
First Edition

NGE Next
Generation
for Europe
Magazine

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Introduction

Joop Hazenberg

Introduction

Europe is in crisis mode and so are Europe's young.

With staggering unemployment figures, lagging education standards and political stagnation, the next generation is in trouble. But that doesn't mean we can't do something about our future.

One action is to join the debate on the policies of the European Union. This is why I started the Next Generation for Europe, a new think-tank based in Brussels but with a network of 'young thinkers' all over the continent. We want to bring fresh ideas and surprising perspectives into the Eurobubble and stir things up. The politicians and policy makers of the EU should know more about the position and potential of young people in Europe, and take their views into account.

This first edition of the Magazine is such a contribution, and boasts a variety of ideas and concepts. From a federal future

for Europe to human rights policies, from the scope of external action to the development of a Gross European Happiness Index. Each of these writers has a strong background in their own topic, and was happy to combine analysis with concrete policy proposals.

We hope you enjoy the Next Generation for Europe Magazine and if you want to discuss one of the essays further, let us know. And for other aspiring writers: we want to publish the next edition in the second half of 2014, so send in your contributions!

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More information on www.ng4.eu

Europe's Federal Future

Gilles Pittoors



Why Federalism is Europe's Best Shot

Overview

Europe is in trouble. The economic and financial crisis has caused massive unemployment and is threatening to create a lost generation of youth that was never given a chance. Change is needed, urgently. Europe should do more; Europe should be more.

Introduction

The financial crisis has made painfully clear that the age of the 'nation-state' is about to end. Either the EU remains a loose federation of states, or it becomes a strong federal state itself. If we do not make this choice now, Europe will continue to stumble from one existential crisis to the next. Diversity is an issue that needs to be addressed. Further federalizing the EU and appropriately centralizing authority in the EU appears increasingly to be the only future for Europe.

The European Union faces significant challenges. The international economic crisis has caused its economy to plummet, and

the Eurozone area now faces several years of [minimal growth](#) or a prolonged recession. The failure of the financial system plunged the Eurozone into an existential crisis, and turned the initial banking crisis into a sovereign debt crisis. In such a daunting economic climate, it should come as no surprise that unemployment, especially among young people, is on the rise. The EU is already dealing with 7.5 million young Europeans without a job, with [youth unemployment](#) escalating to a frightfully high 23% - with no drop of these levels in sight during the course of the next few years. Yet even those dramatic figures are still misleading, as many young graduates are underemployed in temporary jobs, traineeships or internships, often working for free and having no certainty about their future careers whatsoever.

However, although youth unemployment is [recognised](#) as one of the biggest challenges for Europe in the near future, the impact of the crisis goes beyond these socio-economic issues and has grave consequences for the political face of the Union. Externally, Europe is losing ground in the international political arena to other countries such as China, Russia or the US, whose economies have been less touched (so far) by the crisis. Not to say that in those countries the economy is actually doing any better – the US's public debt, for example, is [much higher](#) than that of EU member states – but the economic situation on the other side of the Atlantic has not had the same political ramifications.

Internally, the EU is facing an existential crisis on two fronts: its weak public legitimacy and democratic deficit have created increasing doubts about the desirability of the EU, while its cumbersome decision-making processes also cast doubts on the feasibility of the integration project.

Yet the EU has shown in the past that it is perfectly capable of not only overcoming economic and political crises, but even coming out stronger afterwards. The European project itself was a response to the biggest crisis of the past century: two consecutive world wars. Nonetheless, today the project is failing, unable to overcome the constant bickering of member states, unable to provide its youth with jobs, unable to restore economic stability and ensure growth. As a result of these perceived failures, [public trust in the project is plunging](#), nationalist and populist movements are growing, Euroscepticism is on the rise, and solidarity between member states is at stake.

Federalism is our only real choice

It is for these reasons that now, more than ever, a federal approach to European integration is the best option for the EU to withstand these crises and overcome them. Europe needs to redefine its direction and purpose, and the choice is quite simple: either we stay put and continue in the same direction, with all-powerful members squabbling amongst themselves; or we opt for a Europe that is truly politically, economically and socially united, which makes its decisions through an advanced

democratic system. In short, either the EU remains a loose federation of states, or it becomes a strong federal state itself. If we do not make this choice now, Europe will only stumble from one existential crisis to the next. If we fail to show the courage to firmly choose for 'more Europe' and leave the familiar but failing nation-state notion behind us, we will succeed in reforming the EU into a powerful union with strong procedures and democratic institutions.

The objections and questions are well known: How will a more federal Europe solve the crisis? What will a European federation look like? What to do with the individual countries? And is such a federation even practically feasible?

Of course federalism is no magic formula that will make all our troubles suddenly vanish. Governments make policy mistakes, whether it is a federal European government, a national or a local government, but agreeing to make the EU into a federal state will diminish both the danger of institutional deadlock and the existential nature of the crises of today and tomorrow.

When the EU is recognised as a federal government, its failures will be appropriately considered as policy mistakes and not as a systemic, 'innate' problem of unique to the European construction. After all, just because a government makes mistakes is no reason to deconstruct the institution altogether. Similarly, merely disagreeing with current EU policies does not necessarily imply that European integration needs to be terminated.

On the contrary, when policies fail due to political deadlock it is high time to reform its institutions and make them both more efficient and more accountable. Falling back on the familiar nation-state to solve problems is counter-productive: numerous global challenges, such as environmental, migration and security issues are outgrowing the scope of individual states and require a more comprehensive, common European approach. Accountability and efficiency: those are the key words for a European federation.

Closing the democratic gap

The first area where federalization can help is in the domain of accountability and the EU's democratic deficit. Many European citizens are losing faith in politics and democracy in general. Europe's voting rates are plunging and a [poll](#) conducted in 2009 revealed that more than half of the population was interested neither in voting nor in the election results – a situation which by now is likely to be much worse.. One of the main reasons for this lack of trust is an increased sense of futility. When one disagrees with certain policies, the ‘normal’ reaction is to vote for a different individual or party. Unfortunately, that is exactly what is not possible in the EU. Citizens are unable to democratically vote for or against EU policies because there is no real European-wide democracy.

The Commission is not a real government that can be held publicly accountable and the Parliament – despite noticeably in-

creased democratic oversight powers over the past years - is not a real forum for political debate. The political debates prior to European elections revolve around national or even local issues, and actual European issues are boiled down to the simplified options of being either pro- or anti-EU. Restoring faith necessitates giving the democratic institutions that we have, the power to act upon expectations and generating an inclusive Europe-wide public debate. Recognizing the EU as a federal level can make this feasible.

There are several ways to make the EU's institutions more democratic and accountable. One could, for example, have a directly elected Commission President, have the composition of the Commission aligned with election results, or create pan-European parties. These innovations would make politicians accountable to the whole of the EU instead of only their home constituency, while at the same time increasing public involvement in the EU and allowing for a genuine European public debate to emerge.

Ideally, the relations between the Council and the European Parliament (EP) should evolve towards a federal bicameral system, whereby the EP represents the citizens and the Council the member states. The past two decades saw a massive increase in political involvement for the EP, but much work still needs to be done on the role of the Council. Not only is it composed of national diplomats instead of elected representatives, but too

often it also exercises excessive control over the legislative process, which makes it opaque and tilts the balance of power in favour of member states, side-lining the EP and the Commission. For example, the intergovernmental nature of the Eurozone has put power over the common currency firmly in the hands of the strongest economies – mostly Germany and France – which naturally look after their own interests and have therefore been [unable to formulate a comprehensive response](#) to the systemic problems of the financial crisis.

Let's blame Brussels

Yet without an inclusive public debate at the European level, the EU will never truly be a federation, no matter the number or nature of the institutions put in place.. In his 1952 paper published in *Political Science Quarterly*, William Livingstone already pointed out that "institutional devices, both in form and function, are only the surface manifestations of the deeper federal quality of the society that lies beneath the surface. The essence of federalism lies not in the institutional or constitutional structure but in the society itself." An institution is merely a stage; it requires actors to work it. Citizens need to think of the EU as their federal state, not as some distant administration that dictates policies.

Voters hold accountable the level of government which they believe is responsible for the policy output, but most citizens have very little knowledge of how the EU works and what it does, and

many national politicians make use of this gap to blame all sorts of things on the EU, while taking credit for its successes. In fact, most of the popular critiques on the EU's architecture – such as the size of the Commission, or the expensive double residence of the EP in both Brussels and Strasbourg – are not failures of the EU as such, but of the failure of member states to negotiate and compromise effectively. Many members of Parliament are ceaselessly trying to abolish the Strasbourg trip and many Commission officials want to abandon the tradition of having one Commissioner per country, but on both fronts the members are unwilling or unable to agree on changing the Treaties.

This cumbersome and inefficient nature of integration through the bargaining of member states is another major field where federalism could help. By agreeing on a common European constitution and empowering the institutions to act in a wide range of fields, the bulky treaty-reviews could be avoided to a certain degree and the efficiency and coherence of the EU would be greatly increased. Indeed, coherence and efficiency are some of the strongest imperatives in favour of federalism, but are countered by popular attachment to sovereignty. As a matter of fact, the tension between efficiency and community, or between unification and differentiation, is the main problem arising from federalisation. Europe is a mosaic of different cultures, identities and nationalities – all of which rightfully wish to maintain their uniqueness. As a result, many member states are driven

by concerns over national sovereignty and their ability to assert their autonomy.

