to the defence spending norm. In his speech in Brussels in May 2017, President Trump has said that "The NATO of the future must include a great focus on terrorism and immigration, as well as threats from Russia and on NATO's eastern and

3 Jean-Claude Juncker, *Speech at Prague Defence and Security Conference*, 9 June 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-1581_en.htm

southern borders.” This resulted in NATO’s membership of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIL, extra flight time for the AWACS supporting the Coalition; the establishment of a new terrorism intelligence cell at NATO Headquarters and the appointment of a coordinator to oversee NATO’s efforts in the fight against terrorism. When comparing Secretary General Stoltenberg’s speeches before and after Trump’s inauguration it becomes clear that before Trump’s first day in office Stoltenberg continuously mentioned the threat of a more assertive Russia in his speeches. Now, most of Stoltenberg’s speeches are about countering terrorism. A role for NATO in counter-terrorism raises questions about coordination with and duplication of the EU’s efforts.

The EU-NATO Declaration of July 2016 on their strategic cooperation and the list of 42 cooperation topics (December 2016) mark the improved relations between the EU and NATO.⁴ It also highlights the necessity to join forces on issues that have been prioritised in the past but have gained even more prominence during the last 12 months: hybrid threats, cybersecurity and illegal migration. Both organisations pledge to increase cooperation on capability development, the defence industry, exercises and the resilience of partner countries. Counter-terrorism cooperation is notably missing from the seven main priorities. The HR/VP Federica Mogherini and SG Stoltenberg have reported on the progress of the Declaration in June 2017.⁵

Is there a need to increase the 5 interests and 10 themes in the Clingendael Monitor?

The 5 interests and the 10 themes concerning security threats have not lost their relevance.⁶ However, it might be necessary to add more themes to the list. One of them is the explicit threat of illegal mass migration to Europe. Although this is listed under the theme of ‘crises at the borders of the EU’, the issue is widely perceived as a security threat on its own and deserves a separate analysis. Adding more understanding of the interlinkages and spill-overs between the various themes and threats would add a further analytical sophistication to the Clingendael Monitor and reflects the complex reality of the current security situation. Another theme that might be added is the uncertainty that surrounds the transatlantic relationship.

4 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/07/08-eu-nato-joint-declaration/>




5 *Progress Report on the implementation of the common set of proposals endorsed by NATO and the EU Councils on 6 December 2016*, June 2017, http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170619_170614-Joint-progress-report-EU-NATO-EN.pdf

6 Territorial integrity, terrorism, CBRN weapons, fragile states, energy, free trade, crisis of confidence in the EU, transnational organised crime, climate change and cybersecurity.

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