

Towards the European Union's Foreign Policy 2025 – Taking Stock of the Dahrendorf Foresight Project

Monika Sus

Hertie School of Governance

Abstract

After a decade of economic and political crises, the European Union has arrived at a critical juncture, as has its foreign policy. The long-running debate on gaining more coherence in EU's external action as a global security provider has gained more traction than ever before. The Union is weakened due to recent internal crises from which it is only slowly recovering: the trust placed in Brussels' institutions by both European citizens and global partners is shrinking and the citizens of one of the EU's largest member states, the United Kingdom, have just voted to leave. Based on an analysis of the current state of the Union, this paper takes stock of the outcomes of the Dahrendorf Foresight Project and looks ahead at the EU's role in the world of 2025. By following the narrative of driving forces beyond the EU's foreign policy, this article makes four policy recommendations for development within the next decade.

The European Union stands at a critical juncture, as does its foreign and security policy. Among all the political and economic turmoil that has pulled the Union apart and divided it internally in the last decade, Brexit has delivered the coup de grâce. As the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini (HR), pointed out in June when presenting the new EU Global Strategy (EUGS), 'the purpose, even the existence, of our Union is being questioned' (EUGS, 2016, p. 2). The perception that existential pressure from both inside (growing political polarisation, domestic terrorism, fiscal instability) and outside (Daesh (IS), refugee and migration crisis, geopolitical ambitions of Russia) will transform the European project seems widely shared. The future of the Union is uncertain. The EU has been definitively knocked out of its comfort zone where political and economic stability, liberal order based on the rule of law, pluralism as well as the absence of major conflicts on EU's territory and in its neighbourhood had been taken for granted. Navigating Europe through stormy waters requires a systematic analysis of challenges that influence the development of the European project, both internally and externally. This paper deals with the latter, following the assumption that external challenges intrude on EU's borders, enter into European societies and can pose a threat to cohesion (ESPAS, 2015).

Drawing upon the outcomes of the Dahrendorf Foresight Project (Sus and Pfeifer, 2016), this paper reflects briefly on the driving forces likely to shape the EU's external dimension and indicates necessary steps to be considered in formulating and implementing future foreign and security policy over the next decade. The aim is to show the applicability of scenario

methodology in illustrating future trajectories and downside risks affecting the EU's global role.

The paper is set up in three parts. Following an introductory section on the use of foresight methodology and scenario generation as particular tools in studying foreign policy, the paper successively presents four key drivers that were developed within the Dahrendorf Foresight Project and will determine the EU's foreign policy making in the coming ten years. Drawing on the identified driving forces, it then puts forward four policy recommendations that could be taken into consideration while re-shaping and implementing the EU's foreign policy. The concluding section summarises the findings and links them to the recently published EUGS – 'Shared Visions, Common Action: A stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy' (EUGS).¹ It reflects to what extent the presented policy recommendations correspond to the strategy and addresses the ability of both the EU institutions and the member states to implement the vision.

Foresight analysis and the study of foreign policy

Military organisations were using scenario construction, in the form of war games, for defence planning long before it became a methodological approach of foresight analysis in other fields (Van der Heijden et al., 2009). The first to use the methodology to identify economic, political and social changes was the Shell Company. Already in the late 1960s Shell was working with scenarios to foresee how the future would unfold and impact the company (Shell, 2012). In view of the growing energy demand, Shell's scenario team dared

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to consider the unthinkable: what if the world were to face an oil crisis?

Soon after, the energy crisis did in fact hit the world economy. Shell company management claimed it was prepared, thanks to scenarios in which it had played out the crisis and its possible influence on the company. Since that time, Shell has incorporated the scenario approach as an indispensable component of strategic planning and the company remains an important source of future studies.²

Others companies, government agencies, and think-tanks have since followed Shell's example. Experts and policy makers around the world apply foresight methodology with growing frequency to think systematically about the future and to generate a range of plausible strategic options by challenging the current paradigm (Miles et al., 2008).

3 According to Peter Schwartz (1991, p. 3), one of the leading futurists worldwide, scenarios can be defined as 'stories about the way the world might turn out tomorrow, stories that can help us recognize and adapt to changing aspects of our present environment'. In other words, 'the power of scenarios lies in their ability to help individuals break out of conventional modes of thinking and analysis by introducing unusual combination of trends and deliberate discontinuities in narratives about the future' (Barma et al., 2015, p. 4).

4 The goal of generating scenarios is to deliver a set of alternative futures based on systematic and rigorous analyses of global trends, common assumptions and key forces behind a given issue and thereby to widen the perspective of policy makers. A good sense of driving forces, downside risks, predetermined factors and possible outcomes helps policy makers to make reasonable decisions and lower risks. To illustrate this with an example: one of the forerunners of scenario methodology, Herman Kahn (1962), argued in the late 1950s and early 1960s that US policy makers should prepare for the eventuality of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union and every contingency that such a conflict would entail worldwide. This way of thinking entirely contradicted the conventional wisdom of the time. Soon after, the Cuban Missile Crisis demonstrated that Kahn's scenario was indeed plausible.