Concurrently, however, the forces of globalisation and interdependence push for more intensive cooperation that allows for greater efficiency and coherence of the EU as a socio-economic area. For example, having a common judicial system and/or transport network greatly aids economic development, not to mention the impact of the European Single Market or single currency on Europe's attractiveness for investors and businesses. Additionally, globalised multi-nationals are no longer confined to national borders and can thus no longer be adequately regulated by governments. In short: there is a constant tension between the notion of sovereignty and the notion of union.

How to govern an expanded Union?

This tension increased greatly as the EU's membership expanded. In anticipation of the major Eastern enlargement of 2004 and 2007, the projected heterogeneity of the EU caused many to call for reform that would enable it to simultaneously accommodate 28 diverging positions and yet increase the efficiency of its institutions and the coherence of its policies. In view of the sovereignty/union tension, member states opted for a more 'flexible' Union that aimed at creating a system that was acceptable for all. Refusing to empower the EU any further, their main concern was that the existing rigid procedures of con-

sensual decision-making would become unmanageable with 28 states. The Open Method of Coordination, the procedure for Enhanced Cooperation, or the option of opting out are but a few tools to facilitate the EU's flexibility and prevent a political impasse.

However, none of these options seemed to have done any good. Just look at the Lisbon Strategy, which was designed to turn the EU into the world's most competitive economy by 2010; similarly, look at the Stability and Growth Pact, which aimed to guarantee the solidity of the Eurozone. Both made extensive use of flexible and non-binding methods and both failed rather miserably. The idea that member states would follow the rules without the need for binding legislations turned out to be naïve. Indeed, as [Charles Wyplosz](#) pointed out, the peer pressure that was supposed to push the members to meet their commitments "turned into mutual congratulations" and the initially proactive stance of the Commission was nullified by the Council. Flexibility was a great idea on paper, but it quickly became a way for reluctant member states to avoid responsibility. It made clear that inter-governmentalism and reliance on the goodwill of states is not suited to govern the complex and far-reaching policy areas in which the EU is active.

Take the banking crisis, for example, which has demonstrated that without binding rules and a central institution of control, individual members are unable or unwilling to follow the estab-

lished rules. And making binding rules through intergovernmental consensus and bargaining always boils the initiative down to the lowest common denominator. Although it might gain politicians votes with disgruntled citizens, demanding ever more flexibility of the EU is thus simply irresponsible, as it runs the risk of hollowing out and disintegrating the Union entirely.

History is on our side here: the Roman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Yugoslavia and many other multinational entities eventually collapsed due to a critical lack of internal cohesion. This cohesion is still missing in the EU, not only on socio-economic divergences but also – and arguably more importantly so – on political debates regarding the future of Europe. Although in the last sixty years the nations of Europe have shown that they generally prefer cooperation to confrontation, current doomsday scenarios about the collapse of the Union have never been so widespread. Many doubt not only the feasibility but also the desirability of continuing the integration process, and member states are deeply divided on fundamental questions such as the balance between sovereignty and union, the need for convergence and the respect for diversity, between solidarity and discipline, and between long-term visions and short-term solutions.

Quantum leaps are not feasible

Despite – or, maybe because of – these divergences, further federalizing the EU and appropriately centralizing authority in

the EU is the only future for Europe. A divided Europe will lose its wealth, social system and international standing, while a united Europe will pave the way for increased security, prestige and prosperity, which are the consequences of increased accountability and efficiency of the EU's institutions. Recognising the EU as a federation on both the legal side – i.e. formalising the European construction through a common constitution – and on the political side – i.e. generating a debate on federal European issues – is the only way to achieve these goals, which are vital to the future endurance of the Union and the wider continent.

Yet, we must remain realistic about our goals. It is clear that the classical federal structure as embodied by the USA is not possible in Europe. The "quantum leap" towards a "United States of Europe" that politicians Guy Verhofstadt and Daniel Cohn-Bendit urged for in their 2012 manifesto 'For Europe' is practically infeasible. Similarly, although the Spinelli Group's proposals for a Fundamental Law of the European Union are welcome calls for more Europe amidst widespread euroscepticism, these are no realistic visions for the future of Europe. Rather, we should maintain an incremental approach to deeper integration and federalisation. This does not mean to just laissez-faire, but recognises the limits of federalisation. Crucial to the success of the European project is the respect it shows to Europe's historical diversity. A European federation is not the same as a unitary European super-state, and it should not attempt to harmonise

Europe into a single nation. On the contrary, a European federation should be an open forum for debate which enables national and local cultures to flourish – as long as they are in agreement with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

So, how does this vision differ from the EU today? Well, crucial to a federation is the notion that the federal level should have the power to intervene in case a state does not comply with the common rules. Currently, the Commission's authority to do so is extremely weak and often blunted by Council oversight. If a member state does not comply with EU law, the Commission's only weapon is to start an infringement procedure, which is an extremely lengthy process. Member states can thus effectively hold off the implementation of a 'federal' EU law for many years.

If we want Europe to become a unified continent, we must give the Commission wide authority to pursue comprehensive policies that push for convergence between member states on key issues such as human rights, employment, foreign affairs and taxation. Agreeing on binding rules instead of general standards is one of the most important steps towards a federal Union. This does not mean, however, that the Commission should start micromanaging. Not only would that be inefficient, it would also be practically impossible to implement regulation in accordance with 28 different national traditions. Yet, the current crisis makes it painfully obvious that a lack of convergence and excessive

flexibility can lead only to social tragedy. Binding rules do not mean micro-detailed rules, but imply only the acceptance of the EU's authority to enforce these rules and “punish” those who try to avoid their responsibility.

The crisis has been destructive in many ways; however, it has also generated momentum for integration on which the EU must capitalise. Proof of this are the plans for a banking union, the ‘Six Pack’ and ‘Two Pack’ programmes introducing new macroeconomic surveillance mechanisms, and a general acceptance of the idea that the Commission should develop towards a full economic government for the Union. Also the partial recognition of the need for more political union to safeguard the future of the project is a big step forward.

Conclusion

The upcoming 2014 European elections are a great occasion to test the readiness of the European citizens to accept deeper integration. Most of the institutions are there, it is now up to responsible politicians to inform their constituency of the advantages of integration and cooperation, and of the many achievements the EU has already realised. In turn, it is up to a new generation of citizens to restore their faith and trust in politics, and turn Europe back into the positive story it used to be. We can build all the institutions and have all the great arguments we want, but only popular support for more unity and deeper inte-

gration can ensure Europe's federal future, and only a federal future for Europe will ensure its success.

About the author

Gilles Pittoors (1988) studied history and European affairs at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. He is currently pursuing a PhD in European politics at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, where he conducts research on flexible European integration, governance and federalism, and has published widely on various issues relating to European and Belgian politics.

Further reading

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Gross European Happiness

Jasper Bergink



How the EU should change to increase the well-being of its citizens

Overview

The focus of EU public policy on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is short-sighted. Economic growth has only a limited effect on social progress and the well-being of EU citizens. The well-being of EU citizens, not GDP, must underlie EU policy. EU institutions must change to make Gross European Happiness (GEH) a reality.

Several symbolic and substantial EU policy measures can enhance GEH, from enshrining GEH in the Lisbon Treaty to investing funds in happiness education and fighting mental health problems.

Introduction

This story of well-being starts in the year of protest: 1968. Throughout the world, people rallied to defend their causes: the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, student protests in Paris, the civil rights movement in the US. In the same year, just a couple of weeks before the murder of Martin Luther King Jr, a candidate in the Democratic Party primaries for US President delivered one of the most brilliant speeches ever made. It is worthwhile quoting some extracts:

“Too much and for too long, we have surrendered personal excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our Gross National Product, now, is over 800 billion dollars a year, but that [GNP] counts air pollution and cigarette advertising. It counts napalm and nuclear warheads and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children. Yet the GNP does not allow for the health of our children, or the joy of their play. It does not include the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage. It measures everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

These words were spoken by Robert F. Kennedy three months before he was shot. His [speech](#) serves as a great rhetorical illustration that human beings and their societies are often too short-sighted to act in their own best interests. People are not as rational as we may think. Often we find it extremely hard to

focus on what truly matters for our happiness and well-being ([Note 1](#)).

All of us are vaguely aware that there is more to life than wealth, economic growth and the GDP of our country. Yet, Western governments, and the EU alike, have changed little in the four and a half decades since Kennedy's speech.

Where GDP Comes From

Before uncovering the implications of Kennedy's words for EU policies, it is useful to review how GDP became such an important reference point in our societies. Once upon a time, there was no money. In ancient times, people simply exchanged goods. Objects that could not lose their value, such as shells or rare metals like silver and gold, emerged as currency. They facilitated trade: when direct barter was not possible, golden coins filled the gap. Later on, banks were born as places where merchants could deposit their coins, receiving bank notes in return to travel without large amounts of gold.

