



EU Strategic Vision Workshop

Rome, 26 February 2016 - Outcomes Report

On February 26th in Rome, the *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, within the context of the **Mercator European Dialogue project**, hosted a reflection group on EU strategic vision. In the spirit of the Mercator European Dialogue, a pan-European parliamentarian network established in 2015, the reflection group was composed of 12 Parliamentarians from 7 different European Member States and supported by a number of EU foreign policy experts.



PROCESS

Recognizing the need to define a common strategic vision for the EU as a global actor amidst the emergence of an ever more complex and connected world order, members of the Mercator European Dialogue convened to discuss and share national insights with regards to the ongoing strategic assessment of the ‘EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy’ led by the European External Action Service.

[Exploring the strategy content](#)

Nathalie Tocci, Deputy Director of the IAI, Special Advisor to the HRVP Federica Mogherini, and pen-holder of the EU Global Strategy, illustrated both the methodology and content underpinning the strategy review process, providing MPs with a unique opportunity to gather insights into the rationale and the workings of the most comprehensive assessment of EU foreign policy since the 2003 European Security Strategy.

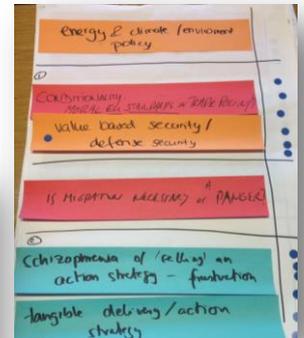
Following Tocci’s introduction, parliamentarians were encouraged to identify and consequently further explore a number of topics of key concern: the **role of European values** in the strategy, the **reconciliation of different nation state interests** in order to articulate a common foreign policy and finally the **implementation potential** of a European global strategy.



OUTCOMES

The role of European shared values in the global strategy

Following an intense debate on the meaning of the term 'values' and the consequent role that the latter are thus to play in shaping EU global strategy, participants agreed that a broad consensus on European values in foreign policy does not, as of yet, exist. Vague definitions and the all-encompassing reach of the term, often perceived to be at odds with the idea of interests, was understood as detrimental to the articulation of a set of joint, fundamental and indispensable set of EU values to be jointly pursued by European Member States.



Building on this consideration, the group identified a number of suggestions to contrast incoherent and hypocritical EU foreign policy:

- Bypass the term values and identify a **prioritized shortlist of common foreign policy goals**. The EU should engage in a process of priority definition seeking to identify and define up to a maximum of three shared foreign policy priorities, and aim to be ambitious in pursuing said objectives whilst accepting to play a more humble role on the rest of the European values basket.
- Identify a European 'modus-operandi' as a proxy for European values in foreign policy: the EU should project itself externally as a **legitimate & credible actor** which identifies itself as a **negotiating power** and shapes all foreign policy actions according to the respect of these three fundamental principles.

- The EU should be aware of its own existing political and moral baggage yet always **lead by example and not attempt to export its model** to its partners.

The implementation challenge

The group of parliamentarians engaged in a discussion on how to avoid the creation of the umpteenth “euro-bubble document” deliberating prescriptively on EU global strategy whilst being completely disconnected from the present political sentiment and reality. To address such a challenge, the group concentrated on how to deliver an “action strategy” in a frustrated and immobilized EU. Echoing to a great extent the concerns voiced in the first working group, the debate focused around the need for the EU to deliver results, manage expectations and regain credibility.



Three pathways were identified as holding the potential for forging a credible and implementable EU global strategy:

- **Restoring credibility:** focusing on a limited number and range of substantial priorities and interests, to then deliver tangible and communicable results. Only commit to delivering results if compliance can be ensured. Strengthen compliance obligations.
- **Kick starting action:** adopting a step by step approach in order to put in motion a virtuous cycle of cooperation across Member States in clearly defined foreign policy challenges. Starting cooperation where possible, for example, through the pooling and

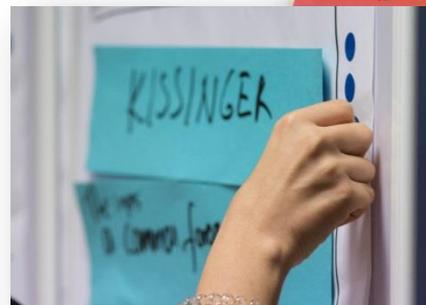
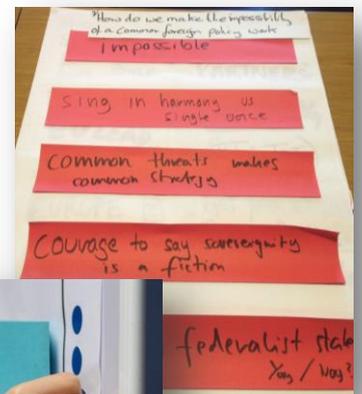
sharing of existing resources (intended not only as capacities but as intelligence) accepting the possibility of multiple speeds.

- **(Re)think institutional procedures:** identifying the correct narrative for the global strategy, in order to highlight the need for effective leadership and at what levels of governance. Recognize existing power structures, evaluate their effectiveness, establish the existence of power-bottlenecks and identify avenues for reform, if necessary.

What common foreign policy?

The last group chose to discuss the possible content and formulation of a European common policy, in a context where consensus around a comprehensive and far-reaching common European foreign policy is deemed a near impossibility. A strong skepticism emerged about the possibility of articulating a joint vision for Europe's external action. What emerged instead was the need to shift away from the "Kissinger paradigm", stating the need for Europe to answer to one phone number, and instead strive to "sing in harmony rather than with a single voice".

Despite the high degree of uncertainty and contrasting views on the probable and desirable direction of EU foreign policy in the future, a number of insights and takeaways arose from the session's discussions:



- **Define and articulate common threats:** identify foreign policy priorities on the basis of the identification and the understanding of shared threats for which joint action at the EU level is desirable.
- **Political courage needed:** an honest and vigorous discourse taking into account the limits of nation state sovereignty - both exogenous to the EU project, dictated by the forces of globalization, as well as self-imposed, such as the single currency - is necessary if Member States are to engage in a constructive dialogue about European foreign policy at the national level as well as within the supra-national and international arenas.
- **Clarity on the federalist perspective:** whether in favour or against, the lack of clarity with regards to the institutional path the EU is travelling, and in particular with regards to the federalist perspective, is inhibiting progress in any direction, in a number of core EU policies. This is particularly true in the field of foreign policy, where national sovereignty concerns are particularly heightened.



SAVE THE DATE

3rd Mercator European Dialogue, 9-10 September, Warsaw

See you in Warsaw!