That said, the world will remain a place of high uncertainty. However, scenario methodology helps to keep strategic surprises to a minimum and is to be preferred over waiting passively for future events to unfold. It is not mere forecasting based on a linear analysis of current patterns nor simple hypothesis-based expert predictions, but rather consists of various qualitative and quantitative approaches, including the generation of multiple scenarios, which is one of the most promising, especially in cases of great uncertainty (Popper, 2008; Pherson, 2015). Figure 1 illustrates the process of multiple scenarios generation.

This approach envisions the generation of multiple scenarios to ensure the most comprehensive overview of a particular risk. All scenarios are screened and undergo a rigid selection process before only the best among them are passed on for further analysis.

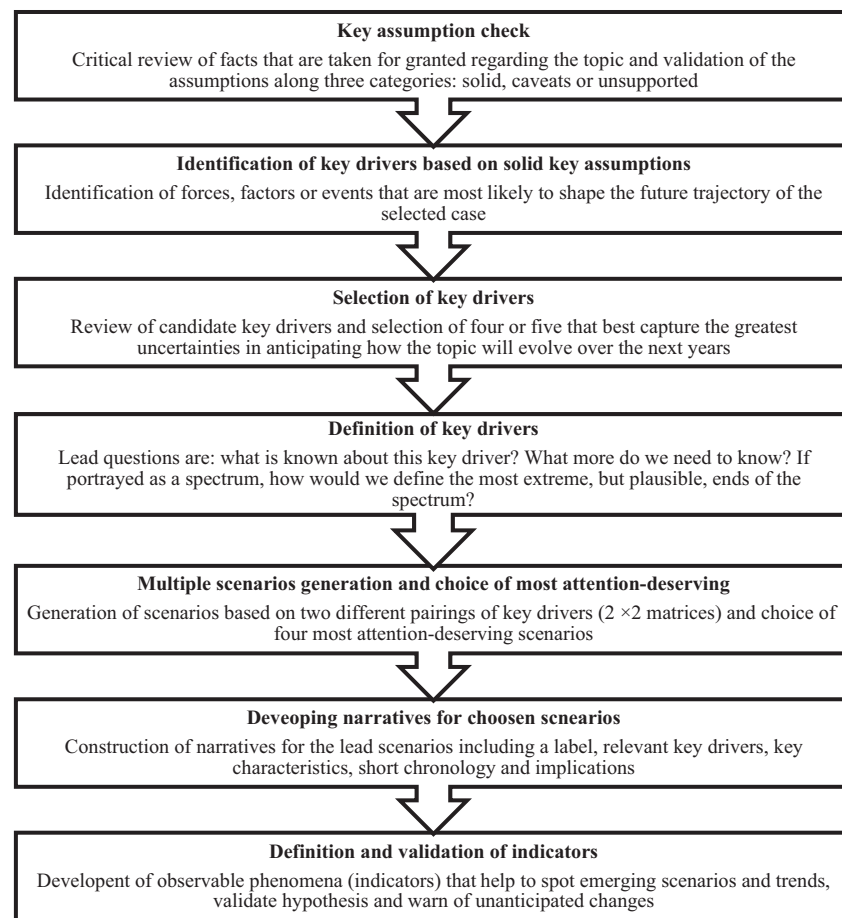
The value of scenarios for foreign policy analysis is measured using three main indicators. First, they widen the

perspective to cover a range of unexpected yet plausible outcomes based on various pairings of key drivers; thus, scenarios break the assumption that the future will resemble the past and that change is only gradual. Second, scenario methodology facilitates contrarian thinking and undermines the groupthink that often occurs in homogeneous environments; and foreign policy elites of the past have shown that they are not immune to its sometimes fatal consequences. Third, foresight methodology in general and scenario approaches in particular offer a viable tool to bridge the growing gap between academia and policy making.

5 Appropriately referred to as the 'cult of irrelevance' (Walt, 2005, 2009), many prominent social scientists have highlighted this chasm between abstract 'academic' research and the needs of decision makers to obtain policy-relevant advice. A lack of effective transmission is damaging for both sides, since theory is an essential tool for evaluating the impact of policies, explaining causal developments and identifying directions of change. So, voices are becoming louder that propose to enhance the policy relevance of research in international relations (IR) and to communicate outcomes and implications of the research findings to policy makers in a comprehensible manner (Desch, 2009; Nye, 2009). Scenario methodology is one of the most effective research techniques to link academic theories with empirical data in order to understand future world events more fully, as it combines in-depth analysis with relevant policy implications and/or recommendations. Scenario thinking corresponds well with the thinking of scholars who have an eclectic approach (Katzenstein and Okawara, 2001–2002) and apply more pragmatism in IR reasoning (Friedrichs and Kratochwil, 2009). Given the lack of adequate methodology in the field of IR that would allow for analysing future events, a systematic scenario methodology could contribute to filling the gap.