At this point, the emergence of money was irreversible. Money also quickly became more than just a practical tool to buy and to sell. It allowed individuals to save, and to measure and compare their wealth. And what a bank account is for an individual, is GDP for a society.

In essence, [GDP](#) is nothing more than an accounting measure; it was created for this purpose in the 1930s. It is simply a con-

cept that summarises the economic value, in monetary terms, of everything that is produced in a country in one year. GDP is a neutral piece of data, compiled by statisticians. Although the statistic does not carry any intrinsic meaning, it becomes important because of the the value people and policymakers attach to it. The choice for GDP as primary indicator in our societies has significant implications.

Evidently, GDP is an easy and practical indicator. A euro produced is a euro produced. Unlike happiness and well-being, GDP is not an abstract concept requiring a complex and subjective balancing exercise to grasp all the elements that constitute it. And economic production matters: our rising income, and continuing economic growth over the ages have brought about the high living standards that we (largely) enjoy today.

There are, however, at least three reasons why the dominance of GDP is problematic. Firstly, the focus on economic production means that environmental and social externalities are not considered. GDP neglects that the depletion of resources, the cost of climate change and social inequality – all of which affect our quality of life ([Note 2](#)).

Secondly, an increase in GDP does not equal progress. Despite the rise in income, happiness levels around the Western world are quite similar to those we experienced fifty years ago ([Note 3](#)).

Thirdly, it's only poor people's happiness that rises when incomes increase. For people with higher incomes, an additional euro does not lead to greater happiness ([Note 4](#)).

Despite these problems, public policies in Western countries and the EU are often driven by their impact on GDP. The Commission publishes its economic forecasts three times a year. The forecasts include growth predictions for all 28 EU member states, with the detail of one digit after the comma. Every month, statistics on inflation, business confidence and industrial production are released. There is no systemic publication of statistics on happiness and well-being, despite an effort to complement economic indicators by environmental and social statistics outlined back in 2009.

The Correlation of Wealth and Well-being

The young field of "happiness economics" has studied the causal link between wealth and well-being in some depth. The general consensus is that there is a relatively weak correlation between the two. The effects of money on happiness are strong when poor people or countries see their income rise above a minimum threshold. However, for an individual or society whose income is already high, an additional euro, pound or crown does not directly improve happiness well-being ([Note 5](#)).

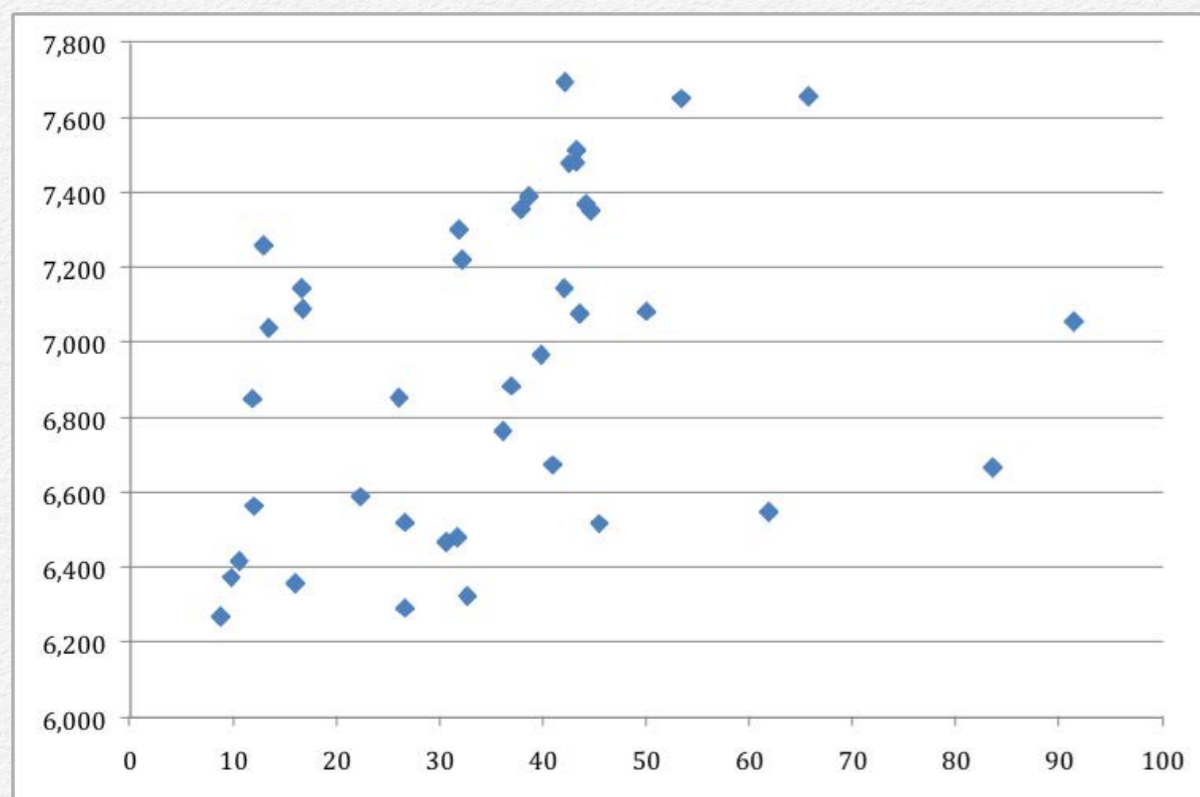
This is the general picture. However, happiness is a complicated, subjective matter and many other elements come into

play. For instance, the fact that your salary moves upwards, or that you earn more than your peers, is related to higher happiness levels. Within a country, richer people tend to be happier than their poorer compatriots. Similarly, a decline in salary or being in a lower position than colleagues or friends is associated with lower happiness level.

Looking at different countries, happiness levels are generally higher in richer countries. But the relationship is not direct. The graph below plots the data of the forty happiest countries (according to the World Happiness Report) and their wealth (with data from the World Bank). It does not show a direct relationship between GDP per capita and happiness. Several poorer countries outperform their richer neighbours, attaining similar happiness levels with lower incomes. We should learn from these positive outliers, and policymakers should translate their lessons to their home environment.

One of the over-performing countries is Costa Rica. It is not a highly developed country, but scores consistently well with a twelfth place in the [World Happiness Report](#) and a first place in the new economics foundation's [Happy Planet Index](#). Of course it is difficult to identify the crucial factor in Costa Rica's happiness. However, anecdotal evidence shows that the close relationship of Costa Ricans to their nature and their life philosophy of '[pura vida](#)' contribute to high happiness levels.

Panama, Mexico, Venezuela and Thailand similarly score high happiness levels with incomes below \$17,000 per capita in 2012. Several European countries can also be found towards the upper left corner. Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Iceland all score high happiness levels – without being as filthy rich as Luxembourg, Norway and Switzerland.



Graph 1. Well-being (vertical axis, happiness levels on a scale from 1 to 10 as per the World Happiness Report 2013) vs GDP per capita (horizontal axis, in \$, World Bank 2012) in selected countries.

* for the methodology and the full World Happiness Report, see [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network](#)

** figures from the [World Bank](#)

The figures also show a divide within the EU. Many Northern European countries are at the top of the table. Central and Eastern European countries including Latvia, Romania and especially Bulgaria are found in the lower half. And the gap has widened in the last years. The World Happiness Report found a steep decline in happiness in crisis countries like Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain when comparing 2006 to 2012.

Beyond GDP

Scientists are thus well aware that the relationship between income and happiness is relatively weak after a minimum level has been surpassed. As discussed above, we have also observed that rises in income in the Western world in the last fifty years correlate with limited increases in happiness. With this in mind, many organisations have aspired to follow Kennedy’s call to measure what makes life worthwhile. They have devised systems that look ‘beyond GDP’, as the domain is known.

Economists see individuals and organisations are rational, utility-maximising actors. Their work is complemented by researchers who specialize in behavioural-, environmental- and even happiness economics. Scholars in these disciplines work on the assumption that “not everything that counts, can be

counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”, as UK sociologist William Bruce Cameron put it. Their analysis methodologies aim to make the uncountable countable. Many of these alternative indices seek to factor in the health of our children, the intelligence of public debate and our wit and our courage that Kennedy spoke about. Some examples are the UN Human Development Index, the Genuine Progress Index and the OECD’s Better Life Index (see box 1).

One of the most famous alternatives is the concept of [Gross National Happiness](#) (GNH), which has its origin in Bhutan. GNH dates back to 1974, when King Jigme Wangchuck took over the reign of the small Buddhist Kingdom in the Himalayas. Confronted with the need to open up and modernise his isolated country, whilst preserving centuries of Buddhist traditions, he decided to establish Gross National Happiness as the basic philosophy for his reign. In 2008, the state’s objective “to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness” became enshrined in the constitution.

In real policy-making, the concept however is more of an ideal than a day-to-day practice. Public administration standards in Bhutan, an upper-middle income country with a small civil service, are not of the highest level. Also, GNH is not universally understood by Bhutanese citizens. GNH was no major issue in the second parliamentary elections in May last year, though this is also could be contributed to the fact that Bhutan is still far from

a mature democracy. Nevertheless, it could serve as an inspiration to EU policymakers. Isn’t Gross European Happiness a worthwhile goal?

