



CFSP

The European Union's Global Strategy
on Foreign and Security Policy
and the Western Balkans

CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

The International and Security Affairs Centre – ISAC Fund organized the first public presentation of the new Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy in Europe on July 14, 2016, in Belgrade. The document itself was issued and endorsed by the European Council on June 29. The conference was divided into three panels:

1. *Opening Panel - What Changes will the EU Global Strategy Bring?;*
2. *CFSP, the New Global Strategy and the Western Balkans: Interests, Values, and Threats;*
3. *Creation of European Security Policy and the Role of Civil Society.*

The main goal of the conference was to present the content, goals and the rationale behind this document and to discuss its importance for the EU as a whole, but also for Serbia and the Western Balkans, in the immediate aftermath of the referendum on "Brexit" in the United Kingdom, as well as in the long term. Furthermore, the conference tried to emphasize the importance of discussing and rethinking the relations of Serbia and the Western Balkans towards the EU when it comes to the Foreign and Security policy of the Union and to discover the eventual avenues and pitfalls for the future.

The conference was attended by current and former officials of EU Member States, representatives of the Government of Serbia, members of the National Assembly, and officials from various ministries, members of the European Parliament, representatives of the diplomatic corps, experts from the EU and Serbia, as well as representatives of civil society.

You can find the detailed conference agenda with all of the speakers on ISAC's website www.isac-fund.org and a review of the coverage of the conference on ISAC's Facebook page.

The following are the conclusions and recommendations that were reached at the conference:

General conclusions about the EU Global Strategy, process of its construction and about the steps that follow

- The “Brexit” referendum heralded a new age regarding the EU integration process. Most probably, the EU in the near future will become a more internally differentiated Union, i.e. in different policies different groups of Member States may accelerate deeper forms of integration based on rules and principles (similar to Eurozone or Schengen, but with more institutionalization). If the EU evolves in this direction, the Western Balkans and Turkey, and even some of the countries in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), can make and expect closer integration with the EU. This will probably make the enlargement of the countries of the Western Balkans much easier.
- Cooperation in the area of EU foreign policy is not as divided as it is the case with some other policies, and there is an essential interest for cooperation. Furthermore, it is not “poisoned” by the Euroscepticism, and the Global Strategy could be used to promote a more integrated approach and improved cooperation, thus to contribute to the European project in the moment of crisis. The Global Strategy can be the starting point for improved and more influential EU Foreign Policy.
- If the Strategy is to be successful, it must be accepted by all of the Member States’ governments, and should serve as a basis for their respective foreign policies. Furthermore, since this Strategy covers all of the areas that have an impact on foreign policy, all of the ministries in the respective governments should know, understand and accept the Global Strategy as the basis and the guideline for their work.
- The process of reflection and outreach, which was applied during the creation of the Global Strategy, should be continued. There should be a constant debate in the Member States about the elements of the EU’s foreign policy, since that would ensure the longevity and applicability of the Strategy and strengthening and understanding of the need for cooperation. The public should be more involved in the process, since the public in most of the EU is increasingly concerned with foreign policy issues, partially due to the rise of the extreme right and xenophobic parties. National and EU experts and diplomats should go to schools, local meetings, universities and other places to discuss the new Global Strategy. Such meetings would be excellent opportunity not just to explain the Global Strategy but EU cooperation in general.
- The EU institutions and the Member States should discuss the Strategy with potential adversaries. Discussions would contribute to better understanding of each other’s goals and aims, thus helping to reduce misunderstandings, which could have extremely high costs.
- The implementation of the Strategy has to be shared between the Member States and the EU institutions, since different actors are responsible for different fields of EU policies. However, the EU has to be at the steering wheel to preserve the intended design of the Strategy.

On the elements of the Global Strategy

- The previous two decades of CFSP and CSDP shaping were marked by the intense debate between the “Atlanticists” and the “Communitarians” on the nature of security cooperation in Europe. The “Atlanticist” feared that deeper integration is aimed at replicating NATO, but now the situation has changed and “Atlanticists” and the US would like to see the EU take more responsibility for its own security. The Global Strategy calls for more cooperation, but keeping in line with the Lisbon Treaty and security issues in general, defence will remain a national competency at least for the foreseeable future. However, in order to provide security to their citizens, Member States should act to establish more “pooling and sharing” of the defence capabilities at the EU level. The Global Strategy recognizes this need and calls for deeper cooperation through the development of joint capabilities and setting of incentives for joint action.
- The guiding principle of the EU Global Strategy is “principled pragmatism”. The new Strategy still adheres to the EU *values* and advocates *engagement*, but it recognizes that there are limits and that there is a need for more *realpolitik* and *pragmatism* when facing challenges of the 21st century. Tailor made approaches in the EU foreign policy should become more a rule than an exception, which means that the EU becomes more realistic about its abilities, in particular about the transformative power for its neighbourhood.
- EU relations with Russia are an important challenge, and it is necessary that all of the officials in the EU and its Member States speak with one voice on the following issues: 1) borders have to be respected according to the Helsinki principles; 2) The EU and Russia share so many common interests and challenges, that both sides are certainly better off when they cooperate.