6 In light of the uncertainty of foreign policy of states and organisations and the diverse factors of influence, it seems to be a must for foreign policy experts to go beyond conventional wisdom and extrapolations of contemporary patterns in order to arrive at possible future courses of action. So, it is no surprise that several foresight exercises within the last decade have had foreign and security policies as their subject (Stein Gross et al., 1998; Zhang, 2004; Richardson, 2005; Celik and Blum, 2007; Van Notten, 2014). Though several of these projects centred on the future of the EU, there is still great potential for the development of strategic foresight within and for the Union (Missiroli, 2013). The EU's awareness of its global role has increased in recent years and this could be an important step towards more strategic thinking on how to pursue the Union's external interests. As Jan Techau (2016) rightly predicted at the beginning of 2016, the EU Global Strategy has expressed the EU's global interests more clearly than ever before, in a quasi realpolitik tenor: peace and security, prosperity, democracy, and a rule-based global order. However, the majority of EU foresight projects so far have addressed the future of the European project as such, the functioning of its institutions and general governance structures (Schinas, 2012; Grevi et al., 2013);

Figure 1. Multiple scenarios generation



Source: own compilation based on the materials of the Dahrendorf Foresight Project.

only a few have dealt with the EU's foreign policy (Tocci and Alcaro, 2012; Kleine-Brockhoff, 2013). The Dahrendorf Foresight Project is the latest example of such an endeavour. A systematic and forward-looking analysis of the key forces that will shape the external relations of the European Union with both its strategic partners China and the US and its neighbours Turkey, the MENA region and Ukraine in 2025, the Dahrendorf Foresight Project provided a solid footing for charting the course of policy actions relating to the EU's role in the world (Sus and Pfeifer, 2016).

Driving forces behind the development of the EU's external role

Drawing on the outcomes of the Dahrendorf Foresight Project, this paper presents four key drivers which will affect the EU's global role within the next ten years. Key drivers are in this case central causal forces that surround the foreign policy of the Union and which determine its future course. These are: (1) cohesion of interests in the global order; (2) EU capacity for collective action; (3) economic

resilience of the Union; and (4) political and social inclusion in the member states.

The cohesion of interests on global order between the EU and other major powers in the world (most of all, the United States and China; in the coming years, possibly also the United Kingdom) will be essential for European foreign policy making and should not be taken for granted. The next decade may witness a diversification of preferences among the various stakeholders concerning the functioning of international institutions and fora such as the United Nations, the G7 or its successor the G20, but also the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The same trend may affect their geopolitical strategies and diplomatic endeavours in existing conflicts, for example, in Syria. As Donald Trump has won the presidential election, a gradual disengagement of the US in the world is probable and could challenge the existing world order. A similar challenge could result if Euroscepticism continues its successful run in several EU member states and renationalising tendencies become dominant. An inward looking Union will neither be able, nor willing to offer an essential contribution to

international law standards and the rule-based world order. Taking into account the current vast diversification of risks and multidimensional security challenges throughout the world, it will be more important than ever for the EU as an organisation to coordinate between world powers and develop a shared position on major geopolitical and security issues. As well, it will be necessary to formulate geopolitical strategies in the face of rising powers, to continue the international negotiations on climate change and the future of the Arctic or nuclear disarmament, and to pursue the Sustainable Development Goals. As Mogherini emphasised in her foreword to the Global Strategy 2016, 'This is no time for global policemen and lone warriors' (EUGS, 2016, p. 4); only by sharing global responsibilities among its partners will the EU be able to develop the strength necessary – both as a unit and at the level of individual member states – to revamp the rule-based world order.

The second driving force is the EU's ability to act collectively, which is noticeable in the repeated calls for more coherence and cohesion in external actions (Nuttall, 2005). It goes without saying that the individual member states differ from one another with regard to their foreign policy priorities and responses. Accordingly, they sometimes prefer to act single-handedly without waiting for consensus among all EU countries, as was evident in the different responses to the Libyan political crisis in 2011 (Koenig, 2011). However, one of the essential prerequisites of the visible EU's foreign policy is precisely the willingness and ability of the national governments to agree on shared interests and to implement collective action in order to pursue them in relationship with third parties (Smith, 2013). Failing to determine a common position paralyses the Union and makes external action impossible (Zielonka, 1998). Intergovernmental decision making in this field should be supported by the supranational coordination of the EEAS the European Commission as the institutions can offer guidelines and put pressure on member states to conform. A series of domestic political dynamics currently occurring in several EU countries, growing levels of populism (due to terrorist attacks or high numbers of migrants and refugees, etc.) and the notion of renationalisation all have a negative impact on the Union's ability to act collectively. At the same time, multidimensional security challenges such as failed states and fragile regimes among its neighbours, hybrid warfare, terrorism and cyber security dangers can force a future EU to respond with hard power because the traditional soft power has proven insufficient. In fact, the HR has already started to implement the defence and security reforms outlined in the EUGS (Council of the EU, 2016b), but it will require the willingness of the other member states to proceed with the transformation of the EU's defence capacities. This has become especially important in light of Donald Trump's victory, since he has expressed uncertainty regarding all future American military backup of the Union's diplomatic efforts in the world (McCurry, 2016; Melvin, 2016).

In addition, the long-term impact of Brexit on the EU's ability to undertake common external action is still unclear. On the one hand, there was London's traditional resistance

to the EU's several attempts to coordinate a joint foreign policy (Hill, 1996); on the other hand, due to Britain's overall military and diplomatic strength, its exit means that the Union as a whole will lose an important asset for its future strategic planning. In any case, Europe's ability to act from a position of political strength and, hence, as a unity will determine its future foreign policy over the next decade.