Box 1: Alternative indicators

The best known alternative is the United Nations [Human Development Index](#). It is based on a country's GDP, education levels and life expectancy. Performance on this list is quite similar to the GDP ranking. Western countries like Norway, Australia and the US are found on the top ranks and mainly African countries at the bottom.

The New Economics Foundation, a British NGO, has created the [Happy Planet Index](#), setting out 'happy life years' against the consumption of resources. The results are a lot different than other indices. Top performers here are: Costa Rica, Vietnam, Colombia, Belize and El Salvador, which achieve high life expectancies with fair happiness levels and a relatively small ecological footprint.

In 2013 the [Social Progress Index](#) was set up by the non-profit Social Progress Imperative. Their index provides a broader measure of well-being via 52 indicators grouped under the more abstract labels 'basic human needs', 'foundations of well-being' and 'opportunity'. In the first results, covering 49 countries, Sweden, the UK, Switzerland and other Western countries topped the list.

A similar methodology is used by the US [Genuine Progress Index](#) (GPI). Contrary to other systems for measurement, the GPI does not compare countries, but assesses progress in the US

from the 1950s until recent years. It is composed of three dimensions: economic, environmental and social. The study concludes that 'genuine progress' in the US peaked in the 1970s. Despite steady economic growth, its benefits have been offset by the costs of income inequality, loss of leisure time and environmental degradation, writes the GPI's [2006 report](#).

Apart from NGOs and researchers, national governments including the [UK](#) and [France](#) and intergovernmental organisations have considered alternative indices. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) measures well-being and progress through the [Better Life index](#). The index is based on 11 values, from housing to life satisfaction and from civic engagement to safety. Rather than balancing these themselves, the OECD leaves it to the user to decide how much value they want to attach to each indicator. This tweak underlines the subjectivity of these indices. When all eleven indicators are accounted for equally, Australia, Sweden and Canada fill the top positions.

For a Happy European Union

EU policy processes should grant well-being the central place that it deserves. In no way, should a government – European or national – interfere with individual people’s choices in life. No government can ever tell me how to be happy. But it is evident that a government is ultimately responsible for the quality of life of its citizens. Implementing this side of the bargain of our social contract requires a series of changes in style and substance.

First of all, the EU can make some symbolic changes in its core philosophy. The Bhutanese constitution promotes GNH and the American [declaration of independence](#) identifies the pursuit of happiness as an unalienable right. In comparison, the EU Treaty’s stipulation that the Union’s “aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples” is quite minimalist.

The Lisbon Treaty should be revised to make the Gross European Happiness (GEH) of over 500 million citizens of the EU, its core purpose. And in order to “walk the talk”, a new Commission service - responsible for the policies promoting well-being – should be created. This new DG could be named DG Gross European Happiness and Well-Being. Maybe David Cameron, [an active proponent of General Well-Being](#), might even want to nominate a Commissioner to steer the DG?

Evidently, these proposals are symbolic. But substance follows style. There are at least four areas where the EU could make improvements. Firstly, the EU should invest in developing its own version of Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness index. GNH is very much based on Bhutan’s values. Europe is a different place and Europeans experience well-being differently. Therefore, the EU should make a cultural translation of GNH into a Gross European Happiness (GEH) index.

Secondly, the Commission should provide regular updates on EU citizen’s well-being. Together with its economic forecasts and regular indicators, it should publish reports on the progress it has made in fostering well-being. This not a revolutionary step: the Commission itself has already laid out plans to complement economic statistics with regular environmental and social indicators in its Communication “GDP and beyond”. These plans should be fully implemented.

As a next step, the Commission should of course apply the knowledge of these new GEH reports. EU policy-making should tackle the weaknesses that are revealed. This is not about a transfer of sovereignty or increased spending, but about shifting EU resources to those areas where they have the largest positive impact on quality of life. Why not grant substantial weight to well-being indicators in the impact assessments that the Commission carries about before the adoption of important proposals. The impact on fundamental rights is already a mandatory

part of these reviews, so why not include a ‘happiness impact assessment’ as well?

Finally, well-being can be integrated into all policy areas. Some of the focus areas include health-care, education and community life. In many of these areas, the Commission’s competences are limited, or shared with member states. But even via best practices or benchmarking what member states are doing, there’s an opportunity for the Commission to make a contribution. EU policies and funding should follow UK philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s advice: “Create all the happiness you are able to create; remove all the misery you are able to remove.” A massive number of Europeans will suffer from mental health problems and depression through their lives; it is one of the largest causes of misery.

The EU could find ways to promote happiness education. Europeans spend up to twenty years in the education system. While they acquire knowledge and skills in many important fields, one of them is lacking. In our school system, little attention is paid to teaching students about well-being. The EU could fund initiatives to set up these kind of programmes, to make sure that children not only know the key dates of their history, mathematical integration and differentiation, and speak at least one other European language, but are also equipped with the life skills that make their lives easier. Happiness is also massively boosted by trust. Community life and trust in your neighbours is thought to

be a key factor in the happiness of countries like [Denmark](#) and Iceland’s happiness. A good government thus invests in trust.

Count the Uncountable That Matters

A radical change is needed. The evidence shows we are doing something wrong. We are sacrificing our limited resources for economic growth, whilst our progress in terms of well-being stagnates. GDP has influenced our thinking and our actions way too much for way too long. From Bhutan to the UK, wise men and women have created alternative indicators that are better suited to do the job. It is time to focus on what truly matters and endeavour to make the uncountable countable.

The American sociologist W. I. Thomas once stated that “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” It is about time that the EU defines well-being, not economic growth, as the real issue.

About the author

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Notes

1. Within academia, there are no universally accepted definitions for concepts as happiness, well-being and quality of life. Yet, happiness (or also: subjective well-being) is generally used for a specific happy feeling in a determined moment in time. Researchers often prefer terms like well-being or quality of life (or also: objective well-being) when referring to life satisfaction over a longer period. Still, the terms are often used interchangeable. The common term 'Gross National Happiness' in reality refers more to well-being than to happiness.
2. See Jackson (2006)
3. Layard (2011), pp. 30-31
4. Layard, pp. 31-32.
5. It is disputed at what the level the curve flattens or even inverts. Proto and Rustichini (2013) observe a peak of happiness levels with an income at \$30,000.

The Strategic Prizes of EU External Action

Erwin van Veen

4

Inspiration, Competition and Compassion

Overview

The external action of the European Union lacks a sense of strategic purpose. This is problematic because the prosperity of its member states and citizens depends on its ability to represent their values and interests in the world effectively, and sometimes aggressively. Such purpose, however, should not be sought in classic diplomacy, hard security or geopolitics. This is best left to the EU's member states for the time being. Instead, the EU should leverage its unique nature and experience to inspire more inclusive governance, set the global framework for economic competition and lead international development efforts.

Introduction

The current debate concerning the nature of the European Union's (EU) external action and the functioning of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is so procedural that it barely

touches what its strategic objectives should be. Yet, this question must be answered in order to deliver on the foreign policy ambitions that EU leaders have expressed time and again. It must also be answered to resolve many of the issues of organizational design, recruitment and operational procedure that continue to plague the EEAS in the years after its creation.

In discussing this question it is important to bear in mind that the EU is not a federation with a unified bureaucracy in which foreign policy is a centralized competency. Instead, the EU has 28 national foreign services that are unlikely to give up their competences anytime soon. In addition, the military strategies, capabilities and foreign policy priorities of many of the EU's members differ so substantially for historic, geographic and political reasons that offensive military operations under EU flag are, simply, fantasies of the imagination. In view of the blowback of a long decade of US-led global securitization, this is not necessarily problematic. It does mean, however, that the EU's external action should not focus on classic diplomacy, hard security or geopolitics if it is to succeed. Instead, the EU should leverage its unique nature and experience to inspire more inclusive governance, set the global framework for economic competition and lead international development efforts.

The procedural nature of the debate on the EU's external action is well illustrated by a number of events. For example, in December 2011, the foreign affairs ministers of 12 EU member

states sent a [joint letter](#) to the EU's High Representative with a polite list of mostly procedural and administrative complaints about the functioning of the EEAS that was newly established on 26 July 2010. Also, the July 2013 [review](#) of the EEAS's performance tallies 35 recommendations that are all about organization, functioning and staffing. Both documents concentrate on the nuts and the bolts of a single institution, namely the EEAS, and are largely silent on the strategic purpose of the EU's external action writ large.

The procedural focus on the EU's external action is also well illustrated by the baffling absence of intense political debate on the strategic interests and role of the EU in the wake of the Arab Spring, the quasi-failure of both the Doha round and the international climate negotiations, as well as an increasing Chinese assertiveness on the global stage. The deliberations of the EU's General Affairs Council of December 2013 by and large stayed within the remit of the EEAS review. It endorsed action on a number of the short-term administrative issues the review raised, but postponed action on its medium-term issues into 2014 and review of the Council Decision that is the legal basis of the EEAS ([Note 1](#)) into 2015 (EU, 2013). In short, it was largely a missed opportunity to set out a few strategic markers for the direction of the EU's external action.

This article seeks to inform and encourage debate about the purpose of the EU's external action ([Note 2](#)).