On the Global Strategy’s importance for the Western Balkans

- The Western Balkans still remain one of the crucial regions for the security of the EU, a strategic front yard of the Union, as it was shown during the course of several previous years, with the challenges such as the migrant crisis, fight against terrorism and others. The region and the EU thus share interests, challenges and opportunities, and essentially “the EU and the Western Balkans are on the same ship.”
- There is an obvious need for the “Western Balkans six” to be included into EU’s strategic considerations. Treating the Western Balkans states as partners, as it was during the migrant crisis in 2015 and finding “a place at the table” for them would be beneficial for improving their will to implement reforms to meet the EU standards, and help in communicating the benefits of EU membership to their citizens.
- The Global Strategy once again acknowledges the EU perspective of the whole region, with full membership in the Union as the outcome of the process. However, the process of enlargement remains based on principles and strict and clear conditionality during the process of accession of these states. There will be no altering of these principles, since the EU has to maintain its credibility. Also, there will be no package deals and each country has its own unique path to EU membership.

- It is also obvious that the process of enlargement became politicized in recent years, which was evident with the recent delay of the opening of Chapters 23 and 24 for Serbia. However, it is worth to remember that this is nothing new since the French blockade of the UK membership more than forty years ago. The EC/EU has always managed to overcome these types of challenges.
- The membership of the Western Balkans states will not happen overnight, and accession is a process that will last. However, the process must “already today” deliver something to the citizens of the Western Balkan states, so they can see the concrete benefits of their country’s EU bid. Thus, the Global Strategy calls for extensive cooperation in certain fields (migration, energy, infrastructure, digital, civil society etc.), as a parallel but connected track to the process of accession.
- The new EU approach towards the ENP countries promotes pragmatism and tailored made approaches for states that do not want or are not ready or not willing to accept the entire elements of the Neighbourhood programmes and the Eastern Partnership which were offered until now to all of these states without a difference. This change could also have a consequence on the process of enlargement, since the states of the Western Balkans which are not interested in fulfilling all of the EU conditions, could also be offered tailored made cooperation programmes with the EU, which would not contain the benefits of the enlargement process and could be considered only as a poor substitute. For example, the EU could easily offer to respective governments a programme of cooperation aimed towards the improvement of security, without insisting on progressive transformation of states, and at the same time design a programme that would help improve the resilience of the society.
- The Strategy is setting the framework of strategic priorities for the countries of the Western Balkans, and these states should define their priorities, interests and values to fit better in that framework. All countries have the chance to give bigger and more concrete contribution to the collective efforts of the EU.

On Serbia and its process of accession negotiations with the EU

- The Global Strategy should serve as a basis for the review of the Defence Strategy and the National Security Strategy that will probably be needed for the successful conclusion of negotiations under Chapter 31: Common Foreign, Security and Defence Policy. Serbia should emulate elements of the EU approach in the process of drafting of the Global Strategy, i.e. Serbia should organise its own process of reflection and outreach with the EU and other Western Balkans states about its foreign policy, together with consultations with individual foreign experts.
- The adaptation of Serbia’s strategic framework is a lengthy procedure, at least for the National Security Strategy, since almost all of the Ministries in the Government have to be coordinated in this process. Thus, it is not possible at this moment to foresee the actual timeframe nor all of the challenges that this process will entail. However, for the inception of that kind of a process, the best indicator would be the issuing of the Chapter 31 Screening Report.
- Serbia should as soon as possible get the Screening Report for Chapter 31, as that would make Serbia’s obligations in the following period more clear and allow it to make an actual timeframe for the implementation of reforms. The Screening Report would also allow for better communication with citizens, when it comes to obligations under Chapter 31, but also when it comes to adherence to the EU value based approach.

- Despite its lack of alignment with certain EU CFSP decisions and measures, Serbia has considerable results when it comes to the other elements that are related to Chapter 31, such as the participation in EU and UN military missions. Serbia has shown a genuine willingness to endure on the EU path and the EU should open additional channels for communication with Serbia to support its will to adapt to the EU approach.
- Serbia has to begin to progressively align with the EU declarations and to apply sanctions and restrictive measures where required. Delaying of this process and lack of communication with public about why it is necessary increases chances for a bigger shock in the near future.
- The EU should pursue a dual approach on Serbia's relation with Russia: the EU should persuade Serbia to align with the EU's approach and emphasize that Russia's aggressive behaviour cannot be tolerated, but also that the EU and its Member States have to show more understanding for Serbia's cultural, economic and social ties with Russia.
- Serbia is willing to implement the Global Strategy, on its own or included in the wider EU approach, since the vast majority of provisions refer also to the interests of Serbia, as a small European country surrounded by the EU and NATO. As such, Serbia has a lot to offer when it comes to the joint EU approach, especially in regards to CSDP and EU's relation with third countries with which Serbia has traditionally good political, cultural and economic ties.
- When it comes to the communication with the EU and its institutions, Serbia should be more proactive and think outside the box. Official dialogue is one dimension, but Serbia should use every possible opportunity to present its view and to influence decision making in Brussels. A perfect example of this kind of approach was voluntary participation of some countries like Norway in the process of reflection in connection to the Global Strategy (Norway sent non-papers on its own to Federica Mogherini's team to influence the process of drafting and adoption of the Strategy).