The third driving factor, the economic resilience of the EU, has become apparent in the years of economic and financial crisis that began in 2008 and from which several European countries continue to suffer severely. Without going into detail on the various definitions of resilience, at its simplest, the concept refers to the ability of a country or a system to recover to its pre-crisis level (EUGS, 2016). The faster the economy bounces back to its pre-shock position the more resilient it is. The economic decline of member states as a result of the crisis of 2008 was the most severe in EU history, yet its effects were distributed asymmetrically and some countries turned out to be more resilient than others. In general, the crisis undermined not only the economy of the Eurozone, but it also weakened EU's leverage in neighbouring countries, such as Ukraine (Sus, 2014) and called into question the role of the EU as an international actor (Kempin and Overhaus, 2014).

If economically weak and fiscally unstable, the Union is neither able to invest its resources abroad nor can it serve as a model of successful economic governance by supranational and national institutions. Accordingly, economic integration not only laid the groundwork for the integration of further policy areas, it also has remained the core criterion for determining the success of the European project as such.

Without doubt, functioning as an economic, industrial and trading powerhouse constitutes one of the EU's greatest assets. Moreover, the ability of both the national governments and the EU's institutions to provide its citizens with prosperity based on economic growth is essential in order to resist the catchphrases of both right-wing and left-wing extremist parties. Especially important here seems to be the issue of unemployment, which is still a highly problematic issue for several European countries; in 2014, over 50 per cent of all EU citizens declared unemployment as the Union's main challenge (Special Eurobarometer, 2014). The frail labour market situation in some member states remains a serious problem. According to data from June 2016, the unemployment rate is highest in Greece with 23.3 per cent, followed by Spain with 19.9 per cent and Croatia with 13.2 per cent (Eurostat, 2016).

Eventually, what will determine the EU's foreign policy is the political and social inclusion in its member states, since it is fundamental for the credibility of the Union as an international actor. Inclusion is a broad concept, most basically it is the opposite of exclusion due to economic, political or social (religious, cultural, or gender, age and class-based) factors. Exclusion manifests whenever pluralism and democratic procedures are suppressed, human rights are systematically abused – when women, political, religious or ethnic minorities are discriminated against or governance has

shown itself to be authoritarian and unaccountable. For example, in countries where inclusion due to economic or political factors becomes weaker, radicalisation tendencies start to appear (Wallerstein, 2005; Williamson, 2014). Spain is a case in point, where the youth unemployment reached a high point in 2013 when it hit 55.9 per cent (Eurostat, 2016) and young people rallied in Madrid against EU-imposed austerity measures; some demonstrations turned violent (BBC News, 2014). The Greek example also shows that young people, frustrated by an unemployment rate of 60 per cent in 2013 (Eurostat, 2016), have intensified social unrest against the mainstream political institutions. It resulted in the spectacular rise of the radical left-wing Syriza in the general elections of 2012 (Kretsos, 2014). The European Union is slowly recovering from the economic crisis, but the share of young people threatened by poverty or social exclusion remains high and could lead to more violent extremism in EU societies. Two years ago, 32 per cent of respondents from the member states identified social inequalities as the main threat to EU cohesion (Special Eurobarometer, 2014), so the need to tackle these tendencies is urgent.

At the same time, as the elections to the European Parliament in 2014 as well as a series of national elections have shown, right-wing populist and extremist parties are undeniably on the rise. Combined with a growing mistrust among citizens of established political parties, we may see populists moving increasingly into the mainstream (Akkerman, de Lange and Rooduijn, 2016). In fact, not only in the relatively young democracies such as Hungary and Poland, but also in Austria, France, Denmark or Germany right-wing parties score surprisingly well and are close to either winning the elections or at least to becoming meaningful political powers (Aisch et al., 2016). Their straightforward dismissal of values such as pluralism, respect for human rights, and rule of law undermines the EU's democracies and damages its standing with its neighbours and strategic partners (also see the article on anti-liberalism from Owen in this special issue). If the EU fails to protect its own values on its territory, it will lose its credibility as a trustworthy partner for its neighbours and for other world powers. Living up to the founding principles will determine the Union's capability to exert an external influence.

EU foreign policy in 2025

According to the scenario method as presented above, identifying the key forces that will influence the EU's foreign policy in the next decade facilitates the formulation of policy recommendations.

Thinking differently about coherence in EU foreign policy

Understood as the EU's ability to perform collectively, 'coherence' does not have to mean that all 28 (in the foreseeable future: 27) member states must act together as a unity. It seems utopian to still consider it a prerequisite for effective foreign policy making. The global challenges currently

confronting the EU are multidimensional and more incalculable than ever before, so they should be addressed in a more pragmatic and multidimensional manner.