It suggests governance, economics and development as three broad areas that are appropriate to guide EU external action because they fit the organization's history, strengths and current situation. It also outlines more specific strategic objectives in each area that the EEAS can pursue together with relevant parts of the European Commission and the EU's member states to make the EU more relevant to its citizens, more vibrant as a region and better reputed – and understood - in the world.

On the Strategic Purpose of External Action: Three Prizes

At face value, it's a no-brainer. In a globalizing world, strength lies not in diversity, but in numbers and in unity of purpose. Estonia is relatively powerless in relation to Russia, yet the EU is a force to be reckoned with. The same can be said for Germany in relation to China, and so on. A strong external diplomatic service, backed-up by joint military force and significant development funds would - acting on behalf of its member states - represent a formidable asset. Kissinger would finally have his number to call and pundits would stop lamenting the lack of EU hard power.

Unfortunately, this line of thinking is fatally flawed and, if followed, reality will continue to disappoint. The trouble is that this perspective conveniently ignores that the EU is neither a federation with a unified bureaucracy and foreign policy as a central-

ized competency nor an entity with a collective desire to act militarily 'out of area'. Instead, there are 28 national foreign services with much longer histories and deeper networks.

Yet, this does not relegate EU external action to irrelevance; it merely suggests that two parameters should guide the future of EU external action - and the EEAS in particular. They will give it a different focus than its classic diplomatic counterparts: less on interstate relations and more on the consequences of globalization. Firstly, for the next few years, the EEAS should complement the external action of its member states in areas where such states lack the required level of interest, resources or skill. In other words, focus on adding value and avoiding direct competition. Second, it should resist the classic Foreign Service reflex of wanting to cover everything. Instead, a more promising strategy would be to select a few niches and grow around those. Close examination of the nature and history of the EU ([Note 3](#)) makes it relatively easy to point to three broad strategic areas of external action where the EU has value to add and can build a profile that is largely complementary to those of its member states.

1. Inspire as a case-study of the dilemmas of governance

At heart, the EU is a practical experiment in governance. While the key questions this experiment aims to resolve have changed over time ([Note 4](#)), responses have consistently re-

quired new arrangements, structures and tools of governance. This has generated a continuous process of experimentation and 'creative destruction'. The Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the EEAS itself provide only some of the latest examples. While this has at times been a bureaucratic and inefficient process, it has nevertheless created significant, practical innovations, such as the Single European Market (SEM), the Euro and a whole range of specialized agencies that facilitate common standard setting in many areas, which has benefited both stability and prosperity. The nitty-gritty of this experiment is of relevance to the wider world for three reasons.

First of all, it shows how deep and divisive political arguments can be incrementally overcome at negotiating tables and in conference rooms. While this experience has little persuasive power in today's EU where domestic audiences face high levels of unemployment, budget cuts and social tensions; however, violence, conflict and crime dominate many other parts of the world. Examples of, and support for, how culture, institutions and practices can enable peaceful negotiations and compromise are highly relevant in a world that faces a growing number of collective action problems, such as the failing 'war on drugs' (Global Commission, 2010), as well as thirty-two active conflicts in 2012 ([UCDP](#)). Effective external action will require grassroots diplomacy and innovative out-of-the-box thinking. These are not typical Foreign Service activities, but then again, that's the point.

Second, EU governance debates have nurtured a set of values that have gradually increased levels of accountability, tolerance and solidarity in the political systems and social cultures of its member states. Evidence hereof is visible in the form of incipient pan-European social safety nets, a decreasing tolerance of the abuse of public office for private gain and the wide acceptance of pluralism in society, media and politics as non-negotiable standards. A good demonstration of this dynamic in action is the recent [spat](#) between the EU and Hungary over the latter's controversial constitutional changes on which it eventually, and in part, had to back down. Thoughtfully enabling and encouraging such peer-to-peer discourse elsewhere is both in the EU's and the world's interest.

Finally, European integration has stimulated civic culture across the continent. It is not of the kind that centers on popular identification with flags or national anthems - that would mistakenly elevate the symbols of nationhood to the European level as indicators of support and legitimacy. Rather, it is of the more practical sort that builds tolerance and appreciation for neighbors through working, travelling, loving, making money and collaborating across borders. The weekly meetings of senior national civil servants in the Coreper, or the thousands of students that participate each year in the Erasmus program, are only the most obvious examples. Because the EU is a continuous work in progress, it has become as much a social experiment as a political one ([Note 5](#)). We know that civic culture matters for the

durability and the quality of results that governance structures produce ([Note 6](#)). Cultural and public diplomacy can tailor these experiences to places like Kashmir or South-East Asia. It will be sensitive and slow work, but centuries of power politics have arguably not yet produced a better record.

In short, the EU has the ability to inspire as a case study in the dilemmas of governance in a globalizing world ([Note 7](#)). While a self-congratulatory approach, or worse, attempts to export 'democracy to the world' ([Note 8](#)), are not exactly recipes for a successful foreign policy, tailoring some of its mechanisms, practices and programs to the global context could be a powerful lever for generating long-term advantage, as well as a source of inspiration for others. From this perspective, the EU's response to the Arab Spring has been a huge missed opportunity to influence the developments in North-Africa with a generous package of opportunities for education and training for its youth bulges and perhaps '[Interreg](#)' type investment deals across the Mediterranean, funded in part by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the European Regional Development Fund, for its fledging economies.

2. Shape the framework for global economic competition

If joint governance is at the heart of the EU, economic integration has so far been its most effective method to move it along. The EU as a single entity is the world's largest economy. It

makes up about 20% of the Gross World Product with the US, China, Switzerland, Russia, Norway, Japan and Turkey as its main trading partners (all over 3% of total trade) ([Note 9](#)).

The economic performance of the EU as a bloc contributes significantly to its output legitimacy. However, significant hurdles to greater economic performance remain, not in the least the completion of the SEM (for example trade in services) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The EU will need to make continuous efforts to compete effectively in the global economy. External action can play a vital role in making this possible under conditions that match the political and social interests of its member states and their citizens. It can help advance three issues in particular:

First, in the process of creating the EU's internal market, many warned of a race to the bottom. Social security and labor conditions would be sacrificed on the altars of corporate profit by governments greedy for more foreign investment. This image of social doom has not come to pass so far – at least not in the EU. On the contrary, standards have been harmonized to the extent that UK businesses complain that the regulation of working hours limits their ability to respond nimbly to changes in demand. The more socialist and corporatist parts of Europe can breathe a sigh of relief.

Yet, at the global level there remains an important job to be done in creating decent working conditions with provisions for

sickness, invalidity and old age, as well as ensuring the safety and quality of production. Here, EU values meet with EU interests: a humane and safe working environment is both right in itself and benefits our ability to compete. It lessens the inevitable disruption that results from low-added value industries in the EU having to close their doors. The task for EU external action here is twofold. First, diplomacy needs to work with business to ensure supply chains are transparent, clean and adhere to minimum worker, production and safety standards. The EU has the economic clout to make this happen. Second, there needs to be a sustained diplomatic push to improve the governance regime of the global economy, either on a case-by-case as part of new trade agreements (like the TIPP) or on a structural basis through existing institutions (such as the International Labor Organization) to set high global practices and standards.

Second, it has become abundantly clear that the global response to the challenge of climate change has run aground on the reefs of NIMBY ([Note 10](#)), which makes it of vital importance that local responses are reinvigorated. The sum of their parts may yet exceed what the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was not able to achieve. As a result, future economic growth needs to be as green as possible. This requires that putting to rest the idea that the luxury of greening the economy can wait until old-style, dirty industrial growth has generated sufficient wealth first. It's a recipe for global disaster. A key question is how this debate can shed its colonial overtones by

which developing countries accuse their OECD counterparts of ‘green’ imperialism after they first got rich in the ‘brown’ way themselves. Helpfully, recent work is starting to show that green growth does not have to be more expensive (OECD, 2013). EU external action can help build the evidence base for green growth, lobby the global agenda and support innovation through its trade policy, development and investment funding.

Third, in times of budget cuts and austerity, effective taxation of savvy multinationals has once more become a topic that gets leaders out of their chairs. While expectations of short-term replenishments of empty treasuries will likely have to be tempered, addressing the underlying questions of social justice and legitimacy are critical for a balanced, long-term recovery. EU external action can deliver a significant contribution to revising the mechanisms and procedures for international taxation because this is slow, technical work that requires diplomatic weight, staying power and deep expertise. The EU has excelled at this sort of technical-diplomatic work away from the headlines. As to the existence of a permissible environment, even Prime Minister Cameron has weighed in on this agenda (G8, 2013) despite the existence of important British offshore tax havens like the Virgin and Channel Islands.

3. Show compassion in a violent and unequal world

The third and final strategic area in which EU external action has value to add is in development cooperation. It is neither jus-

tifiable nor sustainable that hundreds of millions of people live in dire poverty, in daily fear of conflict and violence or next to unimaginably rich neighbors without being able to send their children to school. It is not right because the world is rich enough to give everyone a chance. It is not smart because it feeds poor governance, crime, migration, terrorism and exploitation. These problems are at their most extreme in fragile states where governments tend to be illegitimate, exploitative, incapable, or all three. Sadly, a number of these countries are utterly ignored by the world if they don’t pose a direct Afghanistan-type- threat to its commercial or political interests. Think of Chad, Sudan, the Central African Republic and Yemen, but also of Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon and Sri Lanka.

