

European Council on Foreign Relations

## Why Europe needs a new global strategy

by Hans Kundnani & Mark Leonard & Nick Witney & Richard Gowan & Susi Dennison - 27 Nov 2013

Europe needs a new foreign policy strategy. Many of the approaches that worked so well for the EU in the past have become ineffectual and counter-productive. The EU's official strategy - the European Security Strategy - will reach its 10th anniversary in December but Europe and the world have changed so dramatically in the last decade that the EU cannot simply stick to its outdated strategy.

Europe is losing power and influence as a foreign policy actor and needs to develop a new set of priorities how it wants to engage with the rest of the world. In December, the European Council will discuss defence issues for the first time since the euro crisis began – and European leaders should use this opportunity to commission a major strategic rethink.

A new ECFR paper – Why Europe needs a new global strategy - identifies 6 key issues that are holding Europe back and need to be addressed:

1. European soft power struggles in an era of global awakening;
2. European aid and economic assistance are losing impact in an era of big spenders;
3. “Effective multilateralism” is harder in an era of neo-Westphalian<sup>1</sup> rising powers;
4. Liberal interventionism is more difficult because of fatigue and defence cuts;
5. US disengagement is changing the transatlantic relationship;
6. Economic power alone is not enough in Asia.

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<sup>1</sup> Westphalian sovereignty is the concept of the sovereignty of nation-states on their territory, with no role for external agents in domestic structures.

**Susi Dennison:** “European soft power is a wasting asset in a world in which other regions and powers are increasingly self-confident and less willing to base their policies on relations with the West. The EU should not give up its values, but it does need to rethink how they can best be promoted at a time when ideological, financial and political competition in both Europe’s eastern and southern neighbourhoods is liable to remain high, and even grow, in the years ahead.”

**Richard Gowan:** “Traditional multilateralism is not a reliable basis for strategy in a neo-Westphalian world. Europeans may increasingly have to go “forum shopping” to find alternatives to the UN when it is gridlocked over crises. But this à la carte multilateralism risks splitting the EU: France and the UK are typically more willing to manoeuvre around international legal obstacles than Germany.”

**Mark Leonard:** “No national government or global company would base its policies on a 10 year old strategy. The EU needs a new approach for an era of Chinese-led globalisation, American withdrawal and global political awakening where the very idea of soft power – the notion that people want to be like us – goes against the spirit of the times.”

**Hans Kundnani:** “It is unrealistic to think that Europe could effectively withdraw from geopolitics and become a “European Japan” - one without the ability or will to use military power except in self-defence. Moreover, US disengagement means that Europeans will be expected to take responsibility for sorting out problems in their own neighbourhood.”

**Nick Witney:** 'The EU's 2003 security strategy is the product of a bygone age - a time when the West still ran the world, and the EU was half the size it is today. Brussels is scared to re-open it because it fears that today's 28 member states have very different world views. But that is exactly why we need the debate.’