It is time to make use of the institutional innovations introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, which allow for the establishment of more pragmatic coalitions of member states that are willing to act together. Enhanced cooperation in Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is not only inevitable but also highly desirable. This is particularly the case for variable coalitions of EU countries that, due to an alignment of their (geo)political or economic interests, are willing to take a lead in particular policy areas or relations towards a particular country or region. The notion of 'coalitions of the willing', which more generally has been used to describe US-led coalitions within the United Nations (Beehner, 2007) rather than EU member state alignments, could be adapted for a future European foreign policy. It would also allow the Union to make the best use of the unique expertise and experience of each member state in different areas of external action: '[T]he diversity of the experience, expertise and profile of the EU's member states can be a major political resource for the Union, if their initiatives are framed in common objectives and undertaken either individually or via flexible formats' (Grevi et al., 2013, pp. 57–58). In the same spirit, the EUGS proposes that a 'Member State or a group of Member States who are willing and able to contribute may be invited by the HR, under the responsibility of the Council, to implement agreed positions of the Council' (EUGS, 2016, p. 47). The Treaty of Lisbon already foresees two possibilities of entrusting a group of members with a specific task. One is the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) introduced in Articles 42(6) and 46, which concern exclusively the field of defence; the other is a more open formula for enhanced cooperation within CFSP introduced in Article 43 and 44 (Treaty of the EU, 2012). It is time to apply the possibilities offered by the Treaty in the field of security and defence (Risse, 2012). Also worth considering is a 'coalition of the willing' with an Eastern or Southern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), respective to the interests and competences of individual member states.

The EEAS and its head, the HR, should provide the coordination of such endeavours in close cooperation with the European Commission in order to ensure consistency with agreed EU policies. The HR would undoubtedly benefit from member states' boosted engagement in the EU's external affairs, since a new concept of labour division among numerous EU foreign policy stakeholders is urgently needed. A broad-based debate and consensus around shared strategic interests should facilitate the formulation of a new concept of labour division. The added value of this process would also lend a greater sense of ownership over the Union's foreign policy to its member states, who would then ideally feel more responsible for the policy endeavours they initiated and supported.

Using the powerful tools offered by the Treaty of Lisbon and pursuing the direction of flexible coalitions is a matter of political will. In the words of Mogherini (2016b), it is 'only

a matter of political will. This seems easy, but sometimes we know political will is one of the most difficult things to build'.

Removing a spell from differentiated integration

As the scenarios developed within the Dahrendorf Foresight Project have shown (Sus and Pfeifer, 2016), further enlargement of the EU is not on the table for the foreseeable future (European Commission, 2014); nor has the ENP been effective in creating a 'ring of friends' (Prodi, 2012) beyond the EU borders. Nonetheless, there are several countries in the accession process and others are waiting in line, still hoping to start negotiations or sign Association Agreements. At the same time, differentiated integration,³ labelled also as flexibility, variable geometry, opt-outs or derogations, both within European borders (for example, the Schengen area and the Eurozone) and outside the EU (for example, the European Economic Area with Lichtenstein, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland), is a fact. It appeared in various forms in the Union's earlier history and has divided member states into a group of those willing to proceed more rapidly towards a closer integration and those who would decline some features of the present system of integration, such as a common currency or a common defence policy (Majone, 2005). Moreover, since parts of the EU *acquis* already apply to a number of non-members, the border between these two positions is blurred (Raik and Tamminen, 2014). For example, Norway as a non-EU country closely cooperates with the Union not only on economic issues but also on issues of foreign and security policy by taking part in daily coordination and consultation meetings with the EEAS and the member states in order to safeguard common positions.⁴

Turning the current situation into an advantage by creating issue-related partnerships with neighbours like Ukraine, Turkey or the Western Balkan countries would help to overcome the deadlock of both the enlargement and the ailing neighbourhood policy. Non-EU countries could engage in subsets dealing with energy, trade, migration, etc. and thereby strengthen their relationship with the EU. This could be a way for the EU to regain its transformative power, which currently is rather a memory of the past; it seems the EU has become a 'super-partner' and not a superpower to its neighbours (Grevi et al., 2013).

Europe's development into a two-level or multi-level Union has become even more inevitable following the UK vote to exit. It is not clear yet which type of European integration London would like to adopt once it relinquishes membership status. But it is clear that a compromise will have to be found. Since EU leaders seem united in their position that, due to the British decision to leave the EU, the UK should be shorn of lose any benefits it used to have as a member state for example the access to common market. At the same time, the UK will remain an important economic and political partner for the Union and a way for close cooperation will probably have to be found.

Given this backdrop, the differentiated integration model could strengthen the EU by bolstering cooperation with its

neighbours and letting its member states decide the extent of their economic and political integration. A restructured Union with a strong, closely integrated core and associated circles of integration with varied political or economic priorities could make the EU a more credible partner for other countries and regions in the future. To take an example, the EU might thus consider extending the European Economic Area to include countries that have already signed Stabilisation and Association Agreements (Western Balkan) or Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The existing Energy Community (EU, Western Balkan, Ukraine and Moldova)⁵ could be linked with the recently launched Energy Union⁶ and used as a platform for intensive cooperation in this area.