As these countries are largely out of the geopolitical limelight, EU external action is well suited for a long-term engagement with its diplomatic and development resources. Some will argue that this is already being done. Unfortunately, for EU external action to have real effect, two difficult changes must be made.

To start with, missions and actions at the behest of the EU’s foreign and security policy remain almost completely disconnected from the Commission’s work as the world largest donor. These instruments need to be linked much more strongly at both the strategic and operational level. Moreover, the extremely technical approach and glacial slowness with which the Commission programs the many billions it has to spend on aid is so funda-

mentally at odds with the political and operational realities in fragile states that not much can be expected from them in terms of results.

So there is huge scope for those in charge of the EU's external action to improve the quality of its development efforts. Redesigning procedures for inter-institutional collaboration, joint strategy formulation and programming regulations is slow work and not sexy, but can make a big difference. Were the EU to use the window of opportunity opened by the [New Deal](#) for International Engagement in Fragile States in earnest, it has the potential to become a real innovator in this area. And the member states may actually allow it.

Conclusively Moving Into the 21st Century

In summary, EU external action will not be of the glamorous Foreign Service type anytime soon. It should probably stay away from the headlines where geopolitical interests dominate. Syria, Afghanistan, Russia, Israel, Mali, China and Brazil are simply a size too tall for the EU to play an effective role outside of its core remit as guardian of the internal market ([Note 11](#)). It should also stop wasting energy on creating a more coherent defense and security policy, let alone joint defense procurement or actual intervention. It is highly unlikely that the member states will ever arrive at the level of consensus that will allow the EU to fulfill a meaningful role in these core areas of sovereignty. Instead, John Locke's 'under-laborer conception' seems

a better fit for EU external action. To paraphrase: 'And in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, it is ambition enough to be employed as an under-laborer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge' (Locke, in: Winch, 1999).

There is much that can be achieved by sharing the EU's governance record, and struggles, with the world to encourage such development elsewhere, by building a framework for global competition that safeguards human dignity and social justice, and by showing compassion with those who struggle to make a living under the threat of violence and poverty. These are prizes that reflect the spirit, interests and practice of Europe.

About the author

Erwin van Veen is a senior research fellow at Clingendael's Conflict Research Unit. He specializes in analysis of the politics and economics of change processes in situations of crisis and high levels of violence. This article reflects his personal views.

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Notes

1. See for example Blockmans and Hillion's (2013) helpful article on how the (textual) quality of this decision (2010/427/EU) can be improved from a legal perspective.
2. It builds on earlier work such as Dan Smith (2013).
3. Van Middelaar (2010); Bitsch (2006) and Tsoukalis (2003) all provide interesting reads in this regard
4. One could for example argue that preventing renewed conflict between the continent's major powers stood center stage in the 60s and 70s, catalyzing the region's internal economic dynamism in the 80s and 90s and competing globally in a rule-based, green and sustainable manner in the early 2000s.
5. See Van Middelaar (2010) for an intriguing perspective on the EU as a process.
6. Putnam's (1994) account of regional government in Italy is a classic in this regard.
7. For a good overview of Western political thought and associated governance dilemmas: Ryan (2012).
8. Such as for example attempted through: USA (2006).
9. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_the_European_Union, consulted 1 September 2013.
10. No In My Bank Yard
11. The EU's role as guardian of the internal market does, of course, already have important external politico-economic dimensions as the recent EU probe into the competitive behavior of Gazprom demonstrated.

Human Rights in a Changing World Order

Doutje Lettinga & Thijs van
Lindert

5

The EU's Human Rights Promotion in a Changing World Order

Overview

The EU's power to promote human rights is diminishing in a post-Western world. The EU's unfulfilled value project will meet stiffer resistance in a multipolar world. Global power dynamics are shifting and competing ideologies becoming more resonant. If the EU wants to remain a human rights advocate, it must redefine its strategy and position in the world.

Introduction

During the last two decades the EU distinguished itself as a global actor with a clear normative agenda. According to the Lisbon Treaty, all EU member states are societies in which “pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail”. In the treaty, the EU com-

mits itself to consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and international law. Part of this is the promotion of so-called ‘European’ values abroad, including human rights. In this essay we argue that the EU's window of opportunity to promote human rights abroad is closing due to the rise of emerging powers and the resonance of competing ideologies.

Nonetheless, we believe that the EU can remain an appealing human rights protagonist if it redefines its project and starts anticipating its new position in five fundamental ways. The EU must strengthen relations with emerging powers and regional organizations, support Southern human rights defenders, invest in building transnational youth networks, use its economic and diplomatic leverage as a tool of influence, and improve its own human rights record. Whether the EU will play an active role in shaping the future of the global human rights regime will ultimately depend on the extent to which it demonstrates a more unified external human rights policy.

Challenges for the EU in the Wider World

The EU - an amalgam of different institutions, member states and individual actors - must hasten to improve the internal coordination of its external human rights policies as well as its relations with the wider world, as it faces four major (geopolitical, ideological, economic and internal) challenges.

The first challenge for the EU is its diminishing power to shape the global human rights regime in an increasingly multipolar world. Economic heavyweights as Brazil, Russia, India and China (known as the [BRICs](#)) are followed in their slipstream by smaller but significant powers, such as Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey. When global governance is no longer exclusively dominated by Europe and the US it will become more difficult for the EU to promote human rights and democracy in non-Western countries and to shape the international human rights framework. [Salil Shetty](#), Secretary General of Amnesty International, believes that emerging powers will eventually realize that with great powers comes great responsibility and start defending human rights. Others are more skeptical and doubt that liberal states like India and Brazil will take on an active external human rights policy, let alone (semi) autocratic states like China and Russia. Scholars like [Jorge Castañeda](#) argue that emerging powers hold different attitudes towards concepts of state sovereignty and international law. They often refer to these states' rejection of the fairly new concept of '[Responsibility to Protect](#)', recently invoked to intervene militarily in Libya (2011) and Mali (2012) to defend populations from violence.

The second challenge to the EU's power to promote human rights outside its borders lies at an ideological level. The governments of states like China or Iran have long attempted to deflect Western criticism on their internal human rights record by representing such voices as a form of neocolonial imperialism.

We may expect that such frames will resonate even stronger in a multipolar world. As [Stephen Hopgood](#) and others have argued, the universal human rights project that INGOs have institutionalized was intimately tied to the foreign policy agenda of Western states. Now that the West is losing power, the long taken-for-granted legitimacy of human rights and their institutions is under threat. Competing ideologies, including religious and nationalistic ones, are gaining ground. This affects the EU's self-proclaimed role as a human rights protagonist. Globalization and the diffusion of ideas and movements across borders will exacerbate ideological conflicts, both within the EU and in its relations with the wider world.

Thirdly, the EU's external human rights promotion faces challenges connected to the economic realm. The EU's economic crisis and subsequent austerity measures may [negatively impact fundamental rights](#) within EU countries as well as EU funding streams to promote democracy and human rights worldwide. Fighting the crisis could also jeopardize the priority that EU member states place on human rights in their domestic and foreign policies. Meanwhile, Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) from Europe but increasingly also from emerging powers have grown into global players with power that exceeds that of many countries. Such MNCs can hardly be held legally accountable for violations abroad. Human rights treaties target nation-states, not companies, and justice is invoked through national courts while MNCs operate beyond national jurisdictions.

Finally, the EU faces internal developments that conflict with its goal to promote human rights abroad. The EU is confronted with xenophobic, populist and Eurosceptic movements that endanger the rights of migrants, refugees and other minorities. These developments also challenge the autonomy of EU policy-making and its legitimacy to enforce European human rights law in member states. The biggest challenge, however, arises from internal division among EU member states when it comes to external human rights promotion. The EU consists of a wide range of actors with different understandings of human rights and competing interests - from senior policy officers, Commissioners, MEPs to representatives of individual member states. Consequently, the EU hardly speaks with one voice with regard to, for instance, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or China's human rights abuses. Individual member states' interests often trump jointly-agreed human rights strategies, and bilateral relations are not always in congruence with EU goals. This fundamentally weakens the EU's role as a regional power block to advance human rights.

Towards a New Role in a Changing World Order

We suggest six ways in which the EU could respond to these challenges in order to maintain its position as a global human rights player.

1. Strengthen the EU's connections with the BRICs and smaller emerging powers

The EU should call upon the BRICs to take up their responsibility as reliable global powers and human rights defenders. Not from the position of an instructor but from an approach of [graduated engagement](#) and mutual learning, trying to find common grounds on ways to support human rights values that benefit individuals all around the world. Attributing such a responsibility to emerging powers also requires that European member states create the necessary conditions, sometimes at the expense of their own position. In other words, they must contribute constructively to dialogues concerning better representation of emerging powers in international institutions - such as the UN Security Council, IMF and World Bank - that still reflect the status quo of the world order after World War II. These dialogues must go hand in hand with a constant monitoring of human rights in these countries' domestic and foreign policy. Besides the BRICs, the EU should engage with smaller emerging powers like Mexico, South Africa, Indonesia and Turkey. As Kenneth Roth and Peggy Hicks of Human Rights Watch rightly argue, these states can have significant regional leverage on the politics of neighboring superpowers.

