

# **MAY THE EU BECOME A GLOBAL POWER?**

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I intend to briefly examine some preconditions for the EU becoming a global power and present at least one argument why it must seek for such status. The term “global actor” will be used here in roughly the same sense as “global power”. The former term may even look preferable to some, because when speaking about global power it is difficult to avoid military connotations of the word “power”. There are practically no chances that in the foreseeable future the military power of the EU will become equal or near to equal to that of the US. Of course, some military capabilities of the EU may be substantially improved, to a degree even in the area of territorial defence, but likely without bigger increase in defence budgets. They may be much more enhanced in peace-keeping and crisis management.

Of course, the question “Is military dimension a necessary prerequisite of a global actor?” remains open. Japan is an example of a global actor, which lacks more or less developed military capabilities. She has assumed the role of a global actor with very limited military forces, which have not been used outside Japan for quite a long time. Admittedly, recently Japan took a decision to enable deployment of military forces outside Japan’s territory in case of necessity. I do not think that the EU should follow Japan’s example. The EU has greater ambitions to play the role of a global power. In the post-War time Japan did not even have such an ambition. Today the EU does not want to play the role of a younger brother of the US in the World politics that Japan voluntarily accepted and, it seems, still accepts. That means that the EU must develop military capabilities at least in some sectors.

Even if the EU succeeds in this endeavour, the EU military power will remain for decades a kind of supplementary military power to the US. Does it

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mean that the EU must be pleased with being a kind of political supplement to the US according to the old dictum “America leads, Europe follows”? I do not think so.

I do not intend to examine in detail a complicated question of the US-EU relations. I want to make only a few points. First, good or at least normal relations with the US are a precondition for the EU to become a full-fledged global actor. The EU will achieve nothing or almost nothing when acting against the US and vice versa, the US will achieve little when acting against the EU. Hard power and soft power need each other and can not succeed when acting totally separately. It is really difficult today to imagine well orchestrated action of the EU and the US, say in the Middle East. Yet present bad situation in the region speaks for itself – neither the US, nor the EU may achieve long-term solution in the region when acting separately.

In economy the EU is a power with a global status acquired some time ago. The EU's GDP is almost equal to that of the US. Thus, when listening to discussions on the EU as a global power, it's often heard a repetition of well known saying: the EU is an economic giant and a political and military dwarf. It seems that an economic giant must simply develop his political and military muscles, and then it will become a global power without any reservations.

Yet precisely in the field of economy the EU is facing likely the greatest challenge to its supposed global power status. As Europe's population ages and workforce shrinks, its share in the world economy may dwindle from the present 18 percent to 10 percent in the year 2050. The EU's enlargement in the years 2004 and 2007 can not stop this process. We are lagging far behind overambitious Lisbon strategy goals. Booming economies of China and India may reduce the share of the EU in the world economy even more.

Must global actors or even global powers have strong and big economies? My answer is “no”. To deny the claim that only states with very big economies may be global actors, I will show one simple example. In the Cold War time the share of the Soviet Union in the World economy was smaller than that of the EU today. Of course, you may recall that the Soviet Union, at least from the 70's had strategic parity with the US and plenty of nukes and rockets. But that argument is weak. The economy of the United Kingdom became very strong only in the 19th century. Nevertheless, the UK in the 18th century was an

important global actor. Why? Having relatively small share in the world economy it conducted wise and effective foreign policy. An actor becomes a global player if it accumulates political will and abilities to act on a global scale by implementing its clear-cut foreign policy.

Does the EU have a *wise, coherent and effective* foreign policy? Few would say, except the High Commissioner that the EU has shaped such policy.

Before moving ahead, I would like to say a few words about NATO. NATO countries have never claimed that they had created something like Common foreign, security and defence policy. The Suez crisis in 1956 clearly demonstrated that NATO common foreign policy in the precise sense of the word was lacking. But NATO countries were unanimous in their foreign policy towards the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact allies. In the Cold War time all countries of the North Atlantic alliance were in agreement that the Soviet Union posed the greatest threat to NATO. The consensus over the Soviet threat was a backbone of foreign policy of NATO allies. On this ground they also shaped their common security and defence policy.

The EU quite frequently uses the term “Common Foreign and Security Policy”, although recently less often than the term “European Security and Defence Policy”. Does the EU have workable *common* foreign and security policy? I have doubts. If there is no such a policy it is difficult to expect the EU to have real European security and defence policy. Why? Because Common foreign and security policy forms the basis for European security and defence policy.