Already over a decade ago, Majone (2005, p. 16) signalled that differentiated integration is not a 'momentary aberration but the clear indication of an emergent strategy for achieving progress in politically sensitive areas, even at the price of a loss of overall coherence of the system'. However, it is essential to remember that a multi-speed approach can also pose a danger for the integration project by putting it at risk of dissolving the entire EU and creating tensions due to the existence of two-tier or multi-tier member status. In addition, offering candidate states or neighbouring states to joint different integration cycles will not be as rewarding to them as an offer of full membership (Raik and Tamminen, 2014). But enlargement will not happen in the foreseeable future; in view of the rise of populist parties in several member states, and taking Brexit into account as well as the current difficult economic situations in some Eurozone countries, a restructuring of the Union seems inevitable anyway. The idea of differentiated integration allows for controlling the process and avoiding escalation of anti-EU tendencies that could otherwise put an end to further integration on the continent. The biggest challenge is thus to decide what are the areas in which unity and where opt-outs are acceptable. It is crucial that all EU members comply with these decisions.

Early warning mechanisms against extreme right-wing parties

It goes without saying that the future of European foreign policy starts at home. Domestic vulnerabilities play a great role in EU's foreign policy as the member states are the main decision makers in this field.

The scenarios developed within the Dahrendorf Foresight Project can evoke the impression that the endorsement of right-wing populists is growing across the Union. As presented in the previous sections of this paper, the ability to reassure political and economic inclusion within member states and thereby to overcome the challenge of growing support for populist parties should be included as another key driver of future EU foreign policy. Not only the Eastern European countries Hungary, Slovakia and Poland but also France, the Netherlands, Germany and Austria must find effective measures against rising EU-sceptic parties. According to an analysis published by the European Council on

Foreign Relations, insurgent parties already play a direct role in the governance of eight of the EU's 28 countries (Denison, 2016).

Therefore, not only the national elites but also the EU leadership are in need of a political early warning mechanism to address these movements and a strategy to counter the trend towards more nativist, populist, authoritarian sentiments before they become irreversible. Otherwise, in the face of several countries turning towards isolationism and self-protection of their national interests, the European project of a common foreign policy will probably be abandoned, since the member states will lose interest in cultivating a common European role on the global stage. A case in point is offered by the recent non-binding referendum in the Netherlands, where the majority of citizens rejected the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine (White, 2016).

So, the support for extreme right-wing parties seems to be one of the essential internal challenges for the EU's foreign policy. It should be tackled on the EU level through very firm action against the right-wing parties' attempts to break democratic rules and by raising widespread awareness through campaigns for the common strategic interests of the member states. The benefits of European integration should be brokered as a tangible reality for all, since the number of EU citizens declaring their trust in the Union has decreased from 57 per cent in 2007 to 33 per cent in 2016 (Eurobarometer, 2016).

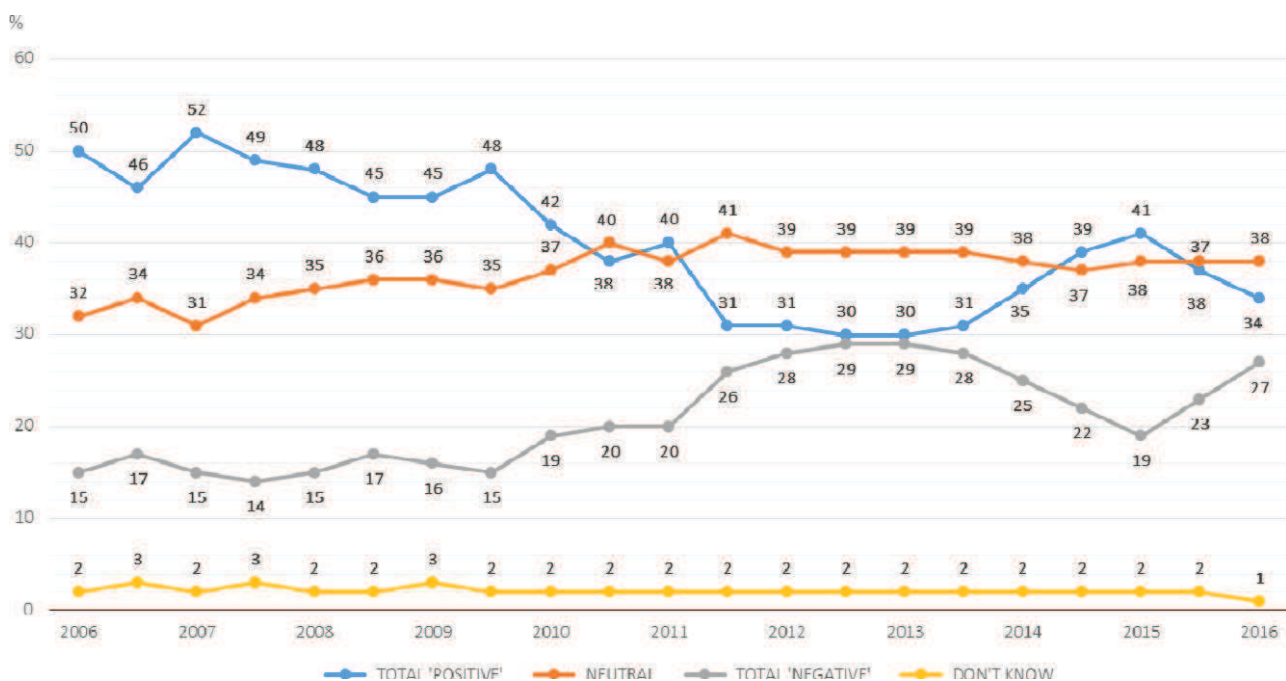
In addition, as Figure 2 shows, 27 per cent of EU citizens declare to have a negative picture of the EU, 34 per cent

have a positive view and 38 per cent are rather neutral. Moreover, more than 55 per cent of Europeans have expressed the opinion that their voice does not count in the EU (Eurobarometer, 2016, p. 16). Taken together, these data make the societies of its member states very vulnerable to the rhetoric of anti-EU parties (Figure 3).