2. Reinforce relations with other regional organizations

The EU could also improve cooperation and coordination on human rights issues with regional institutions in other continents. Human rights compliance can take a more prominent place in existing talks with traditional institutions like the Organization of

American States ([OAS](#)), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations ([ASEAN](#)) and the Arab League ([AL](#)). But the EU must also engage in dialogues with bodies like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation ([SAARC](#)), the Southern African Development Community ([SADC](#)) and the Eurasian Economic Community ([EAEC](#)). The EU should emphasize that it has shown that in the long run economic welfare and prosperity not only benefit from regional integration but also from peace, the rule of law and human rights. Additionally, the EU must not lose sight of its own region. The substantial European Neighborhood Policy ([ENP](#)), which covers 16 partners at the EU's borders, has proven to be a valuable tool to foster human rights and democracy in Eastern Europe and the MENA-region. In these relations, the EU must focus its efforts on carefully chosen objectives, based on a calculation where it can have the greatest impact on local human rights issues.

3. Support human rights movements in emerging powers

If the EU wants new powers to take on a leading role in human rights advancement, it needs to support activists and movements in these countries. As [Peter Konijn](#) argues, today's NGOs involved in international advocacy will lose influence if they cannot transform into truly transnational organizations with supporters in all parts of the world. After all, governments of democratic states like Brazil or India will find it harder to disregard claims for freedom or calls for international action if they

stem from their own constituencies. The EU already has a [financial instrument](#) to support groups and individuals that defend democracy and human rights, but it could target funds better in line with its overall external policy. Moreover, because civic activism in emerging powers has predominantly focused on domestic issues, it should particularly support independent media outlets and civil society organizations that work on the foreign human rights policy of their governments. In this light it is also important that the EU invests in human rights education and helps INGOs disseminate research findings and launch public awareness campaigns about international human rights concerns. Finally, the EU and its member states can speak out more publically against human rights violations to give moral support to local human rights defenders.

4. Invest in building transnational youth networks

Brussels should also invest in building and maintaining transnational networks of young activists who advocate for global action to address human rights problems. According to the [Global Civil Society Yearbook 2012](#), recent protests in Europe, Brazil and the MENA-region illustrate the existence of an active global civil society forged by a generation that strives for democracy, human dignity and social justice. Despite the predominantly national focus of their advocacy, the protest movements bear potential for international solidarity and collective action. Europe should stimulate the growth and strength of transnational action

networks by creating online and offline platforms. This enables youth activists to mobilize jointly and to learn from each other about political organizing, advocacy and mobilizing strategies. It could also expand existing student exchange programs like [Erasmus Mundus](#) to universities in the BRICs because European youth has much to gain from alliances with peers in other continents. Together they can put pressure on regional and global institutions, including the EU, to collectively address the global challenges of tomorrow.

5. Use the EU's economic and diplomatic leverage as a strategic tool of influence

Brussels must also use its economic and diplomatic power more strategically to advance human rights abroad. The EU is the [biggest single market and the world's biggest trader](#), responsible for 20% of the world's imports and exports. Together with its member states, the EU is also still the [biggest donor](#) in the world, with an estimated 53 billion Euros to spend, which adds up to more than half of all Official Development Aid (ODA) in the world. As [Leonard and Kundnani](#) show, with 57.000 diplomats (including both EU and member states), the EU's corps diplomatique outnumbers many of the new powers combined.

Although the EU faces competition from investors and donors from new emerging economies that do not set benchmarks or conditions for loans, trade concessions or aid for third countries, the EU still has significant leverage. The EU could use

this power more clearly to advocate for human rights, for instance when debating the new EU-US free trade agreement ([TTIP](#)) or foreign investments in third countries. It could also use its large market to demand MNCs to respect human rights and CSR principles when operating in or exporting to the EU. It should also explore overlaps between its own objectives and those of corporations and other non-state actors in these countries, using these as an incentives to promote its values in diplomatic negotiations.

6. Practice what you preach; at home and abroad

Finally, the EU can only convince emerging powers and their inhabitants to sustain and promote human rights if it becomes a more credible player itself. The EU's internal track record is not always exemplary. Some have argued that Europe is even facing a [human rights crisis](#), illustrated by the restrictions of individual liberties in counterterrorism policies, the persistent discrimination of Roma and Muslim minorities and the rise of populist extremism, as well as the declining political commitment to human rights. European member states and institutions must condemn and end human rights violations at home - otherwise the EU betrays the values it seeks to represent.

This implies that the European Commission should take a tougher stance on "abusive" member states and hold them accountable. It should no longer relinquish to threats of powerful member states, as displayed by the [EC's half-hearted response](#)

to France's evictions of Roma in 2010. The same applies to EU action in the wider world. In the past, economic and political interests have often silenced EU member states' critique of dictators like Gadhafi and Mubarak. While respecting single member states particular interests in and ties with third countries, the EU must set clear and consistent criteria for bilateral relationships with third countries that are in line with its external human rights agenda. Only when the EU lives up to its own image as a human rights protagonist will its criticism of other states' abusive policies be considered legitimate.

Conclusion

The time has come that Brussels starts advocating universal instead of 'European' values, grounding these in common aspirations and shared interests of peace, prosperity and stability. This does not mean that the EU's role as a protagonist of human rights and democracy is over. The EU is still a global player and it can have a positive influence on the global human rights regime if it uses its power more strategically. In this essay, we have suggested several ways how it can do so. Ultimately, the prospect of success boils down to the question whether the EU will be able to improve internal coherence, consistency and coordination of its external policies. EU integration itself can be considered a laboratory for the future. Without aiming to conflate and homogenize internal differences, the EU has managed to build an impressive discursive and policy framework around shared values.

It is now time for collective action to implement this project in a consistent, focused and coordinated way in the EU's different relations with the new world. This requires a strong and autonomous EEAS that mainstreams human rights in various EU policy domains. Brussels should approach the emerging powers like its own member states: as "grown-ups" with different, sometimes competing understandings of human rights that can legitimately criticize flaws in EU's own human rights practice, yet that also have international human rights responsibilities and duties. This implies that EU member states make space for new powers in multilateral institutions so these can take up a leading role in human rights advancement. These challenges seem enormous, but the international solidarity displayed by younger generations across the globe should make us optimistic about the future.

About the authors

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Make Use of the Crisis – Demand Zero

Lara Wolf



Make Use of the Crisis – Demand Zero

Overview

Europe has to abolish all its nuclear weapons. They have lost their function, cost an enormous amount of money, and hinder the creation of a modern European foreign and defence policy. A quarter century after the end of the Cold War, Europe needs to move on; total nuclear disarmament is the first step.

Introduction

“We cannot at once keep sacred the miracle of existence and hold sacrosanct the capacity to destroy it.” (Note 1)

“The crisis is affecting the EU’s pretensions to be a global actor.” (Note 2)

“The future of our common continent in the 21st century will primarily depend on the EU and Russia – and their interaction.” (Note 3)

How do these quotes fit together? Simply put, they belong to the question concerning which kind of Europe we want to live in the future. In fact, there is really only one blanket solution to all of the above-mentioned problems: Abolishing all nuclear weapons in Europe – using the financial and political crisis as an argument and window of opportunity.

Since the end of the Cold War Nuclear Weapons no longer have military utility, will incur costs of around 1 trillion dollars over the next decade and are a relic of a time gone by, creating a constant source of friction between NATO and Russia.

Nuclear disarmament in Europe will further European and Russian-European integration, save money desperately needed in times of hardship for public finances, and will be the next logical step for a Europe of the 21st century with a common defence strategy; and for a Europe that will be able to talk eye to eye with other major powers.

Reset Priorities

The very idea behind the EU was to overcome divisions during the twentieth century and never be devastated by wars again: It was meant to be defined by peace in the 21st century. In contrast, the idea of nuclear weapons is intrinsically linked with the Cold War, at a time when states couldn’t trust each other and people lived in constant fear. These times – we like to think – are long gone.

However, most of us don't know that there are still approximately 180 B-61 gravity bombs at air bases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey, for delivery by US and host countries' aircraft. Moreover, France and United Kingdom are still nuclear powers.

Years ago Hannah Arendt said that the sheer folly of trying to defend a nation by destroying all life on the planet must be apparent to anyone capable of rational thought. In fact, a lot of people have always been scared of nuclear weapons and people who stood up against nuclear weapons have been ridiculed. But now, times have changed: The financial crisis is radically transforming Europe – sometimes for the worse. Yet in some cases we need to capitalise on the crisis so we can change Europe for the better. It can help us reset our priorities and abandon out-dated thinking on global security. The fact that the two biggest nuclear states (the USA and Russia) are preparing for new disarmament talks is a sign that public opinion is changing. Europe should be a society which pays close attention to people's opinions and as an ever closer union of the peoples of Europe. Nuclear weapons simply don't fit this model.

Highly Anachronistic Weapons

The basic justification for removing tactical nuclear weapons from Europe is that they have no military utility. These weapons were built 70 years ago with the purpose of defeating the Nazis and containing Russia. These threats are long gone – and ever

since, nuclear weapons have been in search of a new mission ([Note 4](#)).