From a political point of view it is much easier to create instruments (e.g. battle-groups) than to establish common EU foreign policy. It would be wiser, however, to proceed further in both directions in parallel. Only if there is a clear-cut notion of the EU foreign policy, its aims, and common EU threats assessment, then the EU may claim that it has functioning Common foreign and security policy and European security and defence policy. Currently there are no such policies. There is something different – committees, staffs, rapid deployment units and so on. The EU has created plenty of structures, but failed to develop a *common policy*.

If the EU wants to become an important global actor in the world, in which the EU’s economic power is relatively diminishing, the EU must more

vigorously seek to establish its common foreign policy. The experience of Lithuania, which, admittedly, never had ambitions to become a global actor, may be instructive. In early 1994 Lithuanian foreign policy concept formulated explicitly three priorities, three foreign policy goals: to become NATO member, to join the EU, and to maintain good relations with neighbours. In spring 2004 Lithuania succeeded in joining both NATO and the EU. We were not so successful in substantially improving our relations with all neighbours, especially with Russia and Belarus, but I do not intend to elaborate more on this issue. Generally Russia and Belarus are hard partners to deal with. The fact that Lithuania fully achieved two of three ambitious foreign policy goals in just ten years is a big success that can not be ignored.

A few years ago one foreign journalist asked me how Lithuanians could contribute to the EU. I mumbled something about our rich cultural heritage and courage Lithuanians showed when independence was regained and statehood restored in March 1990, and that our freedom movement initiated the process of bringing down the second superpower in the world – the Soviet Union.

Today I would say that courage and strong political will or lack of it are the most important factors, because shaping a bold and coherent foreign policy needs a lot of courage and political will. Yet without it, the EU will not succeed on the global scene. An advice might be as follow - the EU without delay should formulate a few main achievable goals of common foreign policy for ten years from now. If the EU fails in formulating those goals and will not be able to implement them later, the EU will not become a strong global actor in the foreseeable future.

A very strong incentive to act more decisively on global scene is energy security problem that Europe is facing. Most politicians and political scientists in Europe understand that Russia is not a reliable supplier of oil and gas. For Russia, it is very comfortable to deal with every single EU member, and thus to use its energy resources and supply as means to exert political pressure on one or another EU member. Russia behaves in full accordance with the old dictum “Divide and Rule”. The EU will be able to withstand Russia’s pressure only if all EU members speak in one voice on energy with Russia. If the EU does not satisfactory solve the problem of its relations with Russia in this vital energy sector, where Russia itself is dependent on the EU, the EU may forever burry its dreams to become a global power.

The US has never taken global ambitions of the EU very seriously. Such emerging great powers as China and India do not care much about the EU either. The EU's capacity to withstand Russia's pressure is absolutely crucial for maintaining EU's credibility in world politics. The EU must show to the world that it is not weaker, at least than Russia. If the EU fails in confrontation with Russia on energy matters, it will largely affect not only the EU's global status, but its very independence. The EU has no choice. The EU simply must become a global actor able to deal with other global actors on an equal basis.

The need for Europe to speak on foreign policy matters with one voice is felt more and more strongly. But who will be pioneers to take *an initiative*, in consultation with all EU members, to formulate the main EU foreign policy goals?

I doubt that at the moment the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy is capable of doing such important and difficult work. For many years, starting from the fifties of the 20th century, Franco-German condominium existed in the European Community and later in the European Union. It is widely recognized that in that arrangement France played a role of political leader, and Germany was leading economic force. Of course, this picture is a little bit oversimplified.

Today another question looms large – can and must united Germany more than sixty years after the end of the World War II remain in this role, keeping low political profile as it did for decades? Of course, there were periods when Germany dared to step up with important political initiatives – Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, for example. More recently Schroeder together with Chirac have put many efforts to stop the second Iraq war, although they were less successful than W. Brandt. But from my point of view, Germany's foreign policy is rather passive, often reactive and not pro-active. And when Germany acts, it takes too much into account the interests and positions of France and Russia. The Nord Stream gas pipeline project is a good example of such a policy.

My conclusion is that Germany must re-examine its role in Europe and Europe's role in the world. Germany's EU Presidency gives a good occasion to do this. Germany has a historical chance to become a unifying and not dividing force in Europe, taking into account interests of all EU members not just its own.