Developing long-term strategic thinking capacities

Finally, the success of the EU's foreign policy will be determined by the ability to think ahead. The Dahrendorf Foresight Project reveals that the EU's relations with its strategic partners and neighbours may take a course for which it is definitely not prepared. US interest and support for the European project should not be taken for granted, as the Americans' role as global police officer might be coming to an end. China may develop into a stronger actor, willing to take over responsibilities beyond its borders and challenge the EU in issues related to climate change. Russia might abandon its neo-imperialist and authoritarian tendencies and get back on a track of constructive cooperation. In some MENA countries, anti-democratic tendencies may become stronger and their governments might decide on soft authoritarianism as a political system, similar to China's model. Turkey might become even more autocratic and more politically and economically interlinked with Russia and lose interest in cooperating with the EU. To avoid being caught by surprise, the EU should proactively engage in areas that may become strategic in the future, such as climate policy cooperation with China, working with Turkey on

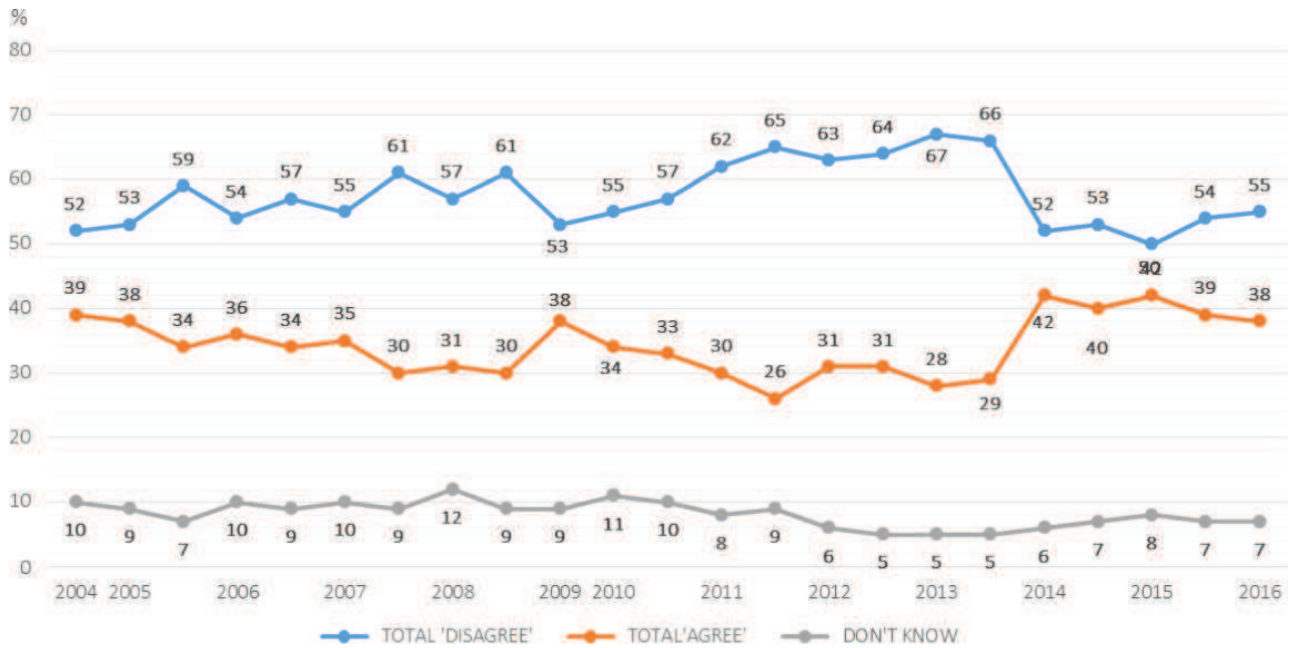
17 Figure 2. The image of the European Union among EU citizens 2006–2016



Source: own visualisation based on Eurobarometer (2016, p. 15).

18 Figure 3. My voice counts in the European Union 2006–2016

LOW RESOLUTION COLOR FIG



Source: Own visualisation based on Eurobarometer (2016, p. 15).

energy policy issues or staying united with Russia in the fight against Daesh. This also seems essential because the potential leadership vacuum in the event of a more isolationist US will transform the global shift of power currently underway into a global disorder, which may become the reality of 2025.