The emergence of mutual military threats between Russia and NATO is practically impossible as a result of the intensified relations between the US and Russia, and the weapons no longer exert any real pressure. This is due to the fact that the approximately 180 B61 bombers in Europe have no pre-assigned targets and their delivery without re-fuelling in the air is impossible.

As a result, these weapons seem to be nothing more than a Cold war anachronism. But they do pose high security risks, for instance due to the possibility of terrorist capture. Additionally, there have been security issues relating to the storage of nuclear weapons, especially in countries such as Pakistan. For example, it remains unresolved whether separate storage provides a layer of protection against accidental launch or whether it is actually easier for unauthorized people to remove a weapon's fissile material core if it is not assembled ([Note 5](#)).

In fact, accidents related to nuclear weapons aren't as rare as many people believe, and their high number compels the International Atomic Energy Agency to maintain a website reporting all the recent ones ([Note 6](#)). In addition, nuclear weapons create uncertainty about them being used under unforeseen circumstances, given that they are unstrained by arms regula-

tions. There are also multiple nuclear actors, so traditional concepts of deterrence would be unlikely to work reliably ([Note 7](#)).

Supporters of tactical US nuclear weapons stationed in Europe argue that they contribute to US-European and US-NATO cooperation and thus strengthen their relationship. However, this is simply a very euphemistic way of saying that these weapons allow the US to conduct a nuclear attack against Russia without having to harm US territory itself but rather having Europe fight for the US and face the consequences.

Such thinking may have made sense during the Cold war but the Cold war has been over for 25 years. Hence, it also seems to be time to strengthen European-Russian integration and cooperation.

Strengthening Russian-European Integration

In fact, throughout the financial crisis it has become obvious that the future of Europe and Russia is intrinsically linked.. Russia's role became apparent in the context of saving Cyprus during its financial crisis of 2012, and the EU is Russia's most important trade partner. Given this strong relationship in economic terms, it also seems to be time to build a common defence, peace and security strategy. Due to the EU's growth, Europe and Russia have become closer than ever in geographic terms. They share a number of interests and a common culture. Removing all tactical nuclear weapons from European territory at

present and cutting down UK and French arsenals would bring Europe and Russia even closer.

Nuclear disarmament in Europe is in line with Russia's interests, given that, as mentioned above, these tactical weapons can only be possibly used against Russia, but a Russian attack is highly improbable.

Simply put: this could be a historic moment; nuclear disarmament in Europe could advance integration between Europe and Russia. This would finally overcome the anachronistic thinking of the Cold war. Ultimately, the idea of Europe as an "ever closer union of the people" gives a moral impetus to try and unify the people of Europe and Russia. The crisis right now is a unique chance to reset our priorities and it allows us to strengthen partnerships with countries we regarded as enemies in the past.

Wasting Money on Useless Weapons - Despite the Crisis?

Moreover, the crisis has emphasised that public finances are in a worse condition than we thought. Solutions need to be found as to how money can be saved and used more intelligently and profitably in the future. Nuclear weapons are clearly not a wise investment. They are, instead, part of the problem: despite the fact that they have no military or practical use whatsoever, they incur incredible costs – and spending will even increase. Over

the next decade, they require spending of around 1 trillion dollars. This money could be used to alleviate the pain of Greece, Spain and other countries in need, build all the schools children need and help combat famine.

In fact, most of the nuclear arsenals are simply too old to be of any use. France will need to pay around 6 billion euros per year even though it has been reducing its weaponry for decades. The most taxing situation is that which is facing the United Kingdom; its arsenal consists of aging submarines whose running costs alone incur billions – so the critical decision whether it is going to buy a new set of submarines for 35-40 billion dollars will need to be made in 2016.

Over the next decade, nuclear weapons will entail greater spending than at any time since the Cold War. Again, this shows that right now there is a unique opportunity for the United States take a wise decision and get rid of these old weapons. In times when Greece has been on the brink of collapsing for years and other states need to spend their citizens' money for saving other member states, spending billions on weapons without any use is hard to justify – if it is justifiable in any shape or form.

Furthermore, just for the modernisation of the bulk of its old arsenal reaching the end of its life span within the next 5 years, Russia will need to spend 70 billion dollars through 2020 ([Note](#)

[8](#)). And this is just necessary to maintain rough parity with the US.

This is also a dangerous development. Despite the fact that Russia is obligated to reduce its number of nuclear weapons under the START-treaty, it is launching a massive modernisation programme. So right now seems to be the right moment to go for total disarmament instead of modernisation.

The EU as a Global Player

The need for a common strategy is obvious: Will the EU, and Europe as a whole, ever be able to become a major player in world politics and international security on a par with the US, China and Russia if it doesn't come up with its own foreign policy, security and defence strategy?

Article 42 (2) of the Treaty on the European Union allows for a common security and defence policy. Moreover, Article 24 imposes the duty of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In addition, in the field of non-proliferation there has been increased consensus between the member states; the EU has become an active institution and has made non-proliferation a central part of its foreign policy. Many bilateral treaties between the EU and other countries include non-proliferation clauses and member states try to emphasise their common position in several international fora. But despite the fact that there has been considerable development the problem

remains that the “common” stance on nuclear weapons is not so common after all. Rather, it is the lowest common denominator.

The question of European nuclear weapons and actual disarmament has never been properly discussed – rather, it has always been about removal of other states’ arsenals. The only action so far has been the European Parliament’s endorsement of the Global Zero action plan which includes the aim of global nuclear disarmament by 2030. As a result of this inaction, the possession of nuclear weapons by France and Great Britain has become a real threat to European integration.

But integration is what we need right now in order to be able to solve the crisis. The closer we get the more power we will have – so the problems which nuclear weapons in Great Britain and France cause will need to stop.

After the Cold war, due to the fact that the threat posed by the former enemy decreased, there was an urgent need for European nuclear powers to find a new justification for their possession. Thus, the idea of the “Europeanisation” of nuclear weapons was born and argued to be necessary due to the de-facto dependence of EU member states on each other in terms of security.

Apart from the fact that this concept would weaken international non-proliferation, and thus would be in breach of international

law, the question remained as to whether the common security policy within the EU was strong enough to deal with such a contentious issue. It might be true that the EU today is indeed in a better and stronger shape in institutional terms.

But European efforts to build a European deterrent system are still deeply immoral: they undermine global non-proliferation efforts and thus increase the Non-Proliferation Treaty’s (NPT) lack of credibility amongst states such as Pakistan and North Korea who are not parties. The NPT is based on the idea that non-nuclear powers gain access to civil nuclear power and the nuclear powers in exchange remove their weapons. Given that reduction in weapons still hasn’t developed very much, there is even a stronger need for nuclear powers to emphasise the need for non-proliferation in general.

Apart from this, during the Cold War with its bipolar logics there has already been considerable disagreement as to when the threshold is met for a nuclear attack as a response to an earlier attack. Today, when terrorists are threatening to steal and use such weapons there is even less of an agreement ([Note 9](#)). This deep disagreement makes a European deterrent system highly improbable.

Instead the EU member states should keep in mind that the idea of Europe was to become a continent defined by peace and to bring people closer together. A common security, defence and peace strategy which includes a decisive stand in fa-

your of nuclear disarmament is necessary. Only by doing so will Europe be able to speak with one concerted voice in the future to powers such as the US and China. Hence, this turns into an argument about European sovereignty as well. Given that a lot of EU citizens don't even know about the tactical nuclear weapons stationed in their countries, building a common security, peace and defence strategy would also help the European public to be better informed on the topic, thereby increasing transparency.

Conclusion: One solution for all problems

As a result of the aforementioned reasons, there is indeed one solution to all problems: to work on a strategy for total nuclear disarmament in Europe. Negotiations with the US and Russia need to start in order for all tactical nuclear weapons in European host countries to be removed and Great Britain and France should cut down their arsenals as well.

The financial crisis has shown that the European states and the people need to stand together and need to work together in order to solve their problems. If the states grow closer together, their problems become shared and solutions can be found together.

Initiatives such as the 2011 study by the Swedish Defence Research Agency FOI proposing a geographically limited approach to remove all tactical nuclear weapons from the Baltic

area show that some states are already a step ahead and have come up with a feasible solution. Proposals like that would bring together both owners of the warheads and nuclear host countries in Europe.

It is true that reasonable people can disagree about how to get to Global Zero, it will need recognition that achieving it will be difficult, it requires negotiating and re-negotiating, civil actors speaking up, and Europe, NATO and Member States to get involved. President Obama was indeed right when he said we need to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons ([Note 10](#)).

About the author

Lara Wolf, 23, was born in Berlin and has been living there all her life, except for a six-month stay in Sardinia, Italy, and a year abroad at Cambridge University as part of her Law degree at the Free University of Berlin, specialising in International and EU Law. After finishing her studies next year she is planning to pursue a PhD in (International) Criminal Law and a Master's degree. She enjoys being part of Global Zero, a movement for a world without nuclear weapons, and has published various newspaper articles on the topic. She has also done internships with several EU institutions, believing in Europe as one of the greatest ideas of the 21st century.

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