In light of the overwhelming and unexpected challenges which have jolted the EU and most probably will continue to shake it to its foundation, some EU officials and experts have started embracing strategic thinking in policy making. Yet the drafting process of the EUGS and the recent attempts to enhance the strategic capabilities across the EU institutions are still not sufficient. Global trend analyses and comprehensive foresight thinking should be integrated fully into the EU's foreign policy planning since the challenges in this field are proliferating. The Strategic Planning Division within the EEAS, the inter-institutional European Strategy and Policy Analysis System, the European Political Strategy Centre within the European Commission, the Long Term Trends Team at the Cabinet of the Secretary General of the European Parliament and various actors dealing with foresight studies from member states should combine resources in order to tackle the future challenges. At the same time, strategic planning of the EU's external actions should involve regular evaluation of the Union's performance in various dimensions of its international involvement (Kleistra and van Willigen, 2010).

The challenge lies not only in a sober assessment of dangers, but also, primarily, in figuring out how to use the available instruments effectively. The 2003 strategy already

aimed at better coordination between various actors and instruments in executing EU foreign policy interests. However, the delivery was lacking since the document offered a general vision rather than a concrete plan on how to act.⁷ Against this backdrop, operationalisation should become the priority of strategic thinking and with the implementation of the recently published EU Global Strategy it is high time to start, as 'the political vision set out in the EUGS will be swiftly translated into concrete policy initiatives and action' (Council of the EU, 2016a). The HR has announced several action plans following the strategic document to be published and put into effect in the autumn of 2016. In November, the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence was adopted (Council of the EU, 2016b), which aims at changing the institutional structure of security and defence at the EU level and at providing for the capabilities to develop a European defence industry (Mogherini, 2016a). Further steps should follow according to the roadmap on the follow-up to the EU Global Strategy (EEAS, 2016).

Conclusions

The European Union has arrived at a critical juncture and faces some troubling uncertainty; so, foreseeing its future in 2025 is a fascinating yet challenging task. Drawing on key forces identified during the Dahrendorf Foresight Project, this paper has pointed out four steps to be taken into consideration when formulating and implementing future EU foreign policy. The four proposals correspond to the leading principles of the EUGS, namely, principled pragmatism and

resilience of the Union. But they go beyond these general directives to offer concrete suggestions for policy action, as they are backed up by systematic and rigorous foresight analyses of global trends, common assumptions and key forces that will be essential for EU's foreign policy in 2025.

10 As Neale Donald Walsch rightly said, 'Life begins at the end of your comfort zone', meaning that we learn most by challenging ourselves. One can paraphrase the statement and apply it to the current situation of the EU. Times in which 'Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free' – when it enjoyed a 'period of peace and stability unprecedented in European history' – are now a distant memory (European Council, 2003, p. 1). The EU is mired in deep crisis and outside of its comfort zone with no end yet in sight. Luckily, history provides several examples showing that critical junctures can become an impulse for moving forward towards a different and more resilient community. The very idea for the European Community evolved from the experience of a devastating war as a remedy to secure stability, peace and prosperity. The beginnings of the integration process in the 1950s were marked by failed attempts to establish the European Defence Community and the European Political Community, but they were followed by the successful development of the European Economic Community. Among the most recent examples for the Union's ability to overcome crisis, what comes to mind is the establishment of the Single Market project in 1992, which emerged from fiscal problems and exchange rate turbulences in the 1970s and 1980s and resulted in the introduction of the common currency. The French and Dutch turndowns of the Constitutional Treaty as well as the Irish objection to the Lisbon Treaty in 2008 were overcome and so the Lisbon Treaty was signed and ratified. Eventually, the 2008 financial crisis of the Eurozone revealed the insufficiency of the Economic and Monetary Union and concerned voices pushed for a deepening of integration in this field via the European Fiscal Pact and banking union.

Yet, muddling through the numerous crisis of the recent decade, the Union has experienced a decrease in public support. Thus, in order to come back to a path of integration, the EU must risk transforming itself in fundamental ways and, first and foremost, regain the trust of its citizens. Otherwise it will plunge into even further disintegration.

Notes

1. For a full text, see: https://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/pdf/eugs_review_web.pdf.
2. For more on Shell and its scenarios, see: <http://www.shell.com/energy-and-innovation/the-energy-future/scenarios.html>.
3. For a classification of differentiated integration, see: Stubbs, A. (1996) 'A Categorization of Differentiated Integration', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 34:2, pp. 281-295.
4. For more information, see: Norway mission to the EU <http://www.eu-norway.org/> [Accessed 24 January 2017].
5. For more information on the Energy Community, see: https://www.energy-community.org/portal/page/portal/ENC_HOME.
6. For more information on the Energy Union, see: https://ec.europa.eu/priorities/energy-union-and-climate_en.

7. For more about the characteristics of ESS 2003 and the difference with EUGS 2016, see: Cooper (2015).

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Author Information

Monika Sus has been a Dahrendorf Postdoctoral Fellow at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin since February 2015. In the academic year 2016–2017 she is also Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence.

Graphical Abstract TOC

The European Union stands at a critical juncture, as does its foreign and security policy. Among all political and economic turmoil that has pulled the Union apart and divided it internally in the last decade, Brexit has delivered the coup